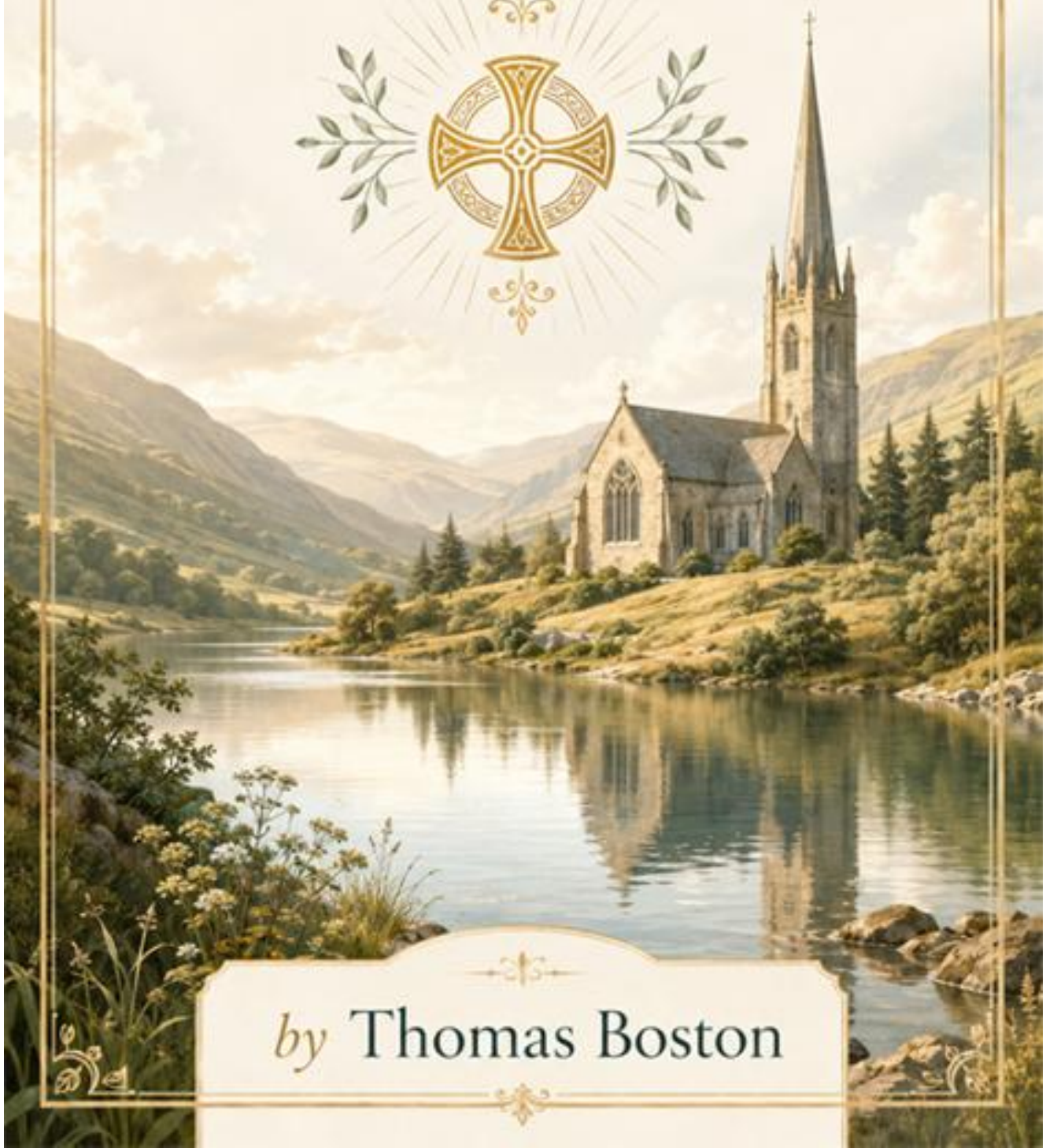
Practical Discourses



by Thomas Boston

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It is hoped, the publication of them now may be for the edification of the church of Christ. The Sermons are also taken in his own notes, prepared for the pulpit only; and therefore they are not so full as, doubtless, they would have been, had he prepared them for the press. But though these volumes labour under the disadvantages which commonly attend posthumous works, there is ground to hope they may, through the divine blessing, be of singular use to the people of God.

They who had the happiness to be acquainted with the author, and have heard him preach—especially those who lived under his

ministry—will easily observe in these Discourses that clear and distinct method of opening up texts, and deducing points of doctrine from them, wherein he excelled; as also the occasional opening up the Scriptures in the course of his sermons; with the close and warm application of the several subjects to the cases both of saints and sinners; in all which he "shewed himself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." He used to observe, that when he had continued for some time preaching on a subject, he still got the clearer insight into it, when he came to bring it home upon the consciences of his hearers.

So great was his delight in his Master's work, and so earnest his desire to be found occupied therein, when he should be called hence, that he preached two or three Sabbaths from a window in the manse to the people sitting without, after that he was no longer able to go to the kirk. And as the two Sabbaths, or three at most, in which he was, by his growing indisposition, laid aside from his public work, were very heavy upon him; so his Master was pleased to call him home on the Saturday, May 20, 1732, to celebrate the eternal Sabbath in that place where "the inhabitant shall not say any more, I am sick."

The subjects here handled are of the last importance, both to saints and sinners; and therefore justly claim their most attentive consideration. The character of the author is long since established; and any further commendation of him, as there is no need for it, so neither would it be so decent from the pen of such a near friend as his Son,

THOMAS BOSTON.

OXNAM MANSE, July 2, 1753.

GOSPEL-COMPULSION

A Sermon preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, at Ettrick.

Compel them to come in. - Luke 14:23.

AND are they not happy that are in? Is your rock as their rock, O sinners, yourselves being judges? And why will not ye come in too? Christ's house is not yet filled. Many have come in, but "yet there is room" for more, ver. 22. And we are sent to "compel you to come in." So we have it in charge in our text.

The scope of this parable (which, upon the matter, is the same with that of the marriage-feast, Matt. 22) is to shew the rejection of the Jews for their rejecting of Christ, and the calling of the Gentiles into their room. The supper to which they are bidden here, is Jesus Christ, with all his saving benefits: he is the maker, and the matter of this supper also. In the morning of time, in the patriarchal ages, men were invited to this feast; for even then there were not wanting preachers of righteousness, 2 Peter 2:5. In the mid-day, under the law, they were invited to it, by prophets, priests, and Levites. And here in the evening, in the last times, the times of the gospel, they are called to it as a supper; the dispensation of the gospel being the last dispensation of grace to the world. The Jews were they that got the first offer, but they would not come; they made their excuses, as ye may read vers. 17, 18, 19, 20. of this chapter. The Gentiles get the next offer; the servant is sent out to the streets and lanes: the ministers of Christ preach the gospel to the poor Gentiles, and they receive it. But all come not in at once: therefore the servant is sent

out into "the highways and hedges," where the most miserable sort of people are to be found; and even these must be compelled to come in. Possibly, this double sending forth of the servant, may point at the Lord's way in the dispensation of the gospel to the Gentile world: the gospel being first preached to those of them who had renounced the idolatry of their country, and worshiped the true God; and sometimes assembled with the Jews in their synagogues to learn of them the knowledge of God, though they did not embrace the ceremonial part of their religion: these might well be represented by the "poor, maimed, and blind," sitting in the streets and lanes of the city. But afterwards it was carried to the most dark corners of the earth, where there was no respect either to the Jewish or Christian religion, but all were sunk together in most gross ignorance and idolatry; which might fitly be represented by "the highways and hedges." See Acts 10; and 13:42, 46, 49.

In the text we have three things. (1.) The great design ministers should have before their eyes in preaching the gospel; and that is, to bring sinners in to Christ. It must not be to draw them to a party, but to draw them to Christ. It is not to make them only change their work, they continuing still without, by preaching mere morality to them; but it is to make them change their master too, to get them into Christ by faith. (2.) Consider whom they are to deal with in order to bring them in; even those that are sitting in the highways and hedges, like beggars in rags and sores, the most unworthy and vile sinners. (3.) The method they must use to get them in; "Compel them" to come in, not by using bodily violence towards them. Christ put the sword of the Spirit in the hands of his ministers, but not the temporal sword. Dragooning, torturing, murdering, may be fit meant to bring in men to Antichrist, but not to bring them in to Christ. The

compulsion in the text is a moral compulsion, such as those use who invite men to feasts, who are not wont to cudgel them in, but seriously and earnestly to deal with them until they consent. So should ministers compel sinners to come in to Christ, dealing with them seriously and affectionately, so as sinners may see they are in good earnest upon their Master's errand. We must give them the charming invitations and offers of the gospel upon the one hand, and lay before them the "terror of the Lord," on the other hand, that if men will go to hell, they may go with a witness. Withal, here is intimated that efficacy of the Spirit, which goes along with the word, to the conversion of the elect; which does not force, but sweetly necessitates them to come in.

DOCTRINE. It is the great work of ministers to compel sinners, in a gospel-way, to come in to Christ.

The best way that I can handle this text, is to aim at that which is given in charge in it. And in order to this, consider with me the import of it.

I. Sinners naturally are out. Were it not so, they needed not be compelled to come in. Hear all ye this day that are out of Christ, what ye are out of, and where ye are.

First, Sinners, do ye know what ye are out of? (1.) All ye that are out of Christ, are out of God's family, Eph. 2:18, 19, God's household is the household of faith, ye are none of it. His house may be an empty house for you. Adam ran out of the house, and all his posterity with him; and ye are still there, where Adam left you. And is not that a sad case, to be out of God's family? Though ye are in our mother's house, ye cannot call him Father, seeing ye are not in Christ his Son: ye can

have no claim to the portion and inheritance of the children, Gal. 4:30. (2.) Ye are out of God's covenant of peace, and so without hope of salvation, while in that state, Eph. 2:12. Ye read of a glorious chariot, Cant. 3:9, 10. It is the covenant of grace, the covenant of peace, as it is held forth in the everlasting gospel; for that is "the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness," upon which Christ rides and prospereth. The first chariot, wherein Adam and his children should have been carried to heaven, was the covenant of works: Adam had the guiding of it; but it did not drive far till it was broken to pieces. Now, there is a new one made in which Christ is carrying all his people to glory; but ye are out of it. King Solomon, the Mediator Christ, made it; it could not be made without him. He made it for himself, to manifest his own glory, and the exceeding riches of his grace by it; and "for the daughters of Jerusalem," to carry his bride home to his Father's house, in it. It was made of the durable "wood of Lebanon;" for he will have it to be an everlasting covenant, that shall never be broken. It has "pillars of silver," those excellent promises that are peculiar to the covenant of grace, as the promises of pardon, perseverance, &c., for it is "established upon better promises." And because there is no small weight in this chariot when a sinner is in it, he hath made the "bottom thereof of gold," solid and strong, so that none that are in it (though heavier than mountains of brass) shall fall through it: for "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Tim. 2:19; they are secured by God's eternal decree of election. No storms of wrath can fall upon them that are in it; for it hath a covering of the purple blood of Jesus Christ. "The midst thereof, the inner part" of it, "is paved with love:" love lines the chariot; it is above them, it is on every hand of them; yea it is underneath them,

so that if they do fall in it, they shall not get such a grievous fall, but they will be able to rise again. Happy they that are in it! But, alas! sinners, ye are out of it. Ye are lying there where the first chariot laid you when it broke. (3.) Ye are out of God's favour, being out of Christ. Now, that is dreadful, for our God is a consuming fire. And there is no shelter from the wrath of God, but under the covert of the blood of the Mediator, Eph. 2:13. The destroying angel is coming through, and there is no blood sprinkled on your door-posts. God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; if ye do not come in, and meet him there, what can ye expect but that he will meet you without, as a bear bereaved of her whelps, rend the caul of your heart, and devour you like a lion? Hos. 13:8. What do your duties avail, while ye are out of Christ? can they procure you God's favour? Your tears will never come into his bottle, nor will your prayers reach his ears, John 14:6.

Secondly, Know ye, sinners, where ye are? I will tell you where ye are. (1.) Ye are on the devil's pasture, the mountains of vanity, about the lions' dens, and the mountains of leopards, where Satan feeds his herd. Ye are out of God's house, wandering abroad for bread, begging at the world's door, saying, Where is it? Ye know not Christ, the bread of life; and therefore the dung of worldly profits and pleasures is so valuable in your eyes. But tell me, sinner, are you ever satisfied? You would "fain fill your belly with the husks" of the world; but do they fill you indeed? is not the substance squeezed out of these things, so as ye find them but empty husks? In all your traversing of the mountains of vanity, came ye ever to the place of which you could say, (and stand by it), This is my rest, and here I will stay? no nor never shall, till ye come to Christ, Is. 55:2. (2.) Ye are in hell upon earth. To be in hell, is to be without, Rev. 22:15. and ye are not come

in, ye are condemned already John 3:18. bound in the prison, Is. 61:1. What is the difference betwixt you, and them that are in hell? Ye are both prisoners; only ye are in the outer prison, they are in the inner prison. Ye are both away from Christ; only ye will depart from him, they must depart from him. The fire of God's wrath is set on in the consciences of both; only it is not as yet blown up and made to flame in you, by the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone to kindle it, as it is in them; but ye know not how soon it may be so. But there is yet another difference; they are prisoners past hope, ye are prisoners of hope. Therefore we proceed to another point.

II. It is the great errand of the friends of the Bridegroom to bring them in that are out. Sirs, ye that are out, ye are where ye should not be, ye are on forbidden ground. We would have you in; we would have you come in to Christ, to unite with him, by believing in him, accepting of him in all his offices.

First, We declare unto you, that our Lord is invested with the sole authority and commission to be the great Prophet, the Preacher and Teacher of the way to Immanuel's land, Acts 3:22. 23. He has set up his school amongst us, but he hath few disciples; and we are come to compel you to come in, that his house may be filled. Satan has many disciples; carnal wisdom has many scholars. Alas for it! O leave them. Our Lord alone is he that is given of the Father to be the great Leader to the heavenly Canaan, Is. 55:4. None ever came, or shall come there, but his followers; come in then, giving up yourselves to him to be guided by him. Ye would all be happy, ye would all be at heaven at last: but ye are wandering in a wilderness, where there is no way; and ye will surely lose yourselves, if ye take not him for your leader. The way to glory is a difficult way, and ye are not acquainted

with it; nay ye are blind travellers, ready every moment to fall over some precipice. O! will ye take a guide? Ye are now standing (as it were) in a place where two ways meet, uncertain which of them to take. Your own wisdom, which is folly, points out a fair broad way, saying, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither," Prov. 9:16. but turn not in thither, for "the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell," ver. 18. The Wisdom of the Father, our Lord Christ, points out to you a narrow way, but it leadeth to life; and he is this day saying to you, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither," ver. 4. Come in then, renounce your own wisdom, give up yourselves to him, to be led and guided by him. "Hear, and your souls shall live."

Secondly, Sinners, do not ye know that ye are guilty, and that ye can have no access to an unatoned God? There was a breach made betwixt God and man by sin. Justice demands a sacrifice; an atonement must be made. The sinner himself is unclean, he cannot be the priest; and he is not able to provide a sacrifice, for the cattle on a thousand hills are not sufficient for a burnt-offering. Wherefore Jesus Christ became our Priest; his human nature was the sacrifice; his divine nature the altar that sanctified the gift; the wrath of God was the fire that burned the sacrifice: the blood was carried in to the most holy place, when Christ ascended into heaven, and sat down at the Father's right hand, to intercede for sinners, upon the ground of his satisfaction. Now, here is the atonement; and we would have you to fall in with this device of salvation by a crucified Christ, renouncing your own righteousness, that you may mount to heaven by the ladder of Christ's mediation. In the earthly paradise, God set up a ladder by which all mankind might get up to the heavenly paradise. It was the covenant of works; a ladder able to bear the weight of all the world at once; but so contrived, that if but the least

pin in it were loosed, all would break together. All mankind mounted it, even the first Adam, and all his children in his loins: but he having loosed one pin thereof, in a moment the ladder broke, and he and all his fell down into a gulph of misery, and an horrible pit, where they might see heaven afar off, but no way to get to it more. This dreadful break rejoiced the devils: it astonished the angels; they saw that they could not mend it, nor make another, and they were wiser than to attempt it. The Son of God saw there was none amongst all the creatures to help, and therefore his own arm brought salvation. Another ladder is made, Jesus Christ Godman, the Mediator betwixt God and men, the way to the Father, Gen. 28:12. The foot thereof is set on the earth, for he is man; the ladder was set so low as sinners might reach it; it was set very low, even in "the lower parts of the earth," (Eph. 4:9), the region of death. The top of it reached to heaven, for he is God; the ladder is so high, that it can set the sinner up to heaven. It can neither loose nor break with the utmost weight upon it; for it is knit together with blood of infinite value, shed to the utmost of what justice demanded, Heb. 9:14. Come, sinners, lay all your weight on it, and fear not. The first ladder could bear nothing but men's persons; it could not bear one sinner with a burden of guilt on his back, but it would break under him: but this will bear you, and your burden of guilt too, though it would be heavier than the sand of the sea. Ah! there are but few upon this ladder, we would compel you to come on. Have ye a mind to lie still in the gulph? have ye taken your last sight of heaven? have ye bid an eternal farewell to glory? or have ye not done it? then why will ye not be compelled to come on? O come before the ladder be drawn up. I know what ye are thinking in effect, ye that will not be compelled to come on; ye are thinking, like "a thief and a robber," to "climb up some other way." I know what ye

are doing; ye are doing one of two: ye are either mending the old ladder, and making the best ye can of the broken pieces, by your morality and legal walk; or ye are making a new one of your own, a ladder of uncovenanted mercy, trusting to the mercy of God, without uniting with the Mediator. But set ye the feet of them as low as ye will, God's justice will never suffer the tops of them to reach heaven. Lay your weight on them then, if ye will do no otherwise; venture your souls on them, venture eternity on them, and climb up: but know assuredly, though ye should get up so high by them as ye could knock at heaven's door, and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us," there they shall fail you, there they shall break, and tumble you down into the lowest hell, John 14:6.

Thirdly, Christ has got a kingdom from his Father, Psal. 2:6, 7, 8; but he has few real subjects. He has set up his standard here this day, and we are come to compel you to come in, and submit to him as your Lord and King. Ye are under strange lords, and have long refused allegiance to your true Lord. O renounce all your idols now, and give yourselves away to him, to be from henceforth his only, his wholly, his for ever. Come in now, and "kiss the Son," Psal. 2:12. Bow the knee to him; put the crown on his head, Cant. 3:11. Open the everlasting doors of your hearts, that the King of glory may come in, Psal. 24:7. If any poor soul be saying within itself, Alas! the armies of hell within my breast are not so easily dispossessed; it is true indeed; but yet I hope you are not so closely blocked up, but that intelligence may be got betwixt Christ and you; ye hear his offer to be your King, will ye give your consent to it? I will ask you but two questions to clear this matter. (1.) If you can do no more, yet will you give him your good-will of the kingdom? Are you willing to part with your lusts, though you be not able to put them away? Though you cannot

shake the yoke of bondage off your own neck, will you give Christ your good-will, to take it off, and lay his own upon you? As a King "he will subdue our iniquities," Micah 7:19. (2.) Can your heart consent to the absoluteness of his government? He must be an absolute monarch, his will in all things must be thy law. And why should he not be so? for he can do no wrong, Psal. 45:6, 7. Will you consent that he model the kingdom in thy heart as he will? Shall he set up and cast down there as he pleaseth? have you no secret reserves, no lust that is but "a little one," and must be spared; no prince of the blood of hell, that he must "deal gently with for your sake?" If it be so, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" Thy consent to him as he offereth himself, is thy coming in.

III. Sinners may come in. Know then that ye have liberty from the Master of the house to come in. Were it not so, he would not send out his servants to compel you to come in. Nay, sirs, he could keep his doors bolted against you, if it were not his will ye should come in: and if ye would be so bold as to come and knock at the door, or offer violence to it, he could speak a word that would make you fall backward. Our Lord Jesus Christ gives fair liberty to all of you, even the worst of you, to come. Ye that are bearing the devil's mark in your foreheads; ye openly profane persons, that sit as it were in the devil's highways; ye that are bearing his mark in your right hand, which ye can hide when ye please, ye vilest hypocrites, who are hid about the devil's hedges; ye are all welcome for Christ's part, he will not cast the door on your face. Surely there can be no less imported in his charge to compel you to come in. And therefore I would have you step forward. Consider, (1.) Is it nothing to you that ye have leave to come in? It was not so always. If before Christ was revealed, the

sinner had offered to have come in, he would have met with the flaming sword of justice, that would have driven him back to his dungeon of misery and darkness. If Christ had not been ground betwixt the upper and nether millstones of the Father's wrath, he could not have been bread to sinners, though they had been hungering after him. (2.) The fallen angels have not leave to come in, and never had since they went out, Jude ver. 6. If it were possible they could believe in Christ, and be content to come in to him, they would get the door cast in their face; for they never got leave to come in. The door was barred on them, and the bar was never drawn, nor ever will, Heb. 2:16. And God was no more debtor to us than to them. (3.) Be your case what it will, this is sufficient to determine you to come in. If ye remain without, ye are ruined, and all doors of hope are closed on you, except this, Acts 4:12. The door is open, ye are not forbidden to come in, ye perish if ye come not in; could we say no more, but it may be ye may get in, this might determine you to give it a fair trial, if ye would but act rationally. Lastly, This leave to come in will not last always with you. "When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door," there will be no more leave to come in, Luke 13:25. They that are in hell this day, cannot get in though they would never so gladly; there is no passing of the gulph fixed betwixt Christ and them, Luke 16:26. The first Adam closed the door upon us, but there was a second Adam to open it; if the second Adam close the door on us, there is not a third to open it, 2 Cor. 4:3. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The apostle here has respect to what he had said of the vail on Moses' face, chap. 3:13. the vail spread over the Old Testament, ver. 14; but the gospel removes this vail, vers. 16, 17, 18. "But," says he, "if our gospel also be vailed, it is vailed to them that are lost;" there is not another

dispensation of grace to be expected to take off that vail. It is God's last grace to the world, Heb. 1:1, 2. The Lord has been making a feast for the world these five thousand years, and now the last service is on the table. The last ship for Immanuel's land is now making ready to sail; therefore ye must put to sea, now or never, Heb. 10:26, 27.

IV. Sinners are desired to come in. They not only have leave to come in, but they are desired by the Master of the house to come in. Arise then, ye worst of sinners, the "Master calleth you." Ye are called, not to a funeral, but a feast; not to a prison, but to the guest-chamber, where he may entertain you with all the delicacies of heaven. If ye were not desired, why would he send his servants to compel you to come in? and will ye refuse when ye are desired? Consider, I pray you, (1.) It ill becomes you, vile worms, to refuse his call. I am sure he might be for ever happy in himself, though you and I both were where, in strict justice, we should be, in the bottomless pit. He needs none of us. What are we that he should be pleased to trouble himself about us, whether we sink or swim! The angels adore him, his Father honours him, and vile wretches, whom he desires to come in, have the face to refuse him whom the Father heareth always. (2.) There are many as good as you, whom he never desired to come in. He does not call you because he has none other to call, who might fill his house. He might remove this gospel from you, and send it into the dark places of the earth, and compel the pagans to come in. Should he do it, it is very likely his offers would be better entertained amongst them than amongst us. Some divide the world into thirty parts, and find that nineteen of these are possessed by pagans, six of them by Jews, Turks, and Saracens, and only five by Christians; and of these five parts Christian, many are Antichristian, lying yet under the darkness of Popery. And has the Lord chosen us out from among

so many, to give us the invitation to come in, and shall we refuse? Lastly, How will ye look him in the face, when ye appear before his tribunal, if ye will not come in now at his desire? How will ye look back on rejected love? What will ye do when he comes in wrath to you, that will not come to him now, upon his call?

OBJECTION. But some will say, Is it possible that he calls me, even vile and wretched me? ANSWER. We have general invitations clogged with no conditions, free offers made to all that will come, Is. 55:1. Rev. 22:17. And the Lord expressly shews, that no vileness nor unworthiness shall stop any that will come, Is. 1:18. Jer. 3:1. and what would ye have more? We are sent this day, in our Master's name, to compel you all to come in, be your case what it will. And if that would persuade you, we should come to you, one by one, and tell you, that it is you, and you, and you, that Christ calls to come in. But if ye believe our doctrine from the word, concerning the misery of your natural state, without hearing your name and sirname in particular, why would ye require more in the doctrine concerning the remedy?

V. Sinners must come in. Compel them to come in. Sirs, ye not only may come, but ye must come, even the worst of you. Ye are not only desired to come in, but ye must not abide without. Consider,

First, "This is his commandment, that ye believe," 1 John 3:23. Ye are peremptorily commanded to come in. God is peremptory with you, and so must we be peremptory with you too. Therefore I tell you, ye must come; and I charge you in his name to come in, and not disobey his peremptory command. Lay your hands to your hearts then, and see what ye will do; whether ye will still abide without, and obey the

devil, and your doubts, fears, and jealousies of Christ, or come in upon God's command. Have ye any regard to the authority of God? have ye any respect at all to his command? then give a peremptory answer, within your own breasts, just now, whether ye will come in or not. Are ye peremptory, that ye will not come, like those sullen desperate sinners, Jer. 2:25, "No, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go?" then what shall we say or do for you? Lord, compel them to come in! Oh! will ye harden yourselves against the Lord, will ye stretch out your hand against God, and strengthen yourselves against the Almighty? For Christ's sake, for your soul's sake, recal that word.

Secondly, But if ye dare not be peremptory that ye will not come, then be peremptory ye will come; for your coming is so commanded, that it will admit of no excuse. Those that were first bidden to this supper, they would not come, but they sent their excuses: but were their excuses sustained? no; God would not take them off their hand, but passeth a peremptory sentence against them, ver. 24. "None of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." We dare admit no excuses in this matter, bring them from whence ye will, whether from the heaven above you, the hell within you, or the world about you; whether from God's greatness, your own vileness, or world's incumbrances. Whatever your case be, ye are commanded of God to come; and his commands are not to be disputed, but obeyed. Wherefore, if ye will not be peremptory that ye will come, we must report to our Lord that ye will not come.

Thirdly, This duty is so peremptorily commanded, that ye must come, and come presently; it admits of no delay. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Now is the accepted time."

We dare not allow you a day, nay nor an hour, to think on it, whether ye will come or not; lest the next day, or the next hour, ye be cast into hell, or a hell be cast into you, for refusing the offer made to you this moment, which is gone before I can name it. Wherefore delay no longer; but this moment open the everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.

Fourthly, This is the duty God has commanded you: John 6:29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Ye can do the Lord no greater pleasure than to come in. Would ye exalt him this day? then come on his call, Hos. 11:7: would ye put the crown on Christ's head? would ye make it a "day of the gladness of his heart"? then come in, Cant. 3:11. It is a great ease for full breasts to be sucked: the breasts of mercy and lore are full; come, starving sinner, do him the pleasure to suck the breasts of his consolations. This is the great comprehensive duty: If ye do this, ye do all; if ye do not this, ye do nothing. What mean ye to be nibbling at the works of God, neglecting this, which is the work. Ye are keeping your windows closed in the daylight, and setting up a candle here and there, within your house; yet there are terrible dark corners within the house still; open your windows, I beseech you, and let in the sun, "the sun of righteousness," and that will be instead of all, and better than all. Would ye, all at once, be wise, righteous, and holy? then come in to Christ, 1 Cor. 1:30. Ye that can do nothing, come to Christ, and so ye shall do all, Philip. 4:13. Would ye honour God? would ye honour his law? then come to Christ. But if ye come not to Christ, do what ye will, ye do nothing. Should ye henceforth keep all the ten commandments, but neglect this, all you do would get a black note of condemnation from heaven written on it. Remember, I pray you, that "he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father," John

5:23. All your other duties are but cyphers without this; and multiply them as ye will, the sum in all will be but nought, if this duty do not stand upon their head.

Lastly, It is a duty commanded, with certification of God's eternal displeasure and wrath against those that will not come: Mark 16:16. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Psal. 2:12. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." And therefore I, as an ambassador for Christ, do, in his name, command and charge you, and every one of you, to come in, under the pain of God's displeasure, under the pain of vengeance, even the Mediator's vengeance; certifying, that if ye will not come, our Lord Jesus Christ will come out of heaven against you, and ye shall be "slain before him," Luke 19:27. To be slain, and die before Christ, who died to save sinners, is a thousand deaths in one; it is a hell upon a hell. But those "that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, even that Lord whose gospel they have not obeyed, 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. Ah! would he be pleased but to confine his presence to heaven, and only allow those that now despise and slight him the favour of being punished from the absence of the Lord; ah! would he but make their destruction come to them at some distance, would he dart the arrows of his wrath into them from afar: nay, but he will have a throne of justice in hell, that they may be punished "from the presence of the Lord," who while in the world fled from his presence on a throne of grace in the gospel. O consider in time what ye do: no fire will burn so violently as that which breaks forth from the altar; no flame of wrath will pierce into a damned soul, like that which is blown up by the breath of a slighted Mediator.

VI. and Lastly, Sinners shall come in. Compel them to come in. Leaving secret things to the Lord, I must tell you, sinners, Christ will not want as many as will fill his house. And struggle as long as ye will, in ye shall come. His house shall be filled. The Mediator has bought the furniture of his house too dear to want any of it, and to leave so much empty room in it. I hope there are some here that are the purchase of blood, which men and devils shall not get kept back from Christ. His Father has engaged by covenant, that his house shall be filled, Psal. 22:30. "They shall come." See Is. 53:10, 11. Nay, is not Christ's hand at the hearts of some just now? Do not some of you find a moving of the iron gate of your hearts, towards an opening of it to Christ? Have you not felt something within working to compel you to come in? Are not some almost in already? Thrust forward; there is no safety till ye be not only almost, but altogether Christians.

Come in to Christ then, ye old people, that are bowing down to meet the grave. Ye have delayed long, delay no more. Though it is very rare, yet it sometimes falls out, that a man is born when he is old, Joel 2:28. Come in, ye of middle age. Are ye out of Christ in your best estate? Surely then your best state is a bad state, a miserable state. Ye are busy providing for your families, but what are ye doing for your souls? Ye are laying up for old age, which, it may be, you will never see: what are ye laying up for eternity? Come in, ye young people; ye are too old to be out of Christ. Do not think religion is only for the hoary head, the wrinkled brows, and hollow eyes; there are more with green heads than with gray hairs in the grave. Therefore come in, and delay not. The older ye grow putting off the work of religion, your hearts will grow the harder to work upon. Come in, ye profane wretches, that are far from righteousness: come, ye hypocritical professors, that are not far from the kingdom of God: come, ye

trembling souls, that are hard at it, and yet dare not come in. O why will ye not come in? I think it must be either because ye will not, or because ye dare not. I fear there are some amongst us that will not come in; they have no mind to quit their lusts, they must follow their old courses, cost what it will; they see no beauty in Christ for which he is to be desired. I shall say little more to such. If ye be resolute for sin, hell, and death, and that no Christ, no heaven, no hell, shall keep you back from the broad way; who can stop you? But be it known unto you, and be it recorded in the black book of your consciences, which shall be opened at the day of judgment, that salvation was in your offer this day, that we endeavoured to compel you to come into Christ, but ye would not; and that therefore your blood shall be on your own heads.

As to you that dare not come in, why dare ye not, after all ye have heard? are ye afraid to come in on Christ's call? dare ye not embrace his invitation? dare ye not obey the great command of God?

OBJECTION. But my sins are innumerable, and most heinous; can there be any room for me? dare such a vile and unworthy wretch as I come in? ANSWER. If your sins were each of them as big as a mountain, were they as numerous as the sand of the sea; yet the blood of Christ, being the blood of the Son of God, is able to purge them away, 1 John 1:7. Lay over all your guilt and unworthiness on him who is altogether lovely: sooner shall the rocks sink under the weight of a bird lighting down upon them, than that blood shall fail you. Remember none are compelled to come in, none are called, but the vile and unworthy, Matth. 9:13. Should your disease keep you from the physician? dare ye not come to the fountain to wash, because ye are unclean? for whom is the fountain opened, but for

unclean sinners? The gospel-supper, though a costly one indeed, was provided for none but those that were unworthy of a drop of water, and far more, unworthy of Christ's blood. Be assured, beloved, the question betwixt Christ and you is not, Whether or not Christ will stoop so low as to wash such a foul soul in his own blood? that is a question determined already, Is. 1:18. Zech. 13:1. But the question that remains to be decided, is, Whether or not, after Christ has stooped so low as to be willing to do that, the vile unworthy creature will give him the affront of stooping in vain? What say ye to that question? Ye have affronted the law of God; will ye affront the Son of God too, refusing his offer? If vileness and unworthiness could have kept sinners out from Christ, never one of Adam's sons had come in. Did not Christ find all the fair ones that are now in glory, lying in their blood? are there any now walking in white, but those who were washed in the blood of the Lamb? turn over the Bible, look into the history of ages that are past, see if ye can find any one that died at his door, who could not be admitted because he was so vile, wretched, and unworthy.

OBJECTION. But there was never a case like mine. ANSWER. There have been very bad cases in Christ's hand, which he has cured; and never did the cure of any case put in his hand misgive. What think ye of Mary Magdalene's case, out of whom he cast seven devils? Mark 16:9. Was not Paul's case, who was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and yet found mercy, a case that may be compared with your's? 1 Tim. 1:13. Sure I am, the workings of sovereign grace upon him were designed to encourage the worst of sinners to come in, ver. 16. Manasseh, though he had the benefit of a religious education by his godly father, was an horrid idolater, a consulter with the devil, 2 Chron. 33:6. a bloody murderer, 2 Kings 21:16; yet he came in, and

was received graciously, 2 Chron. 33:12. 13. And what do ye think of the case of Adam, who at once murdered all his children, ruined the souls of all mankind, and sinned against greater light than ever ye could do? But let us yield it to you this once, that never one's case was like yours; and let us add to it, and never shall one be like it hereafter, it is so very bad: then I think ye have, as the penitent thief on the cross bad, an occasion of glorifying our great Redeemer peculiar to yourself, wherein none of the vessels of glory have shared, or shall share with you. Come in then, thou whose case is a marrowless case, whose case has no parallel; you have the advantage of an occasion to honour Christ with the cure of a case so desperate, that the like of it was never in his hands before. "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old," Is. 43:18; come in to Christ with your new case, "and, behold," says our Lord, "I will do a new thing," ver. 19. His blood has not yet gone so far as it can go. Grudge him not a new jewel in his crown of grace, that will shine brighter than any yet put into it. Come in then, and take the place appointed for the chief of sinners, deepest in the debt of free grace, if it be yet empty. I assure you, they that have come in already think it is not, but that they themselves have filled it up. If it be indeed as thou sayest, then they are mistaken; come you in, and you shall get it.

OBJECTION. But, alas! I cannot believe, I cannot come in to Christ. ANSWER. To clear your way in this matter; see that ye set yourselves to come in to Christ in a promise. Christ is held forth to sinners in the promises of the gospel, Is. 55:1. John 6:37. Rev. 3:20. and chap. 22:17. If ye would come to his seat, come to the promises, he is in the still small voice; ye will find the babe wrapped up in these swaddling-clothes. They that overlook the promise, and try to believe and come

in to Christ, go the wrong way to work: that is like a woman's consenting to marry a man, of whose consent to take her she has no declaration. But the gospel-promise is the contract sent down from heaven, signed already with the Bridegroom's hand; do ye take and read it over, sign it, by your hearts consenting thereto; and then Christ is yours, and ye are his. But close with Christ in the promise as a free promise, as indeed it is, Is. 55:1. Rev. 22:17. Many bar the doors of the gospel-promise with bars of their own making, and then they cry out and complain that they cannot enter in by them. O! say some, if I had so much love, repentance, and brokenness of heart, then I could believe. But I advise you to believe, that ye may get these things, Zech. 12:10; Acts 5:31. Now, though the promise be written in the Bible only, it is as surely Christ's consent to be yours as if ye had a voice from heaven for it, yea and more surely. But you will say, I dare not meddle with the promise. ANSWER. Then meddle not with Christ, but perish; for there is no meddling with him, but in the gospel-promise. But why is a drowning man so fearful, that he dare not catch hold of a cord, even a silver cord, thrown in to hale him to land? Nay, beloved, be not so foolish: though the promise be, in your eyes, like Moses' rod, turned into a serpent; yet take it by the tail, and it will become a rod in your hand. Hos. 11:10. "The children shall tremble from the west;" as the Israelites trembled after Saul, that is, followed him trembling, 1 Sam. 13:7. So then Christ's bride may sign the contract with a trembling hand, love her Lord with a trembling heart and follow him with trembling legs. And O that all of you would say, though it were with a trembling voice, "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." If so, ye would not be in vain compelled to come in.

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

A Sermon preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, at Ettrick, June 7, 1724.

> And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. - 1 John 4:14.

JOHN, the beloved disciple, in his epistles, is still breathing love; love is the string he delights peculiarly to harp upon: so he is either magnifying God's love to us, or pressing our love to God and to one another. And his darling subject, love, is no narrow one, but most comprehensive: it comprehends both the gospel and the law, both faith and works. The love of God to man, is the great doctrine of the gospel, the object of faith; men's love to God and to one another, is the great doctrine of the law of the ten commandments, and the object of holy practice. And there is a near relation between the two: God's love is the fountain, our love the stream; the former the original holy fire, the latter the flame kindled by it. Accordingly, in the text, there is a display of the love of God, for moving us to love one another; the which display of divine love is the substance of the gospel.

Here then we have the gospel, which all the apostles were in one voice to preach unto the world: "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." And therein we may consider,

1. The gospel or glad tidings itself, viz. that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Here is glad news to the world, Christ's

mission. The promise of this mission was made to fallen Adam in paradise: believers under the Old Testament lived and died in the faith of it. But the apostles testified it as a thing performed; the Father sent, or hath sent the Son. The party sent is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ; no other was fit for this mission. The party sending, from whom he had his commission, was the Father, the first person of the glorious Trinity. None of a lower dignity could send one of his dignity. The character in which he was sent, is, "the Son Saviour of the world." So the words are without any supplement; of which there is no need here. So Christ is said to have come a teacher from God, John 3:2, i. e. in the character of a divine teacher. As one is sent ambassador to such a court, that is, constituted by his prince ambassador to that court, and accordingly sent away in that character; so Christ was constituted, nominated, and appointed by his Father, "Saviour of the world," and so sent away into the world in that character. The world is the world of mankind indefinitely, ruined by Adam's sin, John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Therein God's love toward man appeared, Tit. 3:4.

2. The certainty of this gospel or glad tidings. All the apostles witnessed with one mouth this great truth: and they witnessed the same as eye-witnesses, having seen the Saviour, and conversed with him, and read his commission for that effect, and behold heaven's seal again and again set to it in his miracles. And this matter of their witnessing from their eye-sight, was so much stood upon, that the apostle Paul, who was not called to be an apostle till after Christ's ascension, was allowed first to see with his eyes, before he should bear witness, Acts 26:16, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose,

to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

DOCTRINE. It is the great truth and testimony of the gospel, that the Father hath sent his Son Jesus Christ in the character of Saviour of the world.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,

I. Take notice of some things imported in this testimony.

II. Open this character, "Saviour of the world," in which Christ was sent.

III. Apply.

I. I shall take notice of some things imported in this testimony.

1. The world needed a Saviour; otherwise one had not been provided for them by him who does nothing in vain. It was a sick world, east into a desperate illness by eating of the forbidden fruit; and needed a physician to cure the distemper, Matth. 9:12, "Jesus said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It was a cursed world, staked down under wrath by the sentence of the broken law; and needed a Saviour to remove the curse, and bring in the blessing, Acts 3:26, "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you," &c. It was a lost world, lost to God, lost to themselves, lost to all good, lost and perishing under the wrath of God; and it needed one to seek and save them, Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

2. None of inferior dignity to the Son of God could be the Saviour of the world. No man, nor angel, was able to sustain the character of Saviour of a lost world: the work which lay to that office was above the reach of the whole creation, Rev. 5:3, "And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." Here was a trial of the divine love to man; his case was hopeless and helpless from all the creatures: and it issued in that, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," John 3:16.

3. Christ was sent Saviour of the world from heaven's proper motion. The plot to save man, was concerted entirely without him. The world did not meet, and send one to the court of heaven, with a petition for a Saviour, that a Saviour was granted to their earnest entreaties and supplications: but the Father, of preventing free love, sent his Son Saviour of the world. The world's need spoke loud, but they themselves were quite silent; and yet their needs spoke no louder than those of the fallen angels: and sovereign free grace heard the voice of man's need, while it stopt its ears to the voice of the needs of fallen angels, Tit. 3:4, "But the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared."

4. Christ is fully furnished for the saving of a lost world. His being sent in that character, speaks his ability to answer it, Heb. 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." There is no case to be found in the world, but what there is a remedy to be found in Christ for. Whosoever in the world shall die, they shall not die because there was no help for their case in the Saviour, but because they did not employ him, or put their case in his

hand. The Saviour of the world is certainly able to save the world; since he was sent of God in that character.

5. Lastly, The salvation of lost sinners of the world of mankind is very acceptable to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, as well as to himself, otherwise he had not sent his Son Saviour of the world, 1 Tim. 2:3, 4. "For this is good and acceptable in the sigh of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved." Hence it is called "the pleasure of the Lord," Is. 53:10. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." So he is said to make the marriage for his Son, and to send forth to bid to that marriage, Matth. 22. Whence it is evident, that there is no impediment to the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, on Heaven's part; it is pleasing to the Father, to his Son, and to his Spirit.

II. I shall open this character, Saviour of the world, in which Christ was sent; and for that end inquire into two things. 1. In what sense Christ is Saviour of the world. 2. What is the business committed to him as such.

First, In what sense Christ is Saviour of the world. A saviour is a name of honour, and a name of business. It is an honourable thing to save and help the miserable; to be destined, appointed, and called to that employment: but the honourable post has business annexed to it; it will not do without activity, which success is expected to attend, as in the case of a teacher, physician, and the like. Now, one may be a saviour, even as a teacher or physician, of a society, two ways. (1.) In respect of office, as being called to and invested with the office of saving, teaching, or curing that society. And thus one is saviour, teacher, or physician of that society, before ever he save, teach, or

cure any of them. In this respect one may be called an official saviour, teacher, or physician. (2.) In respect of the event and success, as actually and eventually saving, teaching, and healing. As the former ariseth from an appointment put upon such a one; this ariseth from the work he manageth in virtue of that appointment. In this respect one may be called an actual and eventual saviour. Thus it is said, Neh. 9:27. "And, according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies. This premised, we say,

1. Our Lord Jesus is the actual and eventual Saviour of the elect only, in whose room and stead only he died upon the cross, according to the eternal compact passed between him and the Father, in the covenant of grace, otherwise called the covenant of redemption; for these are not two, but one and the same covenant. Thus the apostle calls him "the Saviour of the body," Eph. 5:23. that is, of the elect, who make up the body whereof he was appointed the head from eternity, and in whose name he contracted with the Father in the eternal covenant. And he is their Saviour eventually, as actually saving them, Matth. 1:21. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." None but these will ever truly employ him as a Saviour, or put their case in his hand: and there are none of them but will certainly employ him sooner or later, Acts 13:48. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." John 6:37. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the official Saviour, not of the elect only, but of the world of mankind indefinitely; so our text calls him

"Saviour of the world." Agreeably to which, God in Christ is called "the Saviour of all men," but with a speciality, "the Saviour of them that believe," 1 Tim. 4:10. The matter lies here: like as a prince, out of regard to his subjects' welfare, gives a commission to a qualified person to be physician to such a society, a regiment, or the like; and the prince's commission constitutes him physician of that society; so that though many of them should never employ him, but call other physicians, yet still there is a relation betwixt him and them; he is their physician by office; any of them all may come to him if they will, and be healed: So God, looking on the ruined world of mankind, has constituted and appointed Jesus Christ his Son Saviour of the world: he has Heaven's patent for this office; and wheresoever the gospel comes, this his patent is intimated. Hereby a relation is constituted betwixt him and the world of mankind; he is their Saviour, and they the objects of his administration: so that any of them all may come to him, without money or price, and be saved by him as their own Saviour appointed them by the Father.

That Christ is thus the Saviour of the world, appears, if ye consider,

1st, Scripture testimony, which is plain. Our text expressly calls him so: and so do the believing Samaritans profess their faith in him, John 4:42. "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." You have the appointment of Heaven very plain thereanent, John 3:16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life;" even as the brazen serpent lifted up on the pole in the wilderness was the ordinance of God for healing to the stung persons of the whole camp of Israel. Hence Christ's salvation is called the common salvation,

Jude ver. 3; a salvation which any of mankind sinners may lay hold on. So the Saviour's birth is said to be "glad tidings for all people," Luke 2:10, 11; which it could not have been, if he had not been a Saviour for all people. Wherefore he himself testifies, that he came to save the world, John 3:17. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Chap. 12:47. "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." This was his office; to save sinners indefinitely; not this or that sort of sinners, but sinners of mankind indefinitely, without exception, 1 Tim. 1:15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" the lost, Luke 19:10. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" 2 Cor. 5:19. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." To the same purpose he declares himself "the light of the world," namely, by office, John 8:12. that whosoever will employ him may have the light of life.

2dly, If it were not so, he could not warrantably be offered with his salvation to the world indefinitely, but to the elect only; more than he can be offered lawfully to fallen angels, who are not within his commission as a Saviour. For the ministerial offer can never lawfully carry the matter beyond the bounds of Christ's commission from his Father. But Christ and his salvation may be warrantably offered to the whole world of mankind-sinners, with assurance that whoever of them will employ him to save them, he shall be saved: Mark 16:15, 16. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Moreover, if it were not so, the unbelief of hearers of the gospel, not elected, their not coming to Christ for

salvation, could not be their sin: for it can never be one's sin not to do a thing he has no warrant for; not to employ one to save him, whom God never appointed to be his Saviour. So it is not the sin of fallen angels, that they believe not in Christ for salvation, because they are not within the Saviour's commission; nor of those who never heard of Christ, because his commission was never intimated to them. But not believing in Christ the Saviour, is the sin that ruins the hearers of the gospel who do at all perish, John 3:19. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Finally, if it were not so, the elect themselves could never believe in Christ, till in the first place their election were revealed to them; which is contrary to the stated method of grace: for they can never believe on Christ for their salvation, till they see him to be a Saviour for them.

There are two things further to be remarked on this head.

1. The ground upon which Christ might be constituted Saviour of the world by office. And that was the sufficiency of the merit of his death and sufferings: for though Christ died only in the room and stead of his elect, on the cross sustaining their persons only, according to that John 10:15. "I lay down my life for the sheep;" yet the price paid for them being of infinite worth, was sufficient in itself to save the whole world. The bread provided for them, viz. a crucified Christ, was sufficient to give life to and feed, not them only, but the whole world of mankind: and therefore he might be appointed Saviour of the world, John 6:33, 51. "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, be shall

live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

2. The reason why he actually was constituted Saviour of the world. Among several reasons that might be given for this, I shall only observe here this one, namely, that it was put upon him as a piece of honour, the reward of his great service, in laying down his life for and instead of those who were the objects of his Father's electing love, Is. 49:6, 8. "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." The Father for that cause invested him with "all power in heaven and earth," Matt. 28:18. John 5:21, 22. "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." And it was a reward suitable to his work.

Secondly, What is the business committed to him as Saviour of the world. Not to descend into particulars here, we may take it up in these two.

1. It is to save sinners from their sin, Matt. 1:21. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." Satan ruined the world by bringing sin upon them: thereby they were bound with the cords of guilt, the image of God in them was defaced, they were polluted and made loathsome, and shut up in the hands of

a strange lord. God has appointed Christ Saviour of the world, that sinners may come to him, and be delivered from their sins, 1 John 3:8. "He that committeth sin, is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." It was an inveterate disease, the cure of which was quite beyond the reach of any mere creature, as far as the raising of the dead is: so he was appointed Saviour in the case, Psal. 89:19. "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

2. It is to save sinners from misery, to free them from destruction, Hos. 13:9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." They are by sin made objects of wrath, laid under the curse of the broken law, liable to revenging wrath for time and for eternity: he is appointed to save them from all this, upon their coming to him, and employing him for that purpose, Is. 32:2. "And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Sin let in a deluge of miseries on the world, which flow about the sinner continually in greater or lesser measure: he is a Saviour to dry it up to them, 1 Cor. 1:30. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

USE. I. Of information.

1. Behold here, admire, and believe the great love of God to a lost world, in providing a Saviour, and such a Saviour, for them, even his own Son. The Scripture speaks of this in a very high strain, John 3:16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,"

&c. There was a man-love in God, Tit. 3:4. "But the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared;" a love of the kind, mankind. It has appeared in two eminent instances. (1.) In securing, by an irreversable decree, the salvation of some of them. (2.) In providing a Saviour for the whole of the kind, constituting his own Son Saviour to the lost family of Adam indefinitely. Believe it with application to yourselves. If upon this a secret murmur begins to go through your heart, But it was not for me; crush it in the bud, for it is a bud of hell. If you are not one of the devil-kind, but of sinful mankind, it was for you. The Father gave Christ a Saviour for you, that if you would believe on him, you should not perish: he sent his Son from heaven with full instructions and ample powers to save you, if you will believe. And is not this love? Believe it, and it will be the way to let you in to a sight of more love.

2. Behold here a broad and firm foundation of faith for all and every one of you; that you may come to Christ, whatever your case is, and claim his righteousness and his whole salvation for yourselves; that you may betake yourselves to him as the refuge appointed for you by the Father, from sin and wrath, with as much freedom as a stung Israelite might have looked to the brazen serpent; that you may wholly trust on him, that he will save you from sin and wrath. For he was sent of the Father Saviour of the world; and if by the Father's appointment he is Saviour of the world, he is by office your Saviour, and my Saviour, since we are members of that world of mankind: so that we may by faith claim his saving us from sin and wrath; as a scholar bred in a place may claim teaching of him who is appointed master of a free school in that place; as those of a congregation may claim preaching of their own minister; and as the wounded in battle may claim healing of their own physician, who has a commission to

be physician to their regiment. "For we testify, that the Father sent the Son Saviour of the world."

3. Sinners living in their sins, pining away, and about to perish eternally in them, are without excuse. For "we testify, that the Father has sent the Son Saviour of the world:" John 15:22. "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." Sinners are destroyed with their living and raging lusts, they are run down with them as with running sores, their souls are bleeding to death with them as with mortal wounds: in this case they hold on over the belly of their convictions; and they say, they cannot help it. One cannot help his swearing; another his sensuality; another his pride, passion, covetousness, gross ignorance, his old corrupt unrenewed heart. But the truth is, ye will not have it helped, John 5:40. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." If ye cannot help it, ye have a Saviour who can help it, and would certainly help it if ye would employ him. Know it of a truth, if any of you shall perish, and if ye go on in your sins ye shall perish, ye shall not perish for want of a Saviour. At the tribunal of God, the devils may say, we could not be saved from our sins; for there was no Saviour appointed for us: the pagans may say, we could not be saved; for though we were within the compass of the Saviour's commission, yet we never heard of it, it was never intimated to us. But what will ye have to say, that ye are not saved from your sins; when your Saviour shall sit judge upon you, and condemn you, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, for that ye would have none of him, nor his salvation; ye would not be saved from your sins, would not put your case in his hand; though he had his Father's commission to be Saviour of the world, and your Saviour, and it was read to you, ye would not receive

him as your Saviour, but would rather die in your sins than employ him?

4. Believers themselves may be ashamed and confounded, for that iniquity prevails so against them. Alas! it is a sad sign the Saviour is little employed among us. Little living by faith, makes little holiness of life. O look to that sin that so easily besets you, that has so often wrecked your soul's case: believe you have a Saviour for it, and employ him.

USE II. For trial.

Try whether the Saviour of the world by office is your actual Saviour; whether or not he has saved you. Think not that Christ puts off his saving of sinners till they come to heaven: true, they are not completely saved till they be there; but if your salvation by Christ is not begun here, you shall never get there: Tit. 3:5. 6. 7. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." And ye have no right before the Lord to his table, if he has not been a Saviour to you actually and eventually, in having saved you from sin and wrath initially, though not completely: for if it is not so, it is an evidence you have not received him as your Saviour; for no sooner is he employed by a sinner but he begins to save that sinner.

Mark 1. If Christ has really begun to save you, ye will have the saved man's thoughts of sin, and of the wrath of God. If a drowning man were pulled alive out of a water, or a filthy stinking puddle; and

standing at the side of it, looking to it after that gliff; what would be his thoughts of that water, that puddle, where he was once over head and ears, and almost gone? Such will be your thoughts of sin, and of the wrath of God. Ye will have awful and reverend thoughts of the wrath of God above all awful things: Heb. 12:28. 29. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." For our God is a consuming fire." Matth. 10:28. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Of all terrors it will be to you the most terrible. Those in the state of wrath, they are either so as they have lost their senses in it; they know not where they are, they are dreaming of some pleasant place; and so they go on peacefully in their sins, undisturbed with thoughts of wrath: or else they have some terrible apprehensions of it; but there is something more terrible; and therefore they will rather sin than suffer the hardships attending duty, yea attending mortification: or else their heart is fire-hot with the terror of the wrath of God, and in the meantime, at least, key-cold of love and child-like affection to the God whose wrath it is. But the saved soul looks on it as of all things the most awful, but in the meantime with a child-like reverence of and affection to that God whose wrath it is.

Mark 2. Ye will have a transcendent esteem of and love to your Saviour, 1 Pet. 2:7. "Unto you which believe he is precious." His conscience-purifying blood, his soul-sanctifying Spirit, will be more valuable to you than a thousand worlds. Ye will desire them above all things, pant and long after them, and aye more and more of them: and in comparison of them, all the world will be but trifles in your eyes, which ye would be content to part with to gain them: Matth.

13:46. "The merchantman when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Luke 14:26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Phil. 3:8, 9. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Mark 3. Lastly, Ye will be groaning under the remains of the disease of sin ye are saved from; your conscience will witness ye would fain be wholly rid of it, Rom. 7:24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Your souls will be longing for the complete salvation; that the enemies you see to-day, ye may see no more for ever; that ye may get a complete victory over all your corruptions: Rom. 8:23. "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

USE Last.

Receive the Lord Jesus, then, O sinners, in that character wherein his Father sent him, as the Saviour of the world, and your Saviour. Ye are lost in your sins, and lost under the wrath of God, and the curse of the law; come to him for his whole salvation. Employ him, put your case in his hand as your Saviour by the Father's appointment; and slight him no more.

Motive 1. Consider you need a Saviour. Your disease of sin will ruin you, if ye be not saved from it. The guilt of it will stake you down under wrath, and the wrath of God will sink you into hell. And while sin keeps its dominion over you, be sure the guilt is not removed: Matth. 9:12. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Gen. 2:17. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

Motive 2. There is no Saviour besides Christ, Acts 4:12. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." All others are physicians of no value. All your own endeavours will not save you, nor any thing any creature can do for you.

Motive 3. He is able to save you, Heb. 7:25. "He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him." Whatever be your case, there is infinite merit in his blood to take away the deepest guilt, 1 John 1:7. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There is an infinite efficacy of his Spirit to sanctify the most unholy, 1 Cor. 6:11. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." If ye doubt it, ye dishonour Christ, and his Father who sent him, Psal. 89:19. "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

Motive 4. He is willing to save you, Rev. 22:17. "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." The only thing wanting is your willingness to be saved, Jer. 13:27. "Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?" There is no fear of being rejected if ye come, John 6:37. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." He has taken on him the office of Saviour of the world, and he cannot refuse the business of it.

Motive 5. Lastly, Ye must either receive him as your Saviour from sin and wrath, according to his commission from heaven; or ye will be, and be held refusers of him for your Saviour, after his Father has nominated and commissioned him for that effect. Consider how ye will answer that before the judgment-seat.

Question. How shall I receive him, and employ him? Answer. By faith, by believing on him. Being convinced of your sin and cursed state, and desiring to be saved from both, believe Christ is your Saviour by his Father's appointment; and so wholly trust on him as a crucified Saviour, for his whole salvation, on the ground of God's faithfulness in his word.

THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DENIAL

A Sermon preached, on a sacramental occasion, at Galashiels.

> And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. - LUKE 9:23.

THEY that are rash and indeliberate in their setting away after Christ among his followers, will readily be found to break away from him

again, and desert him, ere they come to the end of the course. Therefore our Lord Jesus fairly intimates here how he is to be followed of all that would come to the end of the course with him; that men may count the cost ere they begin to build; and lay their account with what they are to expect in his company, in the way to the kingdom. And in the words there is,

1. The case which this intimation refers to, "If any man will come after me." It is not the case of coming to Christ, as if none might come to him, or believe on him, till once they have denied themselves, and taken up their cross daily: for as none can come after Christ in the sense of the text, till once they have come to him; so none shall ever be able to reach these things, till once they have believed on him. But it is the case of coming after Christ; which is more than following him; and consists of two parts. (1.) Following him in the way to the kingdom, upon which one is set by believing. This part of it our Lord points at, Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;" as it is plainly imported in the expression. (2.) Coming in at his back into the kingdom; as the term to which Christ with his followers was moving: where he being set down, they also come in after him, and in his right. And this part of it is expressed, ver. 24, "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

2. What is necessary to that case, to one's following Christ in the way to, and coming in at his back into the kingdom of heaven. Two things are necessary thereto. (1.) Self-denial; "Let him deny himself," otherwise he will not follow me in the way to the kingdom: for I deny

myself, Rom. 15:3, "For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." John 5:30, "I can of mine own self do nothing—I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." The original word is very forcible, "Let him deny away himself," like those that desert a party, to have no more to do with them, and content that all the world know it. They must deny themselves as the Jews denied Christ, Acts 3:14, "But ye denied the holy One, and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." And how that was ye see, John 19:15, "But they [the Jews] cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him—we have no king but Cæsar." Away with self, crucify it: we have no king but Christ. They must deny themselves, as they must deny ungodliness, Tit. 2:12, denying its cravings, starving it, till it dwindle away into nothing. (2.) Taking up the cross daily, and following him with it on our back, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily;" otherwise he will not come in at my back to the crown; for so I go to it with the cross on my back, and that daily. The cross is any trouble or adversity which the Lord lays upon his followers.

Now, these things are necessary in this case, absolutely necessary; otherwise we do not follow Christ in the way to the kingdom, but self in the way to destruction: and so we cannot come in at his back to the kingdom, and there is no other way to get into it. They are universally necessary: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Be who they will, ever so delicate or dainty; they must lay their fair necks under this yoke, or perish.

3. The parties to whom this intimation is made: "He said to them all." Peter gave the occasion for this, by his rashness in advising or wishing Christ might spare himself as to the cross: for which he got a particular rebuke. But Mark tells us, that thereupon he called together the people, and his disciples also, chap. 8:34. And here he said to them all, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The matter nearly concerning them all, as well as Peter, the intimation was made to all accordingly.

DOCTRINE. Whosoever will follow Christ in the way to the crown, and come in at his back to the kingdom of heaven, must of necessity deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Christ with it on his back.

Three things fall here to be considered. I. One's coming after Christ, which is the case put; II. One's denying himself; and, III. One's taking up his cross, and following Christ; which are the two things necessary in that case.

I. First, We are to consider the coming after Christ, which is the thing some do aim at, and all should. For clearing of that, consider,

1. Christ in the world was in the way to his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven: Luke 19:12. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom." As he was God everywhere present, he was there even when on earth, John 3:13. "the Son of man which is in heaven:" but as he was man, he was but in his way to it. That was the joy set before him, which he had in view all along while he travelled through our wilderness-world.

2. Accordingly he was in the world, not as a native thereof, but as a stranger travelling through it, with his face always away-ward from it, home to his Father's house. Therefore, though he was sometime courted to set up for himself in it, he would not hearken to the solicitations to stay, and take his kingdom here. The Jews would have forced their kingdom on him, John 6:15; but he fled from it, departing into a mountain, where he was nearer heaven, out of the din of the world. Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world, Matth. 4:8, 9. but he rejected his proposal with indignation.

3. Our Lord Jesus made his way to his kingdom through many bitter storms blowing on his face in the world, and is now entered into it: Heb. 12:2—"who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." His life here was a life of sorrows; but now he has reached the fulness of joy. Death wrought on him all along to the grave; now it has no more dominion over him.

4. There is no coming into that kingdom, for a sinner, but at his back, in fellowship with him: John 14:6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." If we pretend to come into it otherwise, justice will cast the door on our face, and tumble us down into the pit. He is the captain of our salvation, that is on the head of the whole company of the saved: he is the door of the sheep, and there is no entering but through him. So, "If any man will come after me," is in effect, If any man will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

5. Lastly, There is no coming in at his back into the kingdom, without following him in the way: Psal. 125:5. "As for such as turn aside unto

their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." John 15:6. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." He is the author as well as the finisher of our faith; the chief guide in the way, as well as the giver of the prize at the end of the race. Certainly the merit of Christ is effectual on none unto salvation but those whom it conforms to his example. If we have any saving part in his death, we will be conformed to him in his life. Wherefore, since Christ went to his kingdom, denying himself, and taking up his cross, we must lay our account to go and do likewise, if we mind to be there.

II. Secondly, Let us then consider briefly, one's denying himself to come after Christ. And,

1. It implies two things. It implies,

1st, That Christ and self are contraries, leading contrary ways: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Self is Christ's great rival in the world; and no man can serve the two masters: he must either deny himself, and go after Christ; or he will deny Christ, and go after self. There is no compromising the matter betwixt the two: for Christ is the leader of God's upsetting; self of the devil's, when man fell off from God. Hence it implies,

2dly, That the self to be denied is our corrupt self, the old man, the unrenewed part; for that only is contrary to Christ. And, indeed it is not possible there can be any true self-denial but in sound believers, regenerate persons; in whom there is a renewed part, which is that which denies, and an unrenewed, which is that which is denied.

2. Wherein it consists. It consists in a holy refusal to please ourselves, that we may please God in Christ: for it is a denying of ourselves in competition: and God is the competitor, whom the self-denying Christian prefers to himself, after Christ's example, Rom. 15:3. "For even Christ pleased not himself," &c. And it is God in Christ for whom a sinner denies himself, as saith the text: for an absolute God out of Christ being a consuming fire, with which we can have no comfortable communion, the sight of him frights away the sinner, and causeth self to gather together all its strength in its own defence against him; whereas the view of God in Christ draws the sinner to lie down at his feet in hope. Hence, in self-denial there is,

1st, Faith and hope, as the necessary springs thereof: Phil. 1:29. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ,—to believe on him." Rom. 12:12. "Rejoicing in hope." Cut off these, and you cut off self-denial: for the heart of man will never quit hugging one's dear self, till it get a God to rest in; nor let go its gripes of what it has, till it have hope of better.

2dly, A practical setting up of God as our chief end; and a bringing down ourselves to lie at his feet: Psal. 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." This is true conversion, whereby a man is brought back to his primitive situation, out of which he was turned by sin, setting self on the throne as his chief end, and laying the honour of God at its feet. The which unnatural situation all natural men are in; their whole life being one uninterrupted course of practical blasphemy, making themselves their chief end, and God the means.

3dly, An unlimited resignation of ourselves unto God in Christ: 2 Cor. 8:5.—"first gave their ownselves to the Lord." Faith taking hold of God as our God, according to the measure of faith, the whole man is swallowed up in him; God is all, and we become nothing in our own eyes: the whole soul, the whole man, the whole lot, is resigned to him.

4thly, A refusing to please ourselves in any thing in competition with God; but denying the cravings of self, as they are contrary to what God craves of us: Tit. 2:12.—"denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts." And herein lies the exercise of self-denial, which there will always be occasion for while we are here. We may take it up in two generals.

1. Denying our self-wit, which is ready to crave of us a quite other belief and judgment than God demands of us by his word and works: Prov. 3:5. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." If we will come after Christ, we must in this case shut our own eyes, or refuse to believe our own eyes. So did Abraham, Rom. 4:17, 18.—"who against hope believed in hope," &c. There are two cases particularly wherein this self-wit is to be denied.

(1.) In the case of truths revealed in the word, be they never so mysterious: 2 Cor. 10:5. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The want of this is causing many unhumbled men to make shipwreck of the faith at this day, to sap the foundations of Christianity in gratification of their self-wit. But the grace of God will make the greatest wits and profoundest scholars receive revealed truths like a child, if ever it

touch their hearts: Luke 18:17. "Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receieve the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

(2.) In the case of wants, crooks, and hardships that we find in our lot. God in his providence says, that trial, cross, &c. is best for you: self-wit says, it is very bad; and thinks it sees well how that work of God might be mended, and made far better. And thus many walk in a course of contradiction to the judgment of God declared in his works of Providence. Holding fast by self-wit, they will not quit their opinion of the matter to him. That is walking after self-wit.

2. Denying our self-will, which is ready to thwart with the will of God. Therefore we are taught to pray, (Matth. 6:10.) "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." If we come after Christ, we must take God's will for our will, saying with him, (Matth. 26:39.)—"Not as I will but as thou wilt." There are two cases wherein we are particularly to deny our self-will.

(1.) In the case of duty, that we may comply with the will of God's command, however cross it may lie to our inclination: Rom. 7:22, 23, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." God's will must be a sufficient reason for our practice, and we must put the knife to the throat of all our contrary inclinations, Tit. 2:12, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts."

(2.) In the case of our lot, that we may comply with the will of God's providence, Acts 21:14, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." He that made us must be allowed to manage our lot and condition; we

calmly and contentedly submitting our will to his, readily embracing what he carves for us. There is reason for it, Job 34:33, "Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose."

And this denying our self-wit and self-will must extend to three kinds of things.

1. To our civil comforts; such as, our outward peace, worldly substance, liberty, and credit, and the like: all which must be laid at the Lord's feet, to do with them as he will, take them from us, or continue them with us, if so be we will come after Christ: Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. To our natural enjoyments, as health, ease, relations, even life; all which also must be laid at the Lord's feet, to be disposed of as he will, not as we will, Luke 14:26, forecited.

3. To things of religion; not trusting in our own management for them, but depending wholly on the Lord, Psal. 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain;" nor making ourselves the chief end of them, but the honour of God, even as in all things else, 1 Cor. 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

And here two things are of special consideration. One is, that when we refuse to gratify our will, on some carnal motive that may feed some spiritual lust, as is the case in Popish austerities, that is not the

Christian self-denial; but a gratifying of self in one thing by denying it another: and that is a bias the heart is ready to slip aside to. Another is, that there is a denying of ourselves even in spiritual things; for there is nothing wherein self may not mix while we are here. This was called for at Mary's hand, John 20:17, "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," &c. It was exercised by Paul, Phil. 1:23, 24, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Spiritual benefits are ever to be desired: but even in those things there must be an awful regard to the will of God. Say, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

USE 1. Is it so that there is no coming after Christ but in the way of men's denying themselves? then religion is no easy business, and there are few like to see heaven. It is not a way wherein men can be allowed that latitude and self-indulgence which most men cannot want. And they do but deceive themselves, who pretend to faith, or to have come to Christ, that are not exercised to deny themselves.

2. See and consider, communicants, what ye are to lay your account with in coming after Christ, which, in communicating at his table, ye say ye are resolved on. Lay your account with the struggle against self; giving up with self-wit, and self-will: and lay your account with your cross.

3. See a weighty errand ye have at the Lord's table, with respect to denying yourselves, and taking up your cross. Ay, say ye, we are to bind ourselves solemnly to these duties. I will not deny but ye are. But I doubt ye know your errand well anent these things, if that be

the main part of it: that should be, how to get strength for these duties, and to get a sealed possession of Christ and the promises for that effect. And believing is the way to attain that.

(1.) The more firmly ye believe on Christ, and apprehend God as your God in him, the more will ye be in case to deny yourselves, a and take up your cross.

(2.) It is by believing we at first become new creatures, 2 Cor. 5:17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Eph. 2:10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And it is by believing that the new man grows. And so it is by it that there is a principle of self-denial, and by it one is strengthened to the exercise thereof.

(3.) Lastly, In this duty deny yourselves, and depend on the Lord.

III. Thirdly, We come now to consider one's taking up his cross, and that daily, and following Christ. Without this none can come after Christ to the kingdom of heaven, and in the way thereto. They who mind to come after him to mount Zion, must go as Simon the Cyrenian went after him to Calvary, Luke 23:26. bearing his cross.

We offer the import of this clause in these following things.

1. God will lay down the cross to every one that minds for heaven, that they shall have nothing ado but to take it up, John 16:33. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." They shall not need to make crosses to themselves, nor to go out of their way to seek a cross: God will lay it down at every one's door. He had one Son without sin, but no son

without the cross, Heb. 12:8. "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." And God lays down the cross to be taken up by us; when it is brought to that, we must either suffer or sin, Heb. 10:35. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

2. He will lay it down daily to the followers of Christ, that they may have a daily exercise in taking it up, and bearing the cross of the day, Matt. 6:34. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." A change of crosses may be got, but there will be no end of them as long as we are here. Our wilderness-station may be changed indeed; but it will be but for another wilderness-station, till once we are over Jordan: Psal. 73:14. "For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

3. We must not be choosers of crosses. Every one must take up his own, allotted to him by sovereign wisdom, that is the best judge what cross fits us best. We are ready to think we could bear another cross better than that which is laid before us: but that is but a deceit of the heart, that is aye for shifting the present cross; and speaks a want of self-denial. But to strike the bottom out of this humour of picking and choosing crosses, know, that if God mind to take a particular trial of you for heaven and eternal life, and there be any one thing wherein, of all other things, ye are least able to be touched, God will choose your cross for you in that very thing: ye will be sure to be touched in the sore heel, and get rubs where ye are least able to abide them. And it is highly reasonable the trial should be there, when the competition is betwixt God and self. Mark 10:21. "One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor;

and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross, and follow me."

4. We must not trample on the cross, and step over it, but take it up: Heb. 12:5. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." The sullen manliness and Roman courage wherewith some bear their crosses is the produce of self-will, not of self-denial: and speaks contempt of God, not submission to him. When heaven is our party, it becomes us to stoop, and not to make our faces like flint, lest God be provoked to dash us in pieces.

5. Yet neither must we faint at the sight of the cross; for at that rate we will not be able to take it up: Heb. 12:5. "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." It is unbelief which causes that fainting, whispering into the soul at the appearance of the cross, Now, ye will never be able to bear that: and when that is received, the hands hang down, and the knees become feeble: and then the soul is next door to going out of God's way for relief, Heb. 12:12, 13. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees: and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed." But know ye it for a truth, there is no cross whatsoever so heavy but we may get it borne acceptably: there is an allowance of proportionable strength made for it, to be fetched in by faith, 2 Cor. 12:9. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Phil. 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me."

6. As we must not go off the road of duty to shift the cross, so we must not stand still till it be rolled out of our way, but take it up, and go forward. It is easy going off the way, but not easy coming on again. There are quagmires of sin and sorrow on every side of the cross, where the shifters of it may come to stick, 1 Tim. 6:9, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." And to follow Christ in the summer of prosperity, and desert him in the winter of adversity, speaks self-love, not the love of Christ to be predominant in us; and will shew us to be time-servers, not servants of Christ: Job 17:9, "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

7. We must take up no more for our cross than what God lays down; not what Satan and our own corruptions lay to it: it will be our wisdom to shovel that off in the first place, and we will take up the cross the easier. God lays down barrenness to Rachel for her cross, Satan and her own corrupt heart lay a killing weight upon it, Gen. 30:1, "And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die." And then she is like to die in taking it up. O how often do men lay overweights on their cross, and then complain they are not able to heave it! Indeed, we are for the most part in the mist about our crosses, and then molehills appear mountains: but when the cross is cleared of what is laid to it, the naked cross turns little bulk; and he has it half up, that has it so cleared: 2 Cor. 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

8. But however heavy the cross be, we are not to refuse it. Our very life, which of all worldly things is dearest to us, must be laid at the Lord's feet, and we ready to part with it for Christ. The cross was an instrument of death, and that a most shameful and painful one: and the necessity of taking it up, says, that every true follower of Christ must be content to be a martyr; and will be so, either in action or affection. Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not—his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

9. We must yoke with the cross willingly and submissively: God can lay it on us, whether we will or not; but he will have us to stoop, and take it up on us: James 1:2. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." When, by the providence of God, we fall into them, we must not be like the untamed bullock, on whose neck the yoke must be forced; but like the camel that bows down on his knees till the burden is laid on him, Lam. 3:29, 30, "He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, he is filled full with reproach." So did Eli, 1 Sam. 3:18, "He said, It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." This is done by a Christian submission of our will to the will of God in the matter.

10. We must bear it, going evenly under it, till the Lord take it down. It is what belongs to the Lord to take it off; it is our part to take it up. There must be an exercise of patience in our coming after Christ, Luke 21:19, "In your patience possess ye your souls." And patience must have her perfect work, enduring to the end, James 1:4.

11. Lastly, We must follow Christ with the cross on our back. The example of Christ's holy life is the compass by which we must steer

our course, if ever we get to the shore of Immanuel's land, 1 John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." And the hardships of the way through the cross will not excuse our going out of the way. However we be put to suffering, we must aye be doing in imitation of Christ.

USE. O Christians, communicants, and whosoever of you mind for the kingdom of heaven, lay your account with the cross; take it up meekly, and bear it after Christ. Think it not strange concerning the flery trial. The cross is a kindly name to a Christian: be reconciled to it. For that end consider,

1. The necessity of it, in virtue of the divine appointment: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." They that cast out with the cross, do in effect cast out with heaven. Though the way of the cross is a rough way, yet it is the highway, the only way to it. The fiery trial by the cross is that whereby God tries what metal is fit to be made a vessel of glory, and what not: and it is a dreadful thing to be casten here as base metal, Jer. 6:29, 30, "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

2. Christ bore the cross before you, for your sake; and shall it be such a frightful thing for you to bear it after him, for his sake? If ye would partake of his crown, will ye refuse your part of his cross? Rom. 8:17, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." It is highly reasonable Christ's followers be like him in the way to the kingdom, as well as glorified with him in it. If the head

bore a cross, it were unbecoming the members to go without one. When he was a man of sorrows, can his followers expect to be men of joys here? Will the world, that was a step-dame to him, be a natural mother to us?

3. Consider the relation your crosses and troubles have to the cross of Christ, O believers.

(1.) They are the cross set up again to Christ, upon which his members are now suffering: Col. 1:24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church." And the cross, piercing his members, cannot miss to touch the head, Is. 63:9. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them, all the days of old." Zech. 2:8. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." This view of the cross, in which Christ himself appears on it with us, may render it more lovely.

(2.) They are Christ's cross to you, as he left it. Christ in person took up the cross, and there was a curse in it when he took it up: he takes off the curse, and leaves it; and bids you take it up next. O believer, the tree is left thee, but the curse is away; the nails are left, but the venom they were dipt in is away. Though bulls should push you, the horns wherewith they pushed him are cut off. Though crosses of all sorts should meet together in your case, the soul and life which the flery law breathed into them is gone.

(3.) They grow out of the cross of Christ. Ye will, may be, not expect the Christian's bitter troubles among the fruits of Christ's cross: but mistake it not: they must either be blessings or curses. Curses they are not, Gal. 3:13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" therefore they are blessings: and if blessings, from whence else can they drop? Eph. 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." It was by the blood of his cross he procured the covenant-blessings to his people, and the cross among the rest, Psal. 89:30–33. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." We might welcome the cross in this view.

4. The cross is for the destruction of the old man, not of the new man. It is a cross to our corruptions that is much needed: but no real grace ever yet died by the cross. As the candle shines brightest in the night, and the fire burns keenest in a keen frost; so grace has ordinarily thriven best under the cross. It is indeed a cross to our corrupt will, that never goes right while it gets head: it is a cross to particular lusts, that should be mortified, Gal. 5:24. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts:" and both these need to be crossed.

5. It has been the lot of the saints in all ages. And there is no shifting of the cross, if we will go out by the footsteps of the flock. Yea, and ordinarily they that have been most dear to God have drunk deepest of the bitter cup; the most eminent for piety and usefulness, as Job;

for piety and parts, as Heman and Paul; for divine manifestations made to them, as Jacob and David.

6. Lastly, Public persecution for the cause of Christ is what most now alive never saw, far less felt; though our fathers had a long and dark night of it. But the way to heaven is still the same; and therefore no wonder God is making up that want another way in the case of his people; and what trial formerly he took of them, by persecutors, prisons, and gibbets, he is taking the same upon the matter of them now, by other means.

I will conclude by giving you some helps to bear the cross.

Help 1. Look on yourselves as strangers on earth; and keep your eye on Christ, as he went through the world; and upon heaven, as your home, where only ye expect your rest.

2. Quit not faith's gripe of the promise of through-bearing: Is. 43:2. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Believe firmly, that Christ lays on no cross without allowance of ability for acceptable bearing it; plead and look for it.

3. Lastly, Set the cross in the light of the word, and look in through it, till ye see the pleasure in it that Paul assures us from his experience to be within it, 2 Cor. 12:10. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Why, (1.) There is a pleasure in a man's seeing himself standing a candidate for glory,

on his trials for heaven. (2.) In seeing a gracious God cross our corrupt inclinations; in seeing the thieves on the cross, and the hand of God darting one arrow after another into their heart. (3.) In seeing ourselves pass the mountains, where we see the marks of Christ's own footsteps before us. Such a paradise there is within the thorn hedge of the cross.

THE OLD AND THE NEW MAN IN BELIEVERS

A Sermon preached, on a sacramental occasion, at Maxton, in the year 1729.

> Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. - ROM. 6:6.

THE sanctification of sinners is no less a mystery than their justification: the former springing out of the cross of Christ unto them, through the intervention of faith knitting the sinner to a crucified Christ, as well as the latter. Hence the apostle—having asserted the insurance, of the sanctification of believers, that they shall certainly walk in "newness of life," ver. 4; in "the likeness of Christ's resurrection," ver. 5, i. e. as Christ, during the forty days after his resurrection, lived in the world after a new manner, very different from his manner of life in it before his death—brings the ground of it from the cross of Christ, in the words of the text. In which we have,

1. The ground insuring holiness of life in believers united to Christ, "Our old man is crucified with him." This secures their holiness of life, in such manner as the drying up of the fountain doth the drying up of the streams.

(1.) The state the fountain of sin is in believers, "Our old man is crucified with him." This supposeth that Christ was crucified; that in believers there is a twofold man, a new man, and an old; for while he saith, "our old man," he intimates that the old man is not the whole man, as in the unregenerate. The new man is the new creature of grace in the believer, or he as renewed. The old man is the corruption of nature, or he as unrenewed. This old man is the fountain of sin in his heart and life.

Now, the state it is in is a state of crucifixion; it is nailed to the cross, which is a state of death. And its crucifixion is a concrucifixion with Christ, Gal. 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ." In so far as the believer is by faith united to Christ, his old man is nailed to the cross of Christ, to fare here as Christ fared: and that was heavy fare.

(2.) The issue of this state of the fountain of sin in believers. It is twofold.

1st, The final issue, "That the body of sin might be destroyed." The old man is the body of sin, being a complication of the several sinful lusts opposite to the holy law, as the body is of members competent to the human frame. Now, the final issue of this state of the old man, the body of sin, is its destruction and utter ruin. Crucifixion is not present death indeed, but it is sure and certain death. Pilate would have "chastised Christ, and released him," Luke 23:16. but the Jews would have him crucified, for that would carry him quite away from

among them: even so the old man is not to be corrected and amended, but destroyed quite and clean.

2dly, The intermediate issue, "That henceforth we should not serve sin;" that from the moment of our union with Christ we should not serve sin any more, voluntarily living in it, and giving up ourselves to it as its servants, to live and act for satisfying it, as we did before. The old man may live long on the cross before he be destroyed: but then his hands and feet cannot serve him as they did before, there are nails driven through them; he may move them indeed, but then it is with pain and difficulty. So was it with Christ; he behoved to recommend his mother to the care of his beloved disciple John, for that his own hands and feet were not at liberty to act and go for her as formerly.

2. The certainty concerning this ground, "Knowing this." It is not a matter of uncertain hope, but known for truth. It could not be known by sense; no bodily eye could discern our old man on the cross with Christ: nor yet by rational deduction from natural principles; for the whole mystery of Christ is supernatural. Therefore it is known by faith upon divine testimony; it is a conclusion of faith to be laid down for invigorating us in all our endeavours after holiness of life, and to be firmly held and stuck by in all our struggles with the old man, as ever we would desire to make head against him.

That I may touch the several purposes of this text, I shall offer them in several doctrines to be briefly handled.

DOCTRINE I. "There is in believers united to Christ a new man, a holy principle; and an old man, a fountain of sin.

I. Why the holy principle and the corrupt nature in believers are called the new and old man?

1. They are called men, because each of them possesseth the whole man, though not wholly. There are by their means two I's in every believer, Rom. 7:15. "For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate that do I." There is not one part of the man that is in Christ, but grace has a part of it, and corruption has a part of it: as in the twilight there is light over all, and darkness over all too, the darkness being mixed in every part with the light. So my renewed part is I, a man having an understanding enlightened, a will renewed, affections spiritualized, using my body conformably: but my unrenewed part is I too, having an understanding darkened, a will rebellious, affections corrupted, and using my body accordingly.

2. They are called the new and old man, for two reasons.

(1.) Because the new nature is brought in upon the corrupt principle, which was the first possessor. The corrupt nature is of the same standing with ourselves from the conception and birth, and possessed us alone till our union with Christ by faith. And then only came in the new nature, and that made the former old.

(2.) Because of their different originals; the one being in us from the corrupt first Adam, the other from the holy second Adam. So the believer, looking on the corruption of his nature, may call fallen Adam father; and on the new creature in him, he may call Christ father. The second Adam coming after the first, made the first old: so the produce of them in us is the old and new man accordingly.

II. How the believer comes to be thus split in two, two men. This is done by virtue of his union with Christ, from whence ariseth a communication of grace to him from Christ, 1 Cor. 1:30. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Concerning which two things are to be noted.

1. That in the moment of one's union with Christ by faith, there is communicated to him, out of the fulness of grace in the man Christ, a measure of every grace in him, as the wax impressed receives every point in the seal, John 1:16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Eph. 4:13. "Till we all come—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And thus is the new creature formed, being a new man perfect in parts, entire or having all its members, no grace totally wanting.

Hence it is that the new man is formed immediately after Christ's image, so that it is the very picture of the man Christ, as Eve was of Adam. Therefore the forming of it is said to be the forming of Christ in the believer, Gal. 4:19.

2. That yet there is not then, nor during this life, communicated to the believer a full measure of any grace, 1 Cor. 13:9. "For we know in part." So all the graces being imperfect, though they remove sin as far as they go, they cannot fill up the room in any part, mind, will, or affections. And thus is there an old man left in the believer still, Rom. 7:14. which is the image of the first Adam, from whom the corruption composing it is derived.

USE 1. Hence see, that the believer's life while here cannot miss to be a struggling life, Gal. 5:17. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,

and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The believer is like. Rebekah in another case, the two men struggle in him; and like the two armies in the Shulamite.

2. See here the rise of the peace and easy life of it most men have. The flesh in them has no competitor. In the state of glory, grace has all, so there is a perfect peace: in the state of nature, corruption has all; so there is peace too; except what is marred by the struggle between the flesh in one part lusting, and the flesh in another part fearing, as in Balaam, 2 Pet. 2:15. "who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Compared with Numb. 22:18. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Whereas the struggle in the believer is betwixt the flesh and Spirit in the.same part willing, and willing the same thing of their proper motion, Rom. 7:15, 16. forecited.

DOCT. II. The old man in believers is a body of sin, an entire body, lacking none of its members, Rom. 7:24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This appears from the account of it already given. As we derive every grace from the second Adam in our regeneration, so every corruption from the first Adam in our natural generation.

USE 1. This may serve to humble believers, when they are at their best. There is an entire body of sin in them while they are here. Do they excel in any grace? yet there is in them a member of the old man opposite to it, as passion in meek Moses. Have they every grace in them? They have every corruption too, though every one does not

appear, more than every grace. Therefore they have need to watch against all sin whatsoever; for there is never a snare in the ill world but there is a member of the old man ready to fall in with it, Col. 3:5. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness," &c.

2. No wonder the believer groans being burdened, having a whole body of sin carrying about with him. And they that groan not under it are certainly all flesh; no new man in them. If ye belong to Christ ye cannot want an errand to him for sanctification. Ye have a body of sin to lay before him, which he alone can destroy.

DOCT. III. The old man in believers is crucified with Christ. This bears two things.

I. Christ was crucified. He not only died for us, but died for as the cursed, painful, shameful, lingering death on the tree of the cross; which we are met to commemorate. Christ was put to this death for us, rather than another kind of death.

1st, That the first sin that let in all sin into the world might be the more clearly read in the punishment. When ye consider the awful and tremendous dispensation of the Son of God, the second Adam, hanging naked on a tree, and dying there at great leisure in exquisite pain, can ye miss to see the fiery wrath of God against the sin of that naked pair in paradise, pleasuring themselves in the fruit of the forbidden tree, and in an instant defacing the image of God in them?

2dly, That the whole world might see what a low and hard state Christ took on him, putting himself in our room. We were bond-men under the curse, and Christ took on him our state of servitude, and

that under the curse becoming a bond-man for us under the curse, Philip. 2:7. "He took upon him the form of a servant." Hereof the death on the cross was the sign and badge, being the punishment of slaves, and accursed in the law. And to make way for this circumstance, the Jews were subjected to the Romans.

USE 1. Remember a crucified Christ, enter this night deep into the thought of the Son of God hanging, groaning, dying on a cross for us. Admire the matchless love in it. Behold the severity of divine justice against sin in it. Prize the salvation so dearly bought, and receive it with thankfulness.

2. Think not strange, if ye have a crucified life in the world. If ye are Christians, followers of Jesus, why should ye think strange of it, to be thus conformed to your head?

II. The old man in believers is crucified together with him. Here we are to inquire how it is crucified with him; which take in the following particulars.

1. Christ hung on the cross as a public person, a representative of his spiritual seed. For he was the second Adam suffering, as the other the first Adam sinning. So that as they sinned in Adam, they suffered in Christ; the law having them all on the cross in Christ their representative, Gal. 2:20. "I am crucified with Christ."

2. Christ hanging on the cross had the body of all their sins upon him, your old man, and my old man. They were on him by the imputation of the guilt of them, though not inherent in him, 2 Cor. 5:21. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that

we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Therefore our old man is said to be crucified, not in him, but with him.

3. While he was hanging on the cross, he was meritoriously doing away the guilt of them, and consequently the power, pollution, and very being thereof; inasmuch as the guilt being removed, these must cease of course. For the strength of sin is the law, whereby it stakes down the sinner under the curse, 1 Cor. 15:56.

4. The sinner being united to Christ by faith, the merit and virtue of Christ's suffering on the cross is actually applied to him. So that, his guilt being removed, there is a reigning principle of grace planted in him, going through the whole man, whereby the dominion of sin is broken, Rom. 6:14. and the pollution removed so far as that new man goes, Tit. 3:5. So that the believer is an image of Christ on the cross, full of grace in him, and of sin on him; but the former working off the latter.

USE 1. See then, O communicants, that the crucifying of the old man, the body of sin in you, depends entirely on your uniting with Christ by faith. The sacrament is appointed to seal and strengthen that union. Therefore your great business at the table should be, closely to knit with a crucified Christ. The more of that, the more will the death of sin be hastened on. And they that aim not at the destruction of sin in their communicating, while they pretend to remember a crucified Saviour, forget the end of his crucifixion, viz. that the body of sin, being crucified with him, might be destroyed.

2. The old man in believers is in a state of death, though not dead outright. It is crucified with Christ. It may move and stir in them, and vehement struggles it may make, as a dying man struggling with the

mortal disease: but whatever efforts it make, it is on the cross, whence it shall not come down till it breathe out its last.

3. The practice of religion is painful work; and Christians must not think it strange, that oft-times they are pained to the heart in it. The saints in glory have no pain in their work; for the old man is destroyed in them: but the saints here have an unrenewed part; and that is on the cross, and cannot but pain them. There are right eyes in them to be plucked out; the man has a painful struggle in denying himself, crossing his own inclinations, wrestling against his own flesh and blood. Providence thrusts a spear into the old man's side, by piercing trials and troubles; it breaks his legs by cutting disappointments from many airths, to forward his death. This cannot be but painful.

4. The old man is long a-dying out; for crucifying is a lingering death. There must be an exercise of patience in the Christian course; for there may be many a battle ere the complete victory be got. Many a wound the old man will take ere he fall; and after he is worsted again and again, he will get up and renew the battle, till he get the final stroke from the Lord's immediate hand.

It is a grave question, Why doth the Lord suffer the old man of sin to dwell in his people after their conversion? Why is not sin quite expelled at the first entry of grace? Our text affords one weighty reason for it, viz. that the members may be conformed to the head. Christ did not put off the body of our sins, that by imputation lay on him, at his very first encounter with it: nay, he had a grievous struggle with it for the space of three hours on the cross, till he himself got the first fall, dying by its hand on the cross. Nay, if we

reckon rightly, it lay heavy on him the space of thirty-three years; only upon the cross was the heat of the battle, which ended in his death and burial, whereby he put it off quite and clean. So, since imputed sin was on Christ the head all his life, inherent sin is left in believers, the members, all their life. The old man is crucified with him.

DOCTRINE IV. By virtue of the cross of Christ, the old man in believers shall certainly be destroyed quite and clean at length. Here we may inquire,

I. What destruction is that that is certainly abiding the old man in believers? It is an utter destruction of it, with all effects of it, all marks and vestiges of it, all belonging with it to the old Adam.

1. The old man himself shall be destroyed, utterly destroyed, out of all that are Christ's; so that though he has many a time trode them like a field of battle, there shall not be in them the least print of his feet to be discerned, Heb. 12:23. "The spirits of just men made perfect." The day will come, when there shall not be the least guilt of it on them, to draw a frown from their Father's face against them, (Is. 33 ult. "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity"); when it shall have no power to prevail over them in the least: nay, when it shall no more have an indwelling in them, Heb. 12:23. forecited; but shall be utterly east forth as an abominable branch. So the new man shall possess all alone, without a competitor for ever.

2. The sinful vile body derived from old Adam, which brought him down from Adam to us, Psal. 51:5. and continues to the end the best friend he has in believers, shall be destroyed for his sake. The soul

shall leave the sinful flesh to be carried into the grave, where it shall rot and consume, till it return to the dust again, so as not the least lineament of old Adam's image or likeness shall be discerned on it. And Christ will take the same dust thus purified, and form it anew after his own likeness as second Adam, Phil. 3:21.

3. The visible heavens that covered him, and this earth that bore him, and furnished fuel to his lasts, shall for his sake be set on flames, and reduced to ashes, 2 Pet. 3:10. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Compare Gen. 3:17. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." So that it shall no more for ever be to be said, There is the earth where the old man some time lived, and there the heavens that gave him light and air. But Christ will make new heavens and a new earth for the new man, 2 Pet. 3:13. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

4. Lastly, All that shall remain of him shall be buried in hell, Rev. 20:14. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." Old Adam brought in the old man into the world, and he spread his poisonous efficacy over all: so that look where ye will, ye shall not see in all this world that in which there is not sin, or some effect of sin. But then all shall be gathered from off believers, and from off the now groaning creatures, and cast into the lake of fire; so that there shall not be the least sin, nor effect of sin, without the boundaries of hell.

II. When will the old man be thus destroyed? You will easily conceive, from what is said, that destruction will have two periods.

1. At the death of the believer, and not till then. Till then the child of God must wrestle on with it; for so did Christ with it as imputed to him, till death set him free. It is a grave question, how come believers to die being freed from the curse of the covenant of works? ANSWER. They die in conformity to Christ their head; that as death came in by sin, sin may go off by death. It is not dying that does it indeed; for sin goes through death in them that are out of Christ, not moved from off them for all that death can do. But at death, Christ gives the redding stroke betwixt the new and old man, kills the old man outright, as 2 Sam. 1:10. And he does it, by letting in a full measure of every grace from himself into the believer, which takes up the whole man wholly; and so the old man is gone in a moment, as the darkness upon the sun's displaying his beams over all.

2. At the end of the world. Then comes the utter abolition of all vestiges of it out of hell.

III. The certainty of it. It is even as sure as the death of Christ could merit its destruction, and as the end of his death cannot be frustrated, and as he rose again from the dead free from the imputed guilt of it, and sits in heaven to-day without sin so much as imputed to him.

USE. Let the saints then take courage, and renew the battle vigorously with the old man; for the victory will undoubtedly fall to their side. And as for you that are still for keeping the old man's head and heart hale; as ye do interpretatively desire none of Christ's cross, it is an argument ye have as little saving interest in it.

DOCTRINE V. In the meantime, till the, old man be destroyed quite and clean by virtue of the cross of Christ, by virtue of the same cross

the believer shall not be a servant to the old man more. That is the present piece of freedom from it the believer has.

1. The believer has heartily given up with him for a master. Some time he said, as Exod. 21:5. "I love my master,—I will not go out free." But now he hates him mortally, and would fain be altogether free at any rate, Rom. 7:24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The very being in the house with the old man is a burden.

2. He will get no work, but forced work, off his hand more, Rom. 7:15. "For that which I do, I allow not," &c. He will not yield his members to the old man voluntarily, as before, chap. 6:13. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." He will never get work with whole good will at his hand more, but half will at most.

USE. This writes death to such as have given their hand to Christ at his table, and are ready to go back into the service of their lusts. If from henceforth ye enter not into a struggling life against sin, ye have not felt the virtue of Christ's cross.

DOCTRINE VI. ult. Believers should go out against the old man in Acts of holiness, in the faith that he is a crucified man; i. e. Believe your old man is crucified with Christ, and in this belief bestir yourself against him in the use of appointed means. If you believe it not, how can your hands be strong, having all to do yourself alone? But believe it firmly, and it will make you as a giant refreshed with wine.

WORM JACOB THRASHING THE MOUNTAINS

A Sermon preached on a sacramental occasion.

> Worm Jacob,—thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. - ISAIAH 41:14, 15.

RELIGION is a mystery, and the truly religious are a mystery too. They are a mystery to the world, 1 John 3:1, "The world knoweth us not;" yea to themselves, ver. 2, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." That is a matter not of sight and feeling, but of faith. There are many odd connexions, which folk would think contradictions and impossibilities, in their character. See a cluster of them, 2 Cor. 6:9, 10, "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live: as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." That is a strange connexion, an old man and a new man in one man: but none more strange and surprising than this in the text: A worm thrashing the mountains; and that not ridiculously, without effect; but most efficaciously, beating them small. In these words we have two things.

1. What the church and people of God are. They are named by him who misnames none, "Worm Jacob." Their name from their nature is a worm; they are poor, weak, despised creatures, ready to be crushed by the foot of every passer by: yet "worm Jacob;" believing, praying, wrestling worm as he was.

2. What they shall certainly and infallibly do, "Thrash the mountains, and beat them small," &c. I find interpreters generally understand by the "mountains" the great and lofty potentates of the earth, setting themselves against the church. And no doubt these were in the prophet's view; but the view was not confined to them only. God's bringing down the Babylonian monarchy at their prayers, and the victories afterward of the Maccabees over their enemies, cannot reasonably be supposed to complete the intent of this prophecy. We must needs look to the kingdom of Christ for it; of which there is plainly an account, vers. 17, 18, 19. Compare Dan. 2:34, 35. And we must carry on our view, all along to the end of time, Rev. 2:26, 27; the rather that it is the manner of the prophet, to wrap up in one expression, temporal, spiritual, and eternal deliverance; the deliverance from Babylon, which was temporal, being the first and nearest in view, Is. 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live," &c.; but not terminating it. Here then we may consider,

(1.) What "worm Jacob" has to encounter or yoke with, "mountains," and "hills," whose weight is sufficient to crush millions of him; difficulties quite disproportionable to his strength, as a mountain to that of a worm.

(2.) The success of this so very unequal match. The mountains shall not crush the worm; but the worm shall thrash the mountains, as one does a sheaf of corn with repeated strokes. They did not in those days thresh their corn with flails, as we do; but tread it out with the feet of men or beasts, or else by drawing a kind of cart, drag, or sledge, over and over it, called in the text "a thrashing instrument." I do not find the word here denoting the notion of the worm, and rendered "thrashing," applied at all to that drag: but as it formally signifies "to

tread out," as rendered Hos. 10:11, "Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn;" as appears from Is. 25:10, "For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill." So it is applied to a self-moving creature, man, Micah 4:13, "Arise and thrash, O daughter of Zion;" or "beast," Jer. 50:11. Here lies the mystery then, uniting the two notions of the self-mover and the instrument, that the worm shall tread out the mountains, as one would do a molehill. And if ye say, Alas! such a treader! what weight has it? I will make (says the Lord) the feet or belly of the worm like a new-shod thrashing drag for them, that shall tread out the highest and rockiest of them all to purpose.

(3.) The degree and pitch of the worm's success against those mountains: it shall beat them small, till they be like dust, as the word is used, Deut. 9:21; or like chaff: so that they shall be blown away with the wind, and no vestige of them remain.

(4.) The insurance of this success of the worm. Who could insure it, but the mighty God? He has done it. Jesus Christ, Jehovah, the most high God, and worm Jacob's Kinsman-redeemer, hath, by his word of promise, engaged his almighty power on the side of the worm against the mountains. Let not then the worm fear or doubt the success. A worm, seconded by Jesus Christ, will be an overmatch for all the mountains and hills setting up their heads from earth or hell.

DOCTRINE. The mystery of grace carried on by Jesus Christ in his church and people, is like a worm's thrashing the mountains, infallibly to issue in its thrashing them away quite and clean. Briefly,

worm Jacob shall thrash the mountains, and thrash them away quite and clean.

Here we shall consider,

I. The character of the subject wherein this mystery of grace is carried on by Jesus Christ.

II. The mystery of grace carried on in them by Jesus.

III. I shall account for this mystery, worm Jacob thrashing the mountains of difficulties in his way, and thrashing them away quite and clean.

IV. Apply.

I. First, I shall consider the character of the subject wherein this mystery of grace is carried on by Jesus Christ. It is in worm Jacob, denoting the church in general, and every believer or true member thereof in particular: for of these the church consists, as in the text, ver. 14. without the supplement, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, ye men of Israel." One would think, that one designed to be a thrasher of the mountains should be a party of a signally great and swelling character, a hero, a giant, or if there were any thing could carry the character higher: but, on the contrary, it is very low, surprisingly low, worm, worm Jacob. This character points at these five things especially, in the case of the people of God. It points them out as,

1. Weak creatures, really weak for the encounters they must make, as a worm for a mountain. God himself gives them this name of extreme weakness: therefore they must be so in very deed. They have weak

heads, hearts, hands, for the work they are called to. Not only does the first grace find them really weak, but the after supplies of grace also, Heb. 11:34. "Out of weakness were made strong."

2. Humbled souls, truly sensible of their own weakness. By nature they were swelling vipers, but by grace they are humbled worms. And,

1st, Habitually humbled, in respect of their state, as the creeping worm, whose nature it is to go on its belly. So the humble and the gracious are equivalent terms, Psal. 34:2, 3. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." There is a law-work, followed with gospel-grace, wrought on them; issuing in a thorough humiliation, breaking down their natural self-conceit, tumbling down their towering imaginations about themselves which they had in their state of blindness, bringing them, in their own eyes, from the consistence of mountains to that of worms; and convincing them, they are, have, and can do, nothing, Luke 15:17; 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.

2dly, Actually humbled, in respect of their frame. As the worm still retains its creeping gait, at the mountain, as in the valley; so God's people, at difficulties to be happily surmounted, still keep up the sense of their own utter emptiness, and weakness for them, 2 Cor. 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." If the worm Jacob begin to swell again, he will be so unwieldy that he will thrash no mountains till he fall anew, 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:11.

3. Despised creatures. As the lofty mountains overtop the crawling worm, so doth the carnal world contemn worm Jacob, Psal. 22:6,

"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people;" and 123:4, "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud." Though they may value worm Jacob for his gifts which he has in common with themselves, they will never value him for his grace, that leaves him still as a worm in their sight. What of religion lies beyond the reach of the natural man, they despise; the Christian entertainment on words and promises, they despise, as we do the dust the worms lick up; the Christian way of doing in faith, they despise, as we do the crawling of the worm: Like Sanballat, when he mocked the Jews, saying, "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt?" Neh. 4:2, 3.

4. Yet united to Jesus Christ. Though a worm, yet worm Jacob. Our Lord Jesus himself is of the worm family, Psal. 22:6, viz. worm Jacob, Psal. 24:6, "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob." Compare Is. 49:3. "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." This intimates an union between him and them as his worm brethren, Heb. 2:11. Being lowered and humbled to the condition of the worm, they are knit to and built on him by faith, Luke 6:48.

5. Lastly, Daring adventurers, daring wrestlers. Worm Jacob ventured on him that formed the mountains, and wrestled with him, and prevailed too, Gen. 32:24; Hos. 12:4. What wonder to find him then venturing on the mountains themselves? He must have the blessing, and must be forward whatever mountains be in the way, I proceed to,

II. The Second thing to be considered, namely, the mystery of grace carried on in them by Jesus Christ. We may take it up in these two.

1. An apparently hopeless encounter they are led to by him, worm Jacob thrashing the mountains. What a hopeless like encounter is a worm thrashing a mountain! so hopeless like are the encounters the people of God have to make in their way to the eternal rest. These thrashers are certainly thrashers in hope, 1 Cor. 9:10. But the naked eye cannot discover the ground of hope in it: it is faith only which shews it hopeful, while sight represents it as a hopeless case; and therefore they must close their eyes, and thrash in faith, as Abraham did, Rom. 4:19, 20.

We take up this hopeless like encounter in five things.

1st., The Lord lays in his people's way mountains of difficulties quite above their strength; difficulties which they look to, as a worm to a mountain before it: 2 Cor. 1:8, "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." However plain the way to hell be, the way to heaven will be a mountainous way, in the experience of all that travel it: they will never want mountains in their way, till they come to the hill of God.

2dly, They must not go about the mountains in their way, shifting the difficulties which the Lord calls them to; but they must make their way over them, thrashing them down, Micah 4:13, "Arise and thrash, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people, &c. If they offer to go about one mountain, they will be sure to meet with a higher in their way. Peter tried it, denying his Master, and found it

so; encountering another as high above the former, as the anger of God is above that of the creature; and which was like to crush him, Matth. 26:75, "He went out, and wept bitterly.

3dly, Therefore worm Jacob falls a-thrashing the mountains, combating the difficulties which the Lord lays in his way. He puts on a brow for a bargain, and resolutely bestirs his weak hands and feet, thrusting forward maugre all opposition, Gen. 32:26; Matth. 11:12. For there is a spirit in worm Jacob more daring and venturous than ever was in any unbelieving hero; a spirit for thrashing mountains, while they did but scatter molehills, Numb. 14:24; Prov. 16:32.

4thly, They continue the combating of difficulties resolutely and patiently. Thrashing is a continued action, consisting of repeated strokes. It takes some time to thrash a sheaf; how much more to thrash a mountain? It is the ruin of many that they are not able to endure; if a stroke or two would do the business, they would bring their matters to a good account; but they have no heart to be thrashers. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," James 1:4. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved," Matth. 24:13.

Lastly, Worm Jacob has many mountains to thrash. One would be enough, we would think, for the worm; but there is a plurality of them. The truth is, this world is full of mountains to the people of God; and when they have thrashed one, they will have another to fall to, till they be out of this mountainous country. Having passed one difficulty, they will get another to grapple with, till they be within the gates of the city. So they must have a thrashing lifetime of it till they come there.

2. A surprising success; even as surprising as a worm's thrashing and beating the mountains small to dust, and thrashing them away. Such will be the issue of the encounter which the people of God now have with their difficulties in their way through the world; for which the text is plain. We take it up in these two. They will have,

1st, Partial successes in their way, very surprising; surprising to others and to themselves; Psal. 126:1, 2, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." What mountains of difficulties were in David's way to the kingdom! He thrashed long at them, and they never appeared to give way; nay he was like to be crushed with them, saying, "One day I shall perish by the hand of Saul." But see the surprising success, Psal. 18 entitled, "A Psalm of David,—in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul;" wherein, after recapitulating the various difficulties he had to encounter with, he particularly mentions the happy deliverances he met with, and the surprising manner of the same. Some mountains God's people are kept thrashing at all their days, particularly the mount of corruption; and they never fall quite down till death. But, as a pledge for the time to come, God makes some mountains now and then fall down before the worm Jacob; wherewith he is surprised, and transported with wonder, how it has come to pass: Mark 16:4, 5, "And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away;—and they were affrighted."

2dly, A total success at the end of their way, which will swallow them up in surprise and eternal wonder: 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we

the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." When the mystery is finished, the web cut out, it will appear an admirable piece. There will not be left then the least vestige of all the mountains that stood between heaven and them: the thrashed mountains will then be blown away with the wind; and they will lay by the flail, as an instrument they have no more use for.

OBJECTION. But have not others, as well as worm Jacob, mountains of difficulty in their way, which they become masters of too at length? ANSWER. This world is so mountainous, that none can get through it without meeting mountains in their way: carnal men make a shift to creep through some of them; but they can thrash none of them, as worm Jacob doth; they want his head-staff, John 15:6, "Without me ye can do nothing." They creep into others of them, and nestle in them; the mountains of their corruptions, which in a special manner stand between heaven and them; and at length they will be eternally buried under them.

USE 1. Here is a touchstone for trial of true Christians and worthy communicants, worm Jacob thrashing the mountains.

1st, They have a heart and spirit for thrashing mountains in their way to heaven. They are peremptory and resolute to break through them, without exception, as men that must be there, must not perish: Matth. 11:12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Though they have long thrashed in vain to their own sense, they are resolute to hold on; like Paul, "pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. 3:14. This casts the delicate and soft-hearted in this

case, that are not for thrashing mountains: they are for the easier tasks, but have no heart nor hand for that. These I think are the "fearful," Rev. 21:8, like the unbelieving spies and people in the wilderness. Take heed here how ye stand disposed,

(1.) To a vain world; whether there is in you a heart to row against that stream or no; Rom. 12:2, "Be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," &c. If ye have no heart for it, but must go along with it; be ye young or old, ye are no good Christians, Gal. 6:14, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And young communicants, leaving that gap open, make naughty and worthless old ones after.

(2.) To the sin that most easily besets you. Have you no heart to thrash that mountain? ye have not the spirit of worm Jacob, who is one "that keeps himself from his iniquity," Psal. 18:23; and ye will be buried under it at length; like the young man, who was grieved at Christ's discourse about self-denial and the cross, and went away from him and never returned, Mark 10:21, 22.

(3.) To the crook in your lot. Have you no heart to set yourselves to a Christian way of bearing it, but must needs have it evened to your mind? ye have not the spirit of worm Jacob; for the Lord has said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," Matth. 16:24.

2dly, Yet they are but worms in their own eyes, an unequal match for the least of the mountains; 2 Cor. 3:5, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." This casts the proud legalist, that minds nothing but binding

himself to duty, reckoning himself man enough for the duties of Christianity.

The sum of this mark is, the Christian communicant is resolute and peremptory for doing all, yet convinced that he is sufficient for nothing.

USE 2. Here is likewise a ground of full comfort to such. Let not the height, rockiness, nor bulk of the mountains discourage thee; nor yet the felt unsuccessfulness of thy attempts hitherto. God has said it, "Worm Jacob, thou shalt thrash the mountains and beat them small." Be not afraid; only believe.

USE 3. Lastly, Here is, moreover, a strong inducement to all to come to Christ: he will make you "thrash the mountains, and beat them small." Come ye that are wandering on the mountains of vanity, like to be worried on the mountains of prey, nestling in the mountain of corruption, unable to get over the mountains of difficulty before you; come to Christ, and ye shall "thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff."

III. Thirdly, I shall account for this mystery, worm Jacob thrashing the mountains of difficulties in his way, and thrashing them away quite and clean. How can this be?

1. God has said it, and therefore it cannot fail; "Thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff." Compared with Numb. 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the Son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? He speaks things into being, and they must start out of the womb of

nothing, or of not being, at his word, which calls them forth, Rom. 4:17. There is as much for worm Jacob's thrashing and beating away the mountains as there was for making the world, and all the mountains in it; Psal. 33:9, "He said and it was." (Heb.) Shall not his word that said them into being, be as effectual to say them away again? "Thus saith the Lord," is enough to insure the accomplishment of the hardest things prophesied.

2. The glory of his grace, which is the great design of the whole mystery of God, necessarily requires it. What does he intend by the mystery of Christ, but "the glory of his grace"? Eph. 1:6; to shew the "exceeding riches" of it, chap. 2:7. Therefore he has chosen the way that leads straight to that point, Rom. 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." The worm is despicable in itself; but being the subject of glorious grace, if it should miscarry in its attempts, the glory of grace is sunk, as the precious loading with the ship cast away. Wherefore, that his grace may be glorified, if it be in a worm thrashing mountains, those mountains must needs be thrashed away by that worm. Though that sacred fire be but like a spark in the midst of a sea of corruption, it must not only be preserved in, but dry up that sea quite and clean.

3. By an unalterable decree, there must be a conformity betwixt the little worm and the great worm Jacob, the little one's Kinsman-Redeemer; Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Now, the great worm, the man Christ, a worm and no man, (Psal. 22:6), has encountered mountains, and thrashed them away. Where are the four monarchies, the most towering mountains that ever set up their

heads on the earth? The chief worm Jacob has thrashed them away to chaff, which is away with the wind, Dan. 2:35. The mountains stood before him through the world, with all the fastness that human learning and the power of the sword could give: but by his few fishermen he thrashed them away; and the prophecy is fulfilled, Psal. 72:16, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." Now many mountains stand before the little worm: but where will that conformity to heaven's beloved pattern be, if they also do not thrash them away?

4. The little worm Jacob is in reality but a member of the great one, Jesus Christ. Take away that, and worm Jacob is as insignificant for thrashing of mountains, as any worm that crawls on the earth, John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing." Fix that, and worm Jacob has a kind of derived omnipotence, ver. 7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And it is fixed: so their thrashing is Christ's thrashing, Col. 1:24. And ye may well allow Christ's thrashing away mountains, with a little finger of his body. If with the finger of God he cast out devils, with the least of his fingers he may cast down mountains.

5. Lastly, All the mountains that stand before worm Jacob are burnt mountains; so they are far easier to thrash than one would think. The mountain of the Babylonish monarchy stood before worm Jacob, and barred his way seventy years: at length God sets fire in the bowels of it, and makes it a burnt mountain; and then bids worm Jacob thrash, and it flies away with the wind; Jer. 51:25, "Behold, I am against

thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth, and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain." By the death and resurrection of Christ, all the mountains that stand between worm Jacob and heaven, are burnt mountains. Christ has gone through the bowels of them with his fire, undone their consistence, burnt the rooks to lime; they are nothing now but the shape of mountains, with a thin scorched surface: they will give way at the thrashing of worm Jacob, like the apples of Sodom, that being touched go to dust between one's fingers: Micah 2:13, "The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it; and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them." Nahum 3:12, "All thy strong holds shall be like fig-trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater." Compare Is. 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Hos. 13:14, "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; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes."

INFERENCE 1. The struggles of the church with all her adversaries will have a surprisingly comfortable issue at length. As weak as she is, and as strong and numerous as they are, she will infallibly have success, surprising success, against them, attending the encounter with them: Micah 4:11, 12, 13, "Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves

into the floor. Arise and thrash, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." And as to the present state of the church, learn,

1st. It is not at all strange, nor will it make the case of this church hopeless, that prodigiously high mountains, higher than our fathers saw, are raised up against her, overtopping worm Jacob, and threatening to crush him: mountains of national guilt of forty years' gathering, laid upon the top of the mountains of guilt raised by our fathers: profanity overflowing, and become fashionable; a conspiracy carried on in the house of her friends against the grace of Christ and serious godliness, to palm upon us refined heathenism for Christianity; the foundations struck at, mountains of damnable heresies and blasphemies against the person of Christ, and divine authority of the Scriptures; and the advanced learning of the age improved to these monstrous ends. But,

2dly, Assuredly these mountains will be brought down: and though we have all ground to expect that multitudes shall be crushed to death with thrashing judgments for bringing them down; yet neither the one nor the other shall crush worm Jacob, but he shall see them all blown away with the wind.

3dly, It is worm Jacob that shall thrash and beat them small: a believing, praying, wrestling, though despised remnant, will bring them down; though they stand immoveable against all the merely rational and politic methods used against them.

INFERENCE 2. They are not for heaven, that are not for thrashing away the mountains in their way to it. As,

1st, Such as are not exercised unto godliness; that pretend to believe, but trouble not themselves with the work of mortification, letting these mountains stand unmolested: Gal. 5:24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Whatever kindred ye pretend to worm Jacob, if you had any thing of his nature, you would thrash, in mortification.

2dly, Such as are partial in their obedience, that are not for thrashing the mountains in their way without exception, Mark 10:21, 22. Such a lust they are content to sacrifice, but there is a darling one to be spared: any trouble they would bear, but only such an one as God lays before them, they can never think to lay their fair neck under that yoke: that is to say, they will scatter the molehills, but have no heart to venture on the mountains.

3dly, Backsliders, that fall a-thrashing, but give over before the mountains begin to give way, or be beaten small; (Heb. 10:38); they draw back their hand, Luke 9:62. These are like those that came out of Egypt, but fell in the wilderness through their unbelief, thinking there was no making it against the Anakims.

INFERENCE 3. Last, Serious souls, sensible of their weakness, but resolute to combat whatever difficulties are between them and heaven, be the issue what it will, shall certainly be blessed with surprising success, to their own eternal wonder. The worm shall thrash away the mountains.

I would say to such, Go on and prosper: thrash on, worm Jacob, thou shalt beat them small.

1. Thrash on the mountains of opposition that stand in your way, from earth or bell: thou shalt get through them all at length; and thou shalt "stand on the sea of glass, having the harp of God;" and shalt "sing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," Rev. 15:2, 3.

2. Thrash on the mountain of troubles, trials, and afflictions. Let none of them, be they never so high and formidable, prevail to separate betwixt your God and you; they will be beat to dust at length, and blown away from before you; Rev. 7:9, 10, 14, "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.—These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

3. Thrash on the mountain of corruption, indwelling sin; thrash on every height therein, particularly that top of it that is the sin that easily besets you: infallibly you will get it down at length. Paul saw this while he was thrashing it, Rom. 7:24, 25, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Say not, Alas! I am weak, my thrashing will be in vain. No, though you have no more strength for them than a worm for a mountain, it

will not be in vain. God will have these mountains thrashed by worms.

But thou wilt say, Alas! I have thrashed long without success. ANSWER. Thrash on; there must be patient enduring ere the mountain fall, Heb. 6:15, "After Abraham had patiently endured, he obtained the promise:" but there is an oath mediating betwixt the promise and its accomplishment that it cannot fail, ver. 17. (Gr.) Mind the walls of Jericho. Have ye not had a partial success sometimes? be sure then of the total. So it is with Jesus himself, Heb. 2:8, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."

The last mountain to be thrashed away is death, and ye shall beat that small too, 1 Cor. 15:54, 55, "When 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. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

After all, it is a mighty wonder, worm Jacob thrashing the mountains. But the thrashing worm is shod from heaven, and so fitted to thrash. Three things this thrashing instrument is shod with. (1.) A word of command, calling to the work. (2.) A word of promise, securing the success. (3.) The use of means of Heaven's appointment for reaching the end. If any of these be wanting, there will be no thrashing the mountains away: a plain instance we have in the rationalists of the age laying aside the doctrine of a crucified Christ, and substituting in the room thereof the dry and sapless doctrines of

heathenism; which God will never countenance to renew the hearts or reform the lives of any, as being contrary to the appointment of Heaven for that purpose. But worm Jacob, influenced by the command of God, excited by the promise of success, and using the proper means, "shall thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff."

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYING ALWAYS, AND NOT FAINTING

Two Sermons preached, on a sacramental occasion, at Maxton, July 15 and 16, 1727.

> And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. - LUKE 18:1.

THE time of this life is the time of trial; only in the life to come is full ease to be expected. Now is the warfare, and partial victories: the complete victory comes not till death. If we must have our portion of goods in hand presently, and cannot wait, we will soon be through it, and have nothing when we need most. If we mind for heaven then, we must be resolute, set a stiff heart to a stay brae, and hold forward whatever storms blow in our face, as we see in the words of the text. Wherein we have,

1. The Lord's insisting to teach his disciples, "And he spake a parable unto them," &c. That the relative them refers to his disciples, appears by the continued connexion of these words with the discourse from chap. 17:22. And he changes in it his manner of teaching, making a practical improvement, in a parable, of what he had before taught

them in plain style. (Gr.) "Now he spake also a parable unto them," to impress the lesson the more lively, both on their minds, memories, and affections."

2. The new lesson he taught them, "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" that there would be a necessity of their praying always, and not fainting. The discourse whence it is inferred, among other things, bears, (1.) That their comforts should be less than they were then, ver. 22, "And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." (2.) Their temptations more, ver. 23, "And they shall say to you, See here, or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them." (3.) That the world would be long in deep security, and they long in deep distress, so that they might be in hazard of giving it over; see vers. 26–33. (4.) That the Lord would come to them at length, and make all right: but when or where, they are not to know.

Now, to direct them how to carry in such a difficult situation, he speaks the following parable; the scope and sum of which comes to this, "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint." So he tells them, (1.) The course they must hold, blow the wind as it will: they must "always pray;" not that they must be always on their knees, but they must keep a habitual course of praying. (2.) What they must beware of; they must "not faint." The word signifies a succumbing or yielding under the pressure of evils or hardships, as one sinking under a burden, or giving over by reason of the badness of the way, Eph. 3:13, and is well rendered fainting; for the apostle explains it by being loosened, Gal. 6:9, because in fainting or swooning the nerves are loosened, relaxed, or unbended, and so activity is gone. So whatever hardships are met with, we must not be so outwearied with

them as to give over. (3.) The necessity of this; men ought or must needs always pray, and not faint. If we give over, we are gone; if we faint, and break off our course, all is lost.

DOCTRINE. Our Lord Jesus Christ has kindly intimated to all that have business at the court of heaven the necessity of so managing themselves that they still hang on there, and not faint, whatever entertainment they meet with during the dependence of their process.

In this doctrine there are three heads to be considered.

I. Our Lord's kind intimation of this way of his Father's court.

II. The way of the court of heaven, in trysting petitioners with some hardships during the dependence of their process.

III. The duty of the petitioners, to hang on and not faint whatever they meet with.

IV. Apply.

I. The first thing to be considered, is, our Lord's kind intimation of this way of his Father's court. And here we would shew, 1. The import of Christ's making this intimation to petitioners there; and, 2. The weight and moment of this intimation.

First, I shall shew the import of Christ's making this intimation to petitioners at his Father's court.

1. The darkness that is naturally on the minds of poor sinners, with respect to heaven's management about them. We may say, as Jer.

5:4, "Surely these are poor, they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God." The obscurest shepherd from the remotest corner, would know more of the king's court, if he had business there, than the wisest mortals naturally know of the way of the court of heaven. Dark clouds are about the sovereign manager to us: "His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known." Even Job, that had been a long hanger-on about the court of heaven, knew little of the way of it, and behoved to have a new lesson of it, Job 38:1, 2, "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

2. Christ's good-will to the sinner's business going right there: Exod. 28:29, "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment, upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." He shews it by his concern for their right managing it: he knows they are unacquainted with the manner of the court of heaven, and so are in hazard of marring their own business; and therefore he is concerned to set them on the road to get a good answer. The poor soul that is sometimes at the brink of groaning and giving it over, is moved to start back from that precipice, and groan and look up again. Whence is that, but from Christ's secret making of this intimation to them by his Spirit? Rom. 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

3. That our Lord sees sinners are in hazard of fainting from the entertainment they may meet with during the dependence of their

process, Heb. 12:3. He knows their frame, the hastiness of their spirits, John 7:6, how apt they are to take delays for denials, and be discouraged with what is designed only for their trial. Therefore he opens and forewarns them of the manner of the court, Is. 28:16, "He that believeth shall not make haste."

4. That they that shall hang on, and not faint, shall certainly come speed at length. Luke 18:6, 7, 8, "And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." It is not possible that the soul, continuing resolute to go to no other door, but hanging on at his door, to make its grave there, if it be not let in, can be shut out always, John 6:37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Wilful faith, that will be forward in face of "killing" and "slaying," Job 13:15, will get all its will at length, Matth. 15:28, "Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Secondly, The weight and moment of this intimation. This will appear, if it is considered in a fourfold light.

1. Jesus Christ, who makes it, has experienced it in his own case. The man Christ, the head of the church, had the most important business at the court of heaven that ever came before it; viz., for through-bearing in a work on which his Father's glory, and the salvation of an elect world depended. And he was often in prayer: he spent a whole night in it, Luke 6:12. But see his experience of this manner of the court, Psal. 22:1, 2, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my

roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent." And 69:1–3. "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." Now, if this was the manner with the great Petitioner, how can we expect it should fare otherwise with us? Nay, God, in his dealing with Christ the Head, set down a pattern to be followed thereafter in his dealing with the members, Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Compare ver. 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.

2. He is the great Prophet of heaven, whose office it is to reveal the manner of the court to poor sinners. He is fitted for it, as being on all the secrets of it, which the most favourite angel cannot dive into, John 1:18. Therefore we may be very sure this is the manner of the court; and that those who will manage their business at it otherwise will be sure to mar it.

3. He is the only Intercessor there, the Father's Secretary, the Solicitor for poor sinners there. There is never a petition received at the throne of grace, but what is presented by him; nor graciously granted there, but through his intercession, Rev. 8:3, 4; nor an answer graciously returned, or an order issued out for the sinner's relief, but it comes through his hand, John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Who then can doubt of the necessity by him intimated? and who

must not see the kind aspect that the intercessor's hinting this to the petitioners has on their business?

4. He is himself the hearer of prayer. The angels are called to worship him, Heb. 1:6. Stephen, in his most serious moments, when he was nearest heaven, prays to him, Acts 7:59; a plain evidence that he is true God, the Father's equal, the Supreme, the most high God: for it is written, Deut. 10:20, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name." Compare Matth. 4:10, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Psal. 83:18, "That men may know, that thou whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth." And the Scripture condemns serving those that are not by nature gods, Gal. 4:8. Therefore Christ is God by nature, true God, necessarily existent, independent, God of himself, though not a Son of himself: but the divine essence being eternally and necessarily communicated from the Father to the Son, the Father's communicating it, and the Son's receiving it, are equally glorious. Since then he is the hearer of prayer that makes this intimation, it is equivalent to a promise that prayers so managed shall certainly come speed at length; as appears from Is. 45:19, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

II. The Second thing to be considered, is, The way of the court of heaven, in trysting petitioners with some hardships, during the dependence of their process. Here I shall give you, 1. A swatch of that way; and, 2. Some reasons of that way, whereby to account for it in a suitableness to the divine perfections.

First, A swatch of that way in a few particulars. Though the Lord sometimes gives his people very quick dispatch, (Is. 65:24, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"); yet it is very usual to try them another way.

1. Oft-times there is deep silence from the throne, Matth. 15:23; and that even when the petitioner is crying with the greatest earnestness, and crying incessantly, Psal. 22:1, 2, and is at the point of being overwhelmed for want of help, Psal. 143:7; yet no voice to be perceived, no motion appearing towards the petitioner's relief.

2. Oft-times they get a very angry-like answer. The woman of Canaan got a couple of them, one on the back of another, Matth. 15:24, 26, "But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.—It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." It is very ordinary for Heaven's petitioners to hear some Sinai thunders when they are on Mount Zion; to come in a low and heavy case to the throne, and to go away laid lower then they came. So going with their petitions to the throne of grace, they are teazed there to purpose, and many a foul ply of their heart and life is opened out to them, and they come back with a breast full of convictions, Judges 10:10–14.

3. Many a time, at the sight of the King on the throne, they falter, and their speech fails, that they cannot get words to tell what they would be at, Psal. 77:3, 4. Hence many broken sentences in their petitions, which yet are understood well enough in heaven, the blauks being filled up with groans, Psal. 6:3; Rom. 8:26, 27.

4. Disappointed expectations are a piece of very ordinary entertainment there, Jer. 8:15, "We looked for peace, but no good came: and for a time of health, and behold trouble." Hope may be raised, and yet be deferred, till it make a sick heart. These disappointments may meet the petitioner over and over again; Cant. 3:1, 2, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him but I found him not." If ye ask how long the course of them may last? I know of no term fixed for them but one, and that one is enough for faith, Psal. 9:18, "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." And if ye go to another door than the Lord's, the course of your disappointments will have no end.

5. Many a time, looking for an answer, providence drives a course apparently just contrary to the granting of their petition; so is fulfilled that Psal. 65:5, "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation." And it may be so stunning, as to require much faith not to take that for the final answer, as if God had said, speak no more to me of that matter: and yet the wheel of providence may be but fetching a compass to come to the point desired. Thus the sunk spirits of the Israelites were raised in hope, Exod. 4:31, "And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." But the very first thing that comes after that, chap. 5, is, that they are in a worse condition than ever, their bondage is more intolerable; which made Moses' faith stagger; vers. 22, 23, "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this

people? why is it that thou hast sent me? for since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered the people at all.

6. Lastly, Oft-times the Lord, instead of easing the petitioner, lays new burdens on him, Jer. 8:15, "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble." Instead of curing the old wound, there are new ones given. So that sometimes the waters come in on every side, and compass the poor soul: and yet the Lord, though he see it meet to give the sinner such a gliff, may have no mind he should drown for all that; Psal. 116:3, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." Ver. 6, "The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me:" and 88:17, "They came round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together." So it was in Job's case.

USE 1. Whosoever of you would manage your business successfully at the court of heaven, on this occasion, put on resoluteness to hang on about the Lord's hand, and not to faint, till ye get it to a happy issue. And,

1st, Lay the great business of salvation close to heart, let it be your main business; the securing of your saving interest in Christ, now when you have this solemn occasion of both the word of the covenant, and the seal of the covenant together; not knowing if ever ye may have such a favourable occasion again. Time goes away, death is hastening on, it is dangerous to delay. If ye be indifferent in the business, ye will never hang on.

2dly, Lay it down for a conclusion, ye must have Christ, or ye perish. Pinching need makes men importunate: if ye feel not that, ye will soon weary, and never bring the matter to a good issue, John 6:67, 68, "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." The sinner will hang on at Christ's door when he sees all others shut against him.

3dly, Embrace Christ in the great promise of the gospel, believing the promise; taking a dead gripe of it, never to part. It is held out to you, and every one of you, Heb. 4:1, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." It is the report from heaven to be believed, Is. 53:1. Without faith there is no eviting of fainting, Psal. 27:13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

4thly, Take an eternal farewell of the vain world, and deceitful lusts,; resvolving, that, come what will, ye will hang by Christ in the promise, if ye should die there; saying with Job, chap. 13:15, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." None come aright to Christ but they that come resolutely.

Lastly, Be not hasty, but resolve to wait in expectation, setting no time to the Lord's comforting you, Is. 28:16,—"He that believeth, shall not make haste." Micah. 7:9, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." If all thy life long should pass uncomforted, peace and comfort in the end is well worth waiting on.

Use 2. Be not surprised, nor offended at the way of God, though in your addresses to the throne ye meet with apparent harsh entertainment. They have seemed to themselves to be boasted away, who taking the buffet, have got the bit too by waiting on, like the woman of Canaan, Matt. 15:21–28. The importunity of faith, that is, a continued trust in the promise, and an incessant use of the means, will prevail.

Secondly, I shall give you some reasons of that way, whereby to account for it in a suitableness to the divine perfections.

1. This way is taken with petitioners in the court of heaven; for thereby God is glorified, and his attributes more illustrated than otherwise they would be. In this view of it, Paul welcomes it in his own case, though it was hard to sense, 2 Cor. 12:9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God treating his people thus, displays his wisdom, in guiding the broken vessel safely through many rocks and shelves to land without splitting; that afterwards they are made to say, None else but he could have done it, Is. 9:6, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor;" his power, in supporting them under a pressure that otherwise they would sink under, 2 Cor. 1:8, 9, "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead;" his grace, mercy, and goodness, in seasonable interposings thereof when their

foot is ready to slip, Psal. 94:18, "When I said, My foot slippeth: thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." 2 Cor. 12:9, forecited.

2. Hereby the state of petitioners is tried, and a plain difference constituted between hypocrites and the sincere, Matt. 24:13, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." God's petitioners in the gross are like Gideon's army, Judges 7 far more than are to be trusted. So God brings them down to these waters of trial; and there is a heap of them that must have a fill presently, or they faint, cannot go forward; so they are set on, like the men that bowed down on their knees to drink, Job 27:10, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" Others are disposed to endure hardness, without fainting, like the men that lapped; and they are kept as meet to have their petitions granted at length, Luke 18:7, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

3. Hereby the graces of believing petitioners are tried, both as to the reality and strength of them; particularly their faith and patience, 1 Pet. 1:6, 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 gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. James 1:12, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Our Lord takes great pleasure in the faith and patience of his people, and therefore he puts them sorely to it in these points, like the woman of Canaan, Matt. 15 that they may have occasion to exert themselves vigorously. Sometimes they meet with

such a shock that they are foundered in them: anon there is a secret breathing, and they get to their feet again, and act more vigorously than before, like a giant refreshed with wine, Jonah 2:4, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Hereby they have a double benefit; they see the reality of their faith and patience better than in a calm, and the strength of them more than they could have expected, and withal that they are other things than efforts of natural abilities, no more to be their product, than roses of the desart: Rom. 5:3, 4, 5, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

4. Hereby believers are humbled, and taught that they hold of free grace. The exalting of grace is the great design of the whole contrivance of the gospel. Therefore faith is made the turning point in it, the hinge of it as to us; Rom. 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace: to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed. Therefore this method is used in the dispensation of Heaven's favours according to it, Deut. 8:2, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or not." They that buy with their money must be served presently; but beggars must be content to wait on. There are powerful remains of a legal spirit in the best, kything in requiring supply for their needs, with little sense of their unworthieness; and in a disposition to fret, if they be not quickly answered. It takes much hewing to bring down

these; to empty the man of himself, and to let him see that God is no debtor to him for any thing, great or small.

5. This way is taken for honour of the word, Psal. 138:2, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." There are many letters of God's name, but this Bible is the capital letter of it: and there is not one dispensation of providence, that magnifies the Bible more than this. It is even the thing that bears the head above, and keeps the heart from fainting, in this case, Rom. 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." This treatment at the court of heaven sends the petitioner to the records, which gladden his heart, finding that it has been the ancient way of the court; and in a desert way it is no small comfort to the traveller, to find a track, and the print of some one's feet before him. It makes him mark narrowly, and greedily catch at a word; and to discover a treasure, where many a time, when he went over it before, he saw nothing.

6. Lastly, It is taken to make them long to be home. God's children are in this world, young heirs that are abroad out of their Father's country: they send their letters, and draw their bills on their Father: and while they are speedily answered, at every turn, they live at ease in the strange country, and are not solicitous to be home: but their Father cures them of that, letting them at length write over and over again, without an answer; and ceasing to answer their bills: and then they long to be home.

III. The third thing to be considered, is, The duty of the petitioners to hang on, and not to faint, whatever they meet with. We may view it

in these things following.

1. They must never lift their process from the court of heaven, John 6:67, 68,—"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." It was Saul's ruin, that when God answered him not, when he went to a witch; and the unbelieving Israelites when they heard of the giants of Canaan, that they would be back to Egypt again, Numb. 14:4; and it is the ruin of many, when they find not the sweet in religion that they expected, to go back to the world and their lusts, that will answer them, they think, sooner. But whatever be your sore, ye should protest that it shall run for you, till the Lord put forth his own healing hand, and that ye will not go to another for a cure, Lam. 3:49, 50, "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission: till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven."

2. They must never give over praying, but "pray always." They that will pray about the time of a communion, and afterwards leave it off by degrees, will lose all their pains, and prove themselves to be hypocrites, Job 27:10, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" And Satan sometimes plies distressed souls to give up with it, as what they may see they will do no good with, for that God will not hear them. But that is a deceit of hell which ye must never yield to; no not though God should continue to answer you not a word; nay not though your attempting to pray, should seem to serve for nothing but to set a-raging against you; for it is God's command, that "men pray always." There is less ill in mismanaging prayer than in giving it over altogether; for that is tamely to yield yourselves to Satan's will. And though ye may be in such confusion, as to take the devil's whispers within you for your

own voice, God will carefully distinguish the two, and not lay that to your charge wherein ye are pure sufferers. And continuing to pray, ye are in the way of duty, wherein ye may expect God will hear and pity at length.

3. They must insist on their tabled petitions, while their need remains, whatever entertainment they seem to meet with, as the woman of Canaan did, Matt. 15. If ye insist not, ye will be construed to have fallen from it: but importunity will speed at long-run, Luke 11:8, "I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend: yet, because of his importunity, he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth. And indeed, need continuing to pinch, and the petitioner giving over his crying for supply, is fainting with a witness.

Case. But may it not be that the Lord may say Speak no more to me of this matter? ANSWER. It is true, it may be so, as the Lord did to Moses, Deut. 3:26, "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter. But in that case I conceive, (1.) The Lord shows his people they do not need that thing; let it suffice thee, or thou hast much, or enough. And to quiet Moses in this case, he gave him a sight of the land from Pisgah, ver. 27. (2.) The help of the Spirit as to praying in that particular is withdrawn. There is an embargo laid on them in that point, "Speak no more unto me of this matter."

4. They must carry all their incident needs in new petitions, to the same throne of grace, where the former petition may have been long lying, and still unanswered; and so pursue all together. The latter

must not drive out the former, nor the former keep back the latter. It is one of the ways how the Lord keeps his people hanging about his hand without fainting, by sending them several loads above their burden; which loads he takes off soon at their request; and so makes them go under their burden the more easily. These short incident processes, that get a speedy answer, confirm their faith and hope in waiting on for the answer of the main. I believe it will be found, that the Lord's children, who have had the most tedious process before the throne, have not wanted experience of very quick dispatches in the time, Isa. 65:24, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

5. They must continue in the faith of the promise, never quit the gripe of it; but trust and believe that it shall certainly be accomplished, though the wheels of providence should seem to drive out over it and in over it, Rom. 4:19, 20, "And Abraham being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Providence is not our Bible; the works of God may be very various, but the word of promise is always the same, it is never moved. Ye have a very poetical passage, Psal. 18:7, and downwards. I think it proceeds upon this view, that though all the confusions of the universe cannot move the promise; yet if hills, earth, fire, waters, heavens, were all standing before it to hinder its accomplishment, it would move them all out of their places, and make its way through them.

6. They must keep up hope of the thing promised over the belly of all improbabilities, 2 Pet. 1:13, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your

mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Faith opening the door of the promise, hope sees the blessed answer to the petition lying at the King's hand, however long it may be ere it be transmitted. That is very pleasing to God, Psal. 147:11, "The Lord taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy."

7. Lastly, If at any time they begin to faint, they must wrestle against it, that they go not quite away, Heb. 10:35, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." If faith and hope fail, so will patience: but ye must set yourselves to believe over the belly of sense, and hope against hope.

USE. Christians, communicants, and whosoever of you would have your business go right in heaven, go from this place resolute to hang on about the Lord's hand, and not to faint, whatever ye have met with, or shall meet with from that airth. Have a horror of fainting, giving over, or going back to another door. Consider,

1. If ye faint and give over, your suit is lost, ye have given up with it. And,

1st, If your suit be the main thing, the eternal wellbeing of your soul, which is what we all pretend to; then your soul is lost, Heb. 10:38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Be resolute in religion, as ever ye would not be eternally lost; for none will get to heaven but those that have a brow for a bargain, to yoke with difficulties in the way, and go through them. It is a concerning word, Rev. 21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving,—shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death." I think it has a view to the fearful and unbelieving

disposition that kept the Israelites out of Canaan, Numb. 13:33, and 14.

2dly, If it be a temporal mercy, ye may get it, but the substance will be out of it, at least till ye repent of your fainting, Psal. 116:15, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."

2. If ye hold on and faint not, be your on-waiting ever so long, it shall not be in vain. Matth. 24:13, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Gal. 6:9, "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." God will never put those away empty from him, that hang on, and will not go without the blessing.

3. He is well worth the waiting on. (1.) Though he is infinitely above us, he has waited long on us. (2.) The longer you are called to wait for a mercy, ye will readily find it the more valuable when it comes. The promise uses to go longest with the biggest mercy; witness the promise of Christ, while many lesser promises brought forth. (3.) His time will be found the due time, Gal. 6:9; the best chosen time for the mercy's coming; witness the time of Isaac's birth. (4.) Ye shall be sure of some blessed offallings, while ye wait on, Psal. 27:14, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." and 138:3, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Ye shall be sure of some pledge of a good answer, Jer. 52:31, 32.

4. Lastly, They have waited long, that have lost all, by not having patience to wait a little longer, Exod. 32; 1 Sam. 13:8, 10. Therefore "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and

entire, wanting nothing," James 1:4; "for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not," Gal. 6:9.

THE HAPPY ISSUE OF PRAYING ALWAYS, AND NOT FAINTING

Two Sermons preached, on a Sacramental occasion, at Galashiels, August 12 and 13, 1727.

I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. - LUKE 18:8.

AT a late occasion I spoke to the scope of this parable from ver. 1. The parable itself we have vers. 2–5, the doctrine of it, vers. 6, 7. In the text we have the doctrine of it repeated, amplified, and confirmed.

1. The doctrine of the parable is here repeated, "He will avenge them." Our Lord had already laid it before his disciples, ver. 7, in very strong terms: for it is a point upon the belief of which very much depends; particularly his people's "praying always, and not fainting:" q. d. God will certainly hear them at length; therefore they must hang on about his hand crying, and not faint.

1st, Consider the parties for whom this benefit is secured; them. It refers to ver. 7; and so the parties are, they that "cry unto God night and day; and what that is, appears from the scope: it is even to "pray always, and not to faint;" which I have already explained. So they who having laid petitions for supply of their needs before the Lord, do hang on and insist without fainting and giving over, are assured of

a happy issue of their process, however tedious it may be. This is good news to petitioners at the court of heaven, though their answer may have been so long delayed, that it seems as if they would never be heard: this may make them renew their suit, and pursue as a giant refreshed with wine.

OBJECTION. But it is expressly restricted to the elect; therefore, though I hang on never so long, I am, may be, none of God's elect, and therefore can have no encouragement from it. ANSWER. The scope of the parable looks to men indefinitely, ver. 1, "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" and the term elect is no restriction of the criers that are to be heard, as if there were some that cry day and night unto God, that are elect ones; and others that cry night and day unto him that are not elect ones. No; but the crying of the elect day and night in the sense of the text, is proposed as an evidence of eternal election: it is inferred from their so crying, that they are elect ones, and therefore shall surely be heard. Q. d. The unjust judge heard a woman he had no regard for, because she came continually to him: how much more will a just God hear those that are coming continually to him, since they are surely his chosen ones, else they would certainly give it over, and go to another door?

2dly, The benefit secured for them, "He will avenge them;" that is, agreeable to the general scope, he will hear them at length to their full satisfaction; their process shall have a happy issue. But it is expressed by "avenging them," to intimate, (1.) That all the grievances that God's children labour under, and which send them crying to God for relief, arise from their adversaries, temporal or spiritual, without them or within them. (2.) That they are not able to rid themselves of their adversaries, but must grapple with their

burden till another hand take it off. (3.) That God will not only deliver them, but shew them just vengeance on the springs of their grievances.

2. The doctrine of the parable amplified, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Though they think they are put to wait long, yet matters being weighed in an even balance, they shall have a quick return of their prayers.

3. The confirmation of the whole, "I tell you," Our Lord Christ gives his word for it.

The doctrine from the first verse was, that our Lord Jesus Christ has kindly intimated to all that have business at the court of heaven, the necessity of so managing themselves, that they still hang on there, and not faint, whatever entertainment they meet with during the dependence of their process. And, in pursuance of the same scope, from the 8th verse compared with the first, I observe the following

DOCTRINE. To move them that have business at the court of heaven, still to hang on there, and not to faint, whatever hardships they meet with during the dependence of their process, our Lord Jesus hath expressly intimated that such petitioners shall certainly be heard to their heart's content, and that speedily, in reality, however tedious their process may seem to them for the time. Briefly, Jesus Christ has given his word for it, that such petitioners at the court of heaven, as will hang on and not faint, shall certainly be heard to their heart's content, and that speedily.

In handling this doctrine, I shall show,

I. What is that treatment petitioners meet with at the court of heaven, under which they will be in hazard of fainting.

II. Why petitioners are in hazard of fainting from such treatment at the court of heaven.

III. Wherefore the Lord gives such treatment to any of his petitioners.

IV. What is the import of this intimation made for this end.

V. The certainty of such petitioners being heard at length.

VI. How they shall be heard to their heart's content.

VII. How it shall be speedily, notwithstanding the long delay.

VIII. Apply.

I. First, I shall shew what is that treatment petitioners may meet with at the court of heaven, under which they will be in hazard of fainting. I mentioned several particulars at another occasion; I offer now only three things in general.

1. The weight and pressure of their heavy case itself, whatever it is, may be long continued, notwithstanding all their addresses for help, Jer. 8:20, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." They may come again and again to the throne of grace, with their burden on their back, and as often carry it away with them. And that is faintsome work. A short trial, though it be sharp, is but "running with the footmen;" but a long continued one is "contending

with horses," apt to run one out of breath, Psal. 6:3, "My soul also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long?

2. There may be no appearance of relief, Psal. 74:9, "We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." A glimpse of an appearance of relief, though yet afar off, would be like a cordial to the weary attendants, howbeit their night may have been long and dark, and yet no sign of day-break to be discerned. The petitioners are apt to faint, who though they often listen, can hear no voice; though they look oft to the throne, can discern no moving toward their relief, Psal. 119:123, "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness."

3. They may get incident weights laid on them, as a load above their burden, Psal. 69:26, "They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded." These are like drops poured into a full cup, ready to cause it run over; like smart touches on a broken leg, inclining one readily to faint.

II. The second thing to be spoke to, is, why petitioners are in hazard of fainting from such treatment at the court of heaven. Four things concur to it.

1. Natural weakness, Is. 40:6, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. On this very view the Lord "pities his children," Psal. 103:13, 14. We have weak backs, easily bowed down under a heavy burden, Psal. 38:6; weak hearts, Soon damped, where God shews himself our party; weak heads, and are soon brought to our wits end; weak hands, that can do little for

ourselves at a pinch; and weak knees, ready to bow, and let us go to the ground, after long hanging on.

2. Conscience of guilt, Psal. 38:5, 6, "My wounds stink, and are corrupt; because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." Guilt is a mother of fears, and fears cause fainting. The sinner goes to God with his pinching case, he is not answered: presently there is a quarrel apprehended, the man knows he is a criminal, and the guilty conscience whispers in his ear, "There is no hope."

3. Unacquaintedness with the methods of sovereignty, Psal. 77:19, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." The mysteries of the management of providence have perplexed saints of the first magnitude, as Asaph, Jeremiah, &c. We are apt to measure God's ways by our own, which occasions much fainting in trials: whereas they differ as far as heaven and earth, Is. 55:8, 9.

4. A strong bias to unbelief and walking by sense, quite contrary to our duty and interest, 2 Cor. 5:7. We are apt to be impressed more with what we see and feel in providence, than what we hear from the word. And whereas we should expound providence by the promise, the word being our rule, and so get the cordial virtue of it; we expound the promise by providence, and so put ourselves in hazard of fainting: Luke 24:20, 21, 25, 26, "The chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe

all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

III. The third thing to be considered is, wherefore the Lord gives such treatment to any of his petitioners.

First, Negatively.

1. It is not for mere will and pleasure. Satan will be ready to suggest this, and pose the party with such questions as these, for what use is all this delay? what glory comes to God by it? what profit comes to you by it? Good folk may listen overmuch to it. But it is a lie, that it is for mere will and pleasure, Lam. 3:33, "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

1. It is not because he has no pity on you, nor concern for you under your burden; though Zion, by the suggestion of Satan, may entertain that jealousy of her God, which he flatly refuses, Is. 49:14, 15, "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." Whatever the Lord's way be with thee, it is an eternal scripture truth, "God is love," 1 John 4:16, "gracious and full of compassion," Psal. 111:4. And it is apparent even in this case, in that it is not worse with thee, Lam. 3:22, and that thou art always getting new supports under thy burden, ver. 23.

3. It is not to signify to you that you should give it over, and trouble him no more with your petition; as the hasty unbelieving heart is ready to take it, and to give over duty because there is no sensible appearance of success, Jer. 20:9. "I said I will not make mention of

him nor speak any more in his name." He has signified his will to be the quite contrary, 1 Thess. 5:17. "Pray without ceasing;" and our Lord spoke this parable to prevent that misconstruction.

4. Lastly, It is not because he is resolved not to hear you at any rate, cry as long as ye will. Satan will interpret it that way to you, and there is too much listening to it, Hab. 1:2. "O Lord, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of of violence, and thou wilt not save!" He has promised the contrary Psal. 50:15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Our Lord assures you of the contrary in the text.

Secondly, But positively, in general,

It is for holy, wise, becoming ends; it is necessary for his glory and your case. Believe that on the credit of the word, Deut. 32:4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." There is not one random step in his whole way, Lam. 3:33. There is a necessity for what he does.

OBJECTION. I cannot see how my case requires it, or what glory God can have by it. ANSWER. You are no competent judge of what your case requires, and therefore you should leave that to the Lord, Psal. 47:4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us;" Jer. 10:23, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." If you are sick, you leave it to your physician how to order your case: if your affairs are perplexed, and you have a plea at law, you leave it to your lawyer: and when you have a process at the court of heaven, will you not leave it to your God?

Ye are as little competent judges of what glory God can have by such and such a management. God can raise glory to himself, where ye can see nothing but dishonour to him: and he will have it, Rom. 11:36, "For—to him are all things." Believe that, and leave the way of raising it to himself. The seed of glory to God in Job's trial, neither he nor his friends generally saw for a long time: yet it sprung up fair at length, and flourishes to this day.

But particularly,

1. It is for the honour of the man Christ. It contributes to it,

1st, In that thereby the petitioners are conformed to his image, in the suffering part thereof. He met with that treatment at the throne, Psal. 22:1, 2, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent." And for a reward of his bearing it, it is appointed it should be the way of the court ever after. And therefore none of God's children shall miss to share of it, in greater or lesser measure, soon or late, Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.

2dly, Thereby he gets the more employment as the great Intercessor, and is more earnestly applied to than otherwise he would be. Longsome pleas give the advocates much ado; and longsome processes at the court of heaven bring much business to the Mediator, and so much honour.

3dly, It affords him the most signal occasion of displaying his power in combating with and baffling the old serpent, next to that he had

on the cross, 2 Cor. 12:9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Here Satan and a weak creature is yoked, Heaven standing by and looking on. The poor creature has a burden on his back, he cries, Lord take it off, and cries again, but no answer: Satan takes the advantage, works against him to make him faint; but the combat is maintained, and Satan is baffled, through secret support conveyed to the sinner from Jesus.

2. To shew who are meet to be heard, and who not? who have a due value for the mercy petitioned for, and the God in whose hand it is? Israel wandered in the wilderness till all the despisers of the pleasant land, and unbelievers of the word, dropt off: and Caleb and Joshua, who followed the Lord fully, were brought in. The fainting petitioners either despise the mercy, by dropping it; or God himself, by carrying their process to another.

3. To magnify the promise. Satan, in man's state of innocence, bent his main force against the threatening, to shake man's faith of it. Now he bends his main force against the promise, to make poor sinners quit their grips of it. In such a case there is a solemn struggle about it; faith holds, and the devil draws. The believer sees he is gone if he quit it; it is his all; and therefore, though the floods overflow, he strives to keep the gripe.

4. Lastly, To keep up the mercy, till that time come, that, all things considered, will be the absolutely best time for bestowing it, John 11:14, 15. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. I am

glad for your sakes, that I was not there (to the intent ye may believe); nevertheless, let us go unto him."

USE 1. Know then, that trifling and careless management will not do at the court of heaven. Deep earnest ye must be in, resolved not to take a nay-say. Be sincere, prepare, and vigorously press your suits.

2. This may encourage sinners to come to Christ, and to put their case in his hand, and hang on. Particularly back-sliders, and whosoever are fore-boding no good to themselves from him, may be encouraged by this doctrine.

IV. The fourth thing to be spoke to is, What is the import of this intimation made for this end? It imports,

1. That sinners are ready to take delays at the court of heaven for denials. Satan and their own and unbelieving hearts tell them they are so. And therefore, in opposition to this, and to prevent the mistake, our Lord expressly gives his word that it is not so.

2. That importunity and resolute hanging on, and repeated addresses for the supply of the same need, are very welcome and acceptable to Christ and his Father. There is no fear of excess here; the oftener ye come, the more resolute ye are in your hanging on, the more welcome. The intercessor will not weary of your putting your petitions in his hands, nor his Father of taking them out of his.

3. That the faith of being heard at length, is necessary to keep one hanging on without fainting, Psal. 27:13. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Petitioners indifferent whether they be heard or not, may continue

their customary prayers without the faith of being heard: but if men be in deep earnest with their petitions, they will never escape fainting without faith, Rom. 4:18, 19, 20.

4. That the hearing to be got at length at the court of heaven, is well worth the waiting on, be it ever so long. It will more than counterbalance all the fatigue of the process, that is kept longest in dependance. And the faith of this should be kept up, to keep the petitioner from fainting.

V. The fifth thing in the method is, The certainty of such petitioners being heard at length. Here it is necessary to repeat what was said of the duty of hanging on and not fainting, that we may see who they are that are such petitioners.* Now, that such petitoners will be heard, is beyond peradventure, however long they get to wait on, if ye consider,

1. They are doubtless God's own children, elect believers, whatever they think of themselves, Luke 17:7. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" If they were not so, they could never take such a treatment at God's hand, and yet still hang on about it, John 8:35. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever." And will not God hear the cries of his own children at length? certainly he will. The begun resemblance to their elder brother must be complete, 2 Tim. 2:11, 12. "It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him, &c.

2. The nature, name, and promise of God, join to insure it. He is good and gracious in his nature, Exod. 34:6–9. He has bowels of mercy

more tender than a mother to her sucking child, Is. 49:15. He is the hearer of prayer, Psal. 65:2 and will he not answer that part of his name? will he not hear his own children, and hear them after they have cried long, and still continue crying? He has bound himself by promise, Psal. 50:15. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me:" and 102:17. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." And will he not perform this his promise?

3. Such prayers are the product of his own Spirit in them, and therefore he cannot miss to be heard, James 5:16. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Ye say, ye have cried so long, and no answer; and therefore your petitions appear to be the product of nature, not of the Spirit of God. But I say, according to the word, ye have cried so long and no answer, and yet continue crying, and have not fainted, and given over, but stick by it resolutely; therefore your petitioning is not the product of nature, but of the Spirit. For nature's praying is a pool that will dry up in a long drought; but the Spirit of prayer is the lasting spring, John 4:14. If thou art strengthened to hang on, and not faint, it is a token heaven's hand is at thy upholding; as was the case with David, Psal. 138:3, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

4. Our Lord Jesus has given his word on it, and so has impawned his honour they shall be heard, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Now, he is the Intercessor at the court of heaven, and his intercession is never baulked there: so the honour of the Mediator, and his people's being heard, are in one bottom to sink or swim

together; and he is able to secure his own honour: and does not that make sure work of your being heard? I proceed to shew,

VI. Sixthly, How they shall be heard to their heart's content.

1. They shall at length see that their prayers have been accepted. I do not say they shall at length be accepted, but they shall see they have been so. Many cannot think those prayers are accepted, that do not come soon back with an answer. But that is a mistake; for the petitions of those that hang on and faint not, proceeding from that disposition, are accepted instantly, though many years should run ere the answer come back, 1 John 5:14, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." God doth with his wrestling children's petitions, as a father with letters sometimes from his son in a far country, he reads them with pleasure and affection always as they come to his hand, and lays them bypast to be all answered at the most convenient time: Matth. 15:28, "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

2. They shall get an answer of their petitions to their heart's satisfaction, Matth. 15:28, forecited. Psal. 9:18, "The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." God will tell out to them according to the promise in answer to their prayers; so that they shall change their wrestling note, and say, "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications, Psal. 116:1, and look on what they have met with as bearing the signature of the hand of a prayer-hearing God. Their burden shall be taken off, and they shall have their petitions in kind, or equivalent to their heart's content, 2 Cor. 12:9, "And he said unto

me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

3. They shall be fully satisfied as to the long delay, and the whole steps of the procedure, however perplexing they were before Rev. 15:3, "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Standing on the shore, and looking back to what they have passed through, they will be made to say, He hath done all things well; and they will see that there could have none of it been wanting.

4. They shall get it with increase according to the time they waited on, and the hardships they sustained during the dependence of the process. The fruit of the promise, the longer it is a-ripening, the more bulky it is. Abraham and Sarah waited for the promised child till they were coming into extreme old age, the very next step to death, Gen. 18:11; but they got with it an addition of the renewing of their ages, Gen. 21:7; and 25:1.

5. Lastly, Their spiritual enemies that flew thick and strong about them in the time of the darkness, shall be scattered at the appearance of this light, 1 Sam. 2:5, "They that were full, have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry, ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children, is waxed feeble." Formidable was Pharaoh's host while the Israelites had the Red Sea before them: but when they were through the sea, they saw the Egyptians dead upon the shore, Exod. 14:30. Such a heart-sight shall they that hang on and faint not get of Satan and all his black bands. I proceed to shew,

VII. Seventhly, How it shall be speedily, notwithstanding the long delay.

1. It shall be speedily in respect of the weight and value of it when it comes: so that the believer looking on the return of his petition, with an eye of faith perceiving the worth of it, may wonder it is come upon so short on-waiting. This view of it the apostle takes, 2 Cor. 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And so says Zophar, Job 11:16, "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away."

2. It shall come in the most seasonable nick of time it can come in, Gal. 6:9 when it may come to the best advantage for the honour of God and their good: and that which comes in the best season, comes speedily. To every thing there is a season; so fools' haste is no speed. Times and seasons are in the Lord's hand, and all his works are best-timed, Deut. 32:4 and will abide the strictest examination, Eccles. 3:14.

3. It shall come as soon as they are prepared for it, Psal. 10:17. "Thou will prepare their heart;" and if it should come sooner, it would be over soon. And it may take long time to prepare for it; there may be many a lesson to learn, much working on their will may be necessary, ere they be prepared for it.

4. It shall not tarry one moment beyond the due and appointed time, Hab. 2:3, "Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry;" it will not linger, postpone, or put off beyond that due time. Whatever way the wheel of providence be driving, it is a wheel within a wheel, and so needs spend no time in turning about.

5. Lastly, It will be surprising, as a glaring light to one brought out of a dungeon, though he was expecting it. No doubt the church was expecting the end of their captivity in Babylon toward the end of the seventy years: yet such was the change, it was surprising, they "were like men that dreamed," Psal. 126:1.

USE 1. Let all know that it is not in vain to seek the Lord. God's trust is better than the world's hand-payment. Though waiting on at the court of heaven may be longsome, yet it is a sure way to get our wants supplied.

2. All ye that have now set your faces heavenward, professing your resolution to forsake sin and the world, and to hang on about the Lord's hand for all; do not look back, turn not away from him, Heb. 10:38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Remember it is "he that endures to the end shall be saved."

3. Think it not strange if ye meet with treatment at the hand of the Lord, whereby ye may be in hazard of fainting. He loves to try his followers. But be resolute to hang on about his hand, come what will, and ye will be sure to speed at length.

4. Ye that are going away mourning from this communion because of a hiding God, and a hungry meal ye have got; do not despond; but inquire into the causes, mourn over them, and renew your addresses to the throne vigorously; and what ye missed in public, ye may get in secret.

5. Lastly, Ye that are under any pressure, who have been long tossed with tempests and not comforted, nor have any appearance of comfort shewing itself; comfort yourselves with the words of the text,

believing it; while ye can have no comfort from the appearance of providence; and be resolute in hanging on, and faint not. And ye have Christ's word for it, your case shall have a happy issue, though never so desperate like.

And whoever would be kept from fainting, and animated to hang on about the Lord's hand, believe, that hanging on ye shall certainly be heard at length to your heart's content. For so hathour Lord said, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

THE STRENGTH OF CHRIST ILLUSTRATED IN THE WEAKNESS OF HIS PEOPLE

Two Sermons preached on a Sacramental occasion at Galashiels, July 31, and August 1, 1731.

For my strength is made perfect in weakness. - 2 COR. 12:9.

IN the Lord's leading his people through the wilderness of this world, there are many mysteries of providence which are too high for them to comprehend; so that, after the narrowest scrutiny into them, they must conclude as Psal. 77:19. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." But the light of glory hereafter will satisfy their sense as to all the particular steps therein; and till that time come, there is a light of the word that may satisfy faith as the general design of them; and the text has a beam of such light in it. In the words,

First, Observe the connexion poiuting to the mystery this beam of light was sent to clear; "For," &c. That we may see what this aims at, we must look back to the preceding account; where we find, (1.) Paul wrapt up into the third heavens, while yet alive, ver. 2. (2.) the same Paul quickly after in a kind of hell upon the earth; where instead of the pleasurable glance and taste of the happiness of the heavenly society he had got, he finds himself yoked in close combat with the devil, ver. 7; whom if he did not see with his eyes, he certainly felt the weight of his hands upon his body and spirit; for I think there is no reason to recede from the literal sense of the text. (3.) Paul praying

again and again in this humble situation, to be brought out of it, ver. 8. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." (4.) The answer given to his prayer, whereof the text is a part. And here is, 1st, The precise answer to his petition, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" Wherein there is, (1.) Something implied, viz. that the Lord was not minded to give the riding stroke as yet, but the combat behoved to continue longer, and how long he was not to know. (2.) Something expressed, viz. That he had such a second, that there should be no fear of the issue, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Now, 2dly, Our text is the justifying reason of this answer; not of the expressed part of it, the sufficiency of the Lord's grace; but the implied part, the divine conduct in letting the battle go on, though by this time it was with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood. Q. d. Paul, be not stumbled at this; I have a becoming design in suffering it to go on, and not giving the decisive stroke as yet.

Secondly, The beam of light clearing this mystery in the general to faith: "my strength is made perfect in weakness." Wherein is set forth,

1st, An amicable yoking of divine strength and creature-weakness. There was indeed here a most powerful evil spirit, yoked in a hostile manner with weak flesh and blood; so that had they two, without any interposition from heaven, been left to dispute it, the former had torn the latter in a thousand pieces. But there was an invisible divine hand with the weak party, that supported against the strong.

2dly, The illustration of the glory of the divine strength by this conjunction with creature-weakness; "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Where,

1. Consider whose is this strength. It is the Lord's to whom Paul prayed vers. 8, 9: and that was the Lord Christ, ver. 9. To him Paul prayed, in this combat with Satan, it being he who by his office was to bruise the serpent. Whereby it appears, that he is true God, God, by nature, as being the object of divine worship, and the subject of sovereign divine power, Col. 2:9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

2. What his strength is. It certainly comprehends the strength of his grace lodged in him as Mediator, but is not confined to his moral perfections, but takes in the whole divine power, whereby he is able to do all things for the weak creature, whatever its weakness be: for the words are general.

3. One of those fields wherein it exerts itself, viz. weakness. It exerts itself in the strong, both in heaven and earth; and without it the strongest would be weak as water. But on this earth there is occasion for exerting itself in the weak, in their weakness; working in, by, and with the real weakness and felt weakness of the creature.

4. With what advantage it exerts itself in the creature's weakness: it is "made perfect" there. There is a twofold perfecting of a thing; one real, by adding to it something that it wanted to complete it, and the power of Christ being infinite, is not capable of that: another manifestation, whereby that which was vailed before comes to be discovered, like the sun getting forth from under a cloud. Thus Christ's "strength is made perfect in weaknsss:" it shines forth the more illustriously there, that it doth as it were appear alone, unmixed with creature-strength.

DOCTRINE. The strength and power of our Lord Christ, being perfected or illustrated in the weakness of the creature, sufficiently clears the dispensation of his keeping his people, so long as he really doth, struggling in circumstances of weakness in this world.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Consider this dispensation.

II. The matter clearing it.

III. Apply.

I. First, We shall consider this dispensation. The Father has committed all judgment into the hand of the Son: Christ the Mediator has the charge of conducting all his redeemed ones through the world, to the promised land, John 5:22; Is. 55:4. And here is his conduct in that matter, this is the stated course of his dispensations, keeping them long struggling in circumstances of weakness. And here consider,

First, The place of it. That is only this world. It begins with them as soon as, believing on him, they resign themselves to his conduct: it continues with them all along, while they are on the way: but when he has them at home in heaven, that dispensation is for ever laid aside as to them. It has no place but in this lower world. Paul, from the time he became a Christian, had a continued struggle, till he was wrapt up to the third heaven, Rom. 7:24. While he was there in that case, it intermitted. But when he came back again he even fell into it anew; and the first attack of it was most fearful.

Secondly, The nature of it; which we may take up in these two.

1st, He obliges them to a struggle, Matth, 11:12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." They are not to expect an easy passage through the world to the promised land; but must trust him their desired ease till they come to their journey's end. They are obliged to do it,

1. In that he lays great pieces of work to their hand, doing work, suffering work. He will not have them to be idle: every day will cast up its own piece of work, that unless they fall asleep, they will find their hand filled every day. And if at any time they do fall asleep, when they awaken again, they will find their work increased on their hand.

2. In that he suffers them to meet with great opposition. The wind of providence from heaven, often blows strong in their face for their trial, Gen. 22:1. The wind of temptation from hell, and opposition from that airth never falls, and at times rises very boisterous, and becomes tempestuous, as in the apostle's case here, ver. 7. Meanwhile they must not run in from their work, and take a house till it turn calm; but must hold on their way. This constitutes the struggle, Eph. 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

2dly, Yet, though he obliges them to this struggling life, he, in the depth of his wisdom keeps them in circumstances of weakness; and these circumstances of,

1. Real weakness; whereby it comes to pass, that they really want within themselves a sufficient stock of ability, to manage their work, and grapple with and force their way through the opposition made them in it. He himself owns this to be the way of his managing his people, that he keeps them from hand to mouth, John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing."

2. Felt weakness. They are not strong enough for their work, and he makes them sensible it is so, 2 Cor. 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." So that both builders and bearers about the temple of the Lord, are obliged with one voice to say, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain," Psal. 127:1. And if at any time they lose this sense of their weakness, it is his way to leave them to their own weight, till, catching a fall, the smart bring them to themselves, to a sense of their weakness; as in Peter's case.

More particularly, our Lord keeps his people while here,

1st, Always in circumstances of natural weakness; and these,

1. Of pure natural weakness, a weakness that is inwrought with human flesh, though at its prime, Is. 40:6, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." The witnesses hereof are, the need of meat, drink, sleep, &c. wherewith the tabernacles of clay must daily be underpropped. Even this makes God's children objects of their "Father's pity," Psal. 102:13, 14.

2. Of sinful natural weakness; not that he brought them under such weakness, but he suffers them to lie under it. There are remains of

the corruption of nature in them all, which makes them a company of poor groaning weaklings, Rom. 7:24. Grace has got in indeed, but corruption is not yet quite got out. The Canaanites are left in the land, and they are not able to clear the land of them. And this corruption of nature hath a strong bias, in each of them, to some particular evil, according to their various tempers and circumstances, "the sin that easily besets them," Heb. 12:1.

2dly Often in circumstances of accidental weakness, through a variety of afflictions, trials, and temptations, weakening their bodies, or weakening their spirits, or weakening both together; as in Paul's ease here. The particulars of this kind are too numerous to enter into the detail of: physicians and divines have filled books with them respectively.

Thirdly The difficulty casting up about this dispensation. Th is a twofold knot here.

1. The first lies in that he can put them out of those circumstances of weakness, yet he keeps them in them. The former cannot be questioned, since his divine power could have perfected them in the moment of conversion, both naturally and morally: what he will do to their souls at death, to their persons at the resurrection, he could have done in the moment of their union with him. The latter is manifest from the experience of his people in all ages and places of this world.

2. The second lies in the consequences of this dispensation. The weak things act weakly, leaving the marks of their weakness on all they do, and groan under the whole. Here the creature's hardships and pressures are the easiest part; but the sin, and dishonour to God that

eventually attends them under this dispensation, ties the knot straitest, and makes many a weary look for the deliverance.

II. Secondly, We are to consider the matter clearing this dispensation; which is, that the strength and power of Christ is illustrated in the weakness of the creature. And here we would shew, 1. Wherein the strength of Christ is illustrated in the way of this dispensation; and, 2. The becomingness thereof.

First, Wherein the strength of Christ is illustrated in the way of this dispensation.

1. In supporting them under their weakness, 2 Cor. 1:8, 9, 10. The more ready the house is to fall, the more does appear the efficacy of the prop that holds it up. The dispensation of providence towards some of the saints, in supporting them under their pressures, is a train of wonders: the dispensation of grace supporting them all, is a continued miracle, in that the spark of grace is not extinguished, in the ocean of corruption wherewith it is encompassed in themselves and others, put in agitation by the powers of darkness.

2. In doing great things by them, weak and contemptible as they are. How illustriously shines the power of Christ in making "worm Jacob thrash the mountains," Is. 41:14, 15, weak creatures victorious over all the power of the enemy? It is in such Christ chooses to set forth his God-like strength, his divine power, 2 Cor. 4:7. When he set forth with his gospel in the world, Satan had the power of the sword, and the learning in the world, on his side: but Christ, by a few illiterate fishermen, Paul expected, carried his point against Satan with his swordsmen and bookmen too.

3. In strengthening them out of weakness, Heb. 11:34. How often is their case, when at the weakest, nearest to a strengthening; and the fainting saint becomes like a giant refreshed with wine, by a touch of Christ's hand, a word from his mouth! Is. 40:29, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Amos 5:9, "The Lord strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong; so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress." Paul speaks his usual experience of this, 2 Cor. 12:10, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." He gives strength for a particular effect: when the work comes to the setting to, it comes, according to Matt. 10:19, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak:" when the work is done, it goes. So the timing and continuance of it, speaks whence it comes, that it is not home-bred, but heaven-bred.

4. Lastly, In bringing the weak things, through all their difficulties, safe home at long-run, Psal. 73:24. O wonderful counsellor, that will guide such a weak company, through all their snares, to glory! how must the power and skill of the pilot shine, in bringing such broken and shattered vessels, amidst so many rocks and shelves, in a tempestuous sea, safe to land! Surely, whatever doubts remain now with them about this dispensation, when they set their foot on the shore, they will sing the song of Hoses and the Lamb, and say of his whole dispensations, "He has done all things well."

Thus do shine forth in this dispensation,

1. The strength of the wisdom of Christ, and it writes his name in legible characters, THE WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR. What wisdom but divine could conduct such a company of weaklings, under such circumstances of weakness, through all the powers of the enemy, so as to lose none of them! Mark that connexion, Is. 40:28–31, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there it no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have 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 be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

2. The power of his hand, which eminently exerts itself here. To do great things by mighty instruments, is the way of the creatures: but to do great things by weak and contemptible means, is the way of Christ, because he is GOD. To overthrow mountains by earthquakes, is the work of God in nature; but to make a worm thrash mountains small as dust, is his work in grace.

3. The power of his grace, 2 Cor. 12:9. Here it appears an immortal seed; and to be, in its meanest lodging, the heart of a weak creature, impregnable: whence? Not from its own nature, as such a created quality, evident from Adam's case: but that it is the grace of Christ, communicated out of his fulness, and thereby, fed as from a continual spring, John 4:14, "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

4. Lastly, The strength of Christ's interest in heaven, which procures the weak ones so many pardons, keeps them in the state of favour with God, and at last gets them, notwithstanding all their weakness and worthlessness, set up vessels of glory in the upper house.

USE 1. Hence we proclaim Jesus Christ a fit support for all weak ones to draw to: come to him then, ye weak creatures, that his power may be displayed in you, to his honour, and your good.

There are other weak ones than the saints, though none so sensible of their weakness as they. Strangers to Christ, ye are weak, dead-weak, however strong in your own conceit. To convince you that feel it not,

1. Are ye brought out of the state wherein Adam left you? No, ye are not. Then ye are weak, Rom. 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly:" not only weak bodies, but weak souls, notwithstanding all your natural and acquired abilities. And it is owing to the lowness of your case, that ye are not sensible of it.

2. What head can ye make against disease or death? 1 Cor. 15:55, 56, 57. What strength for that encounter? Is. 40:6, All must die, say ye; but the saints through Christ are proof against the sting of it; but what safeguard against it have ye?

3. Are your own legs able to bear you before the tribunal of God? Surely not, Psal. 143:2, "In thy sight shall no man living be justified." Why seek ye not then for shelter under the covert of blood? I say then,

1st, Insensible sinners, come to a sense of your weakness. and under the sense of it come to Christ. Without it ye will not.

2dly, Sensible sinners, let not your weakness scare you from Christ, but rather prompt you not to delay coming, Matt. 9:12. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." They will perish in their weakness that come not.

Let all consider, that whoever they be in whom the strength of Christ's grace shall not be displayed, in a state of union with him, the strength of his hand will be displayed against them for ever, in a state of separation from him, 2 Thess. 1:8.

USE. 2. Communicants may hence be directed in their approach, to come under a sense of their weakness, to receive the seal of God's covenant insuring the strength of Christ to be forthcoming for them under all their weakness. And all that are minded for heaven, may learn to set themselves to submit to this dispensation, and to lay their account to live by faith, not by sense, till they get home.

SECONDLY, The becomingness of this constitution. It will appear worthy of God, and therefore in reason should be satisfying to the creature, if ye consider,

1. That the man Christ is now in heaven, and will be to the end of the world, Acts 3:21. But by this means his divine power is, for his glory, still illustrated in the world. While he was on the earth, he did now and then let out a beam of his divine glory: but he was nevertheless put to an ignominious death in it; and his enemies gave out, that he was swallowed up in death as other men. But by this means there is a continual proof of his resurrection, ascension, and divine power, kept

up and to be kept up in the world to the end, in that continued display of his strength in the weakness of his people, 2 Cor. 4:11. "For we which live, are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." Consider,

1st, His divine power had a vail cast over it, when he was on earth, Phil. 2:7. and in his sufferings, crucifixion, death, and burial, he appeared in human weakness, 2 Cor. 13:4. Is it not worthy of God then, that now, when he is in heaven, his divine power should shine forth in its turn in the world; and that there should be a scene of human weakness, wherein it may to the greatest advantage display itself?

2dly, This display of the strength of Christ in the weakness of his people appears full to their conviction: and the more weak they are, they see it the more clearly while it is exerted in them; as contraries appear best by one another's side. And thus the glory of the power of Christ continually shines in the world, in the eyes of them who feel it.

3dly, While there is a people in the world compassed about with much weakness yet professing their dependance on the strength of Christ, and they are accordingly strengthened, in many instances at least, to the conviction of beholders; this is a sufficient objective evidence of the power of Christ to the world, sufficient to extort a confession of it from them, as Psal. 126:2.—"Then said they among the Heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." Is. 61:9. "Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed;" or to leave them

inexcusable. Hence, in all times of persecution, the support from heaven that confessors and martyrs had, hath brought numbers over to their side, so that the blood of the martyrs usually proved the seed of the church.

Hence I conclude, that this constitution and method of providence and grace in the church on earth, is a glorious device worthy of God, for displaying the glory of Christ. There, where he was some time covered over with ignominy, reproach, and disgrace, as weak and contemptible, a worm not a man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people," is his glory displayed, Psal. 22:5.

2. It is agreeable to the method of divine procedure in other things, and so makes the divine conduct to be of a piece. Wherein we may observe, that it is God's ordinary way, (1.) To carry on great works by degrees, and not immediately to bring them to their perfection. So the world was made, first, a confused dark mass of earth and water, and then step by step formed, and finished, and beautified. Was the old creation a work of time, for the more full manifesting of the power of God? it is congruous, that the new creation should be so too, for illustrating the strength of Christ, in and by whom it is done. (2.) From small and contemptible beginnings to raise the most eminent works, and by most unlikely and unpromising means to do great things; because the power of God appears the more clearly in such a situation. From Abraham's body in a sort dead, and Sarah a barren woman, whose womb by age was deadened too, he raised a nation like the stars for multitude, continuing to this day: and looking to their beginning, we see Isaac an only son, on an altar, ready to be sacrificed; and the first-fruits of them long in slavery in Egypt, and, when delivered, wandering forty years in a wilderness.

How congruous is it, then, that the innumerable multitude that shall at length stand on the mount Zion above, round about the throne, in white robes, and palms in their hands, should be brough tthither from lying among the pots, and straggling long in the wilderness?

3. Particularly, it is agreeable to the divine procedure in the ease of Christ himself. And that, (1.) In the constitution of his person as God-man; wherein infinite power and creature-weakness met together as attributes of one and the same person; he who, being true man, was capable of being "crucified through weakness," being also the mighty God, 2 Cor. 13:4 Now, if the divine power was lodged with creature-weakness in Christ personal, how congruous is it that the same divine power should be illustrated in the weakness of his mystical members? (2.) In the conduct of providence about his person. The most signal display that ever God made of his power, was by the man Christ and in him, 1 Cor. 1:24. being "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." By him as God-man he redeemed the world; the last a greater work than the first, as the giving his own Son was more than the speaking of a word. But how was this work brought about, but by subjecting him to a number of weaknesses for his lifetime in this world, concluded at length with his death? And in these the divine power sent forth its most radiant beams, and by them reared up the new creation. Shall it then be thought strange, that as Christ was in the world, Christians should be ever so too? or that, since the power of God was illustrated in the weakness of the man Christ, the same divine power in the person of Christ should be illustrated in the weakness of his people, while they are here in this world?

4. Lastly. This dispensation tends to the heightening of the glory of the victory of the Son of God against the devil. That proud apostate spirit rose in rebellion against God; and having seduced man, set up a kingdom in the world in opposition to God's. Against him the Son of God, for his Father's glory, and the recovery of fallen man, proclaimed war in paradise, Gen. 3:15. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;" and, for his more shameful defeat, encounters him in human nature, a weak one in comparison of the more powerful angelic nature, whereof Satan was; and illustrates his strength against him in the weakness of that nature, as in his natural body, so in his mystical body. The heat of that battle was on the cross, where he was "crucified through weakness," yet triumphed over him. The battle is carried on in his mystical members laden with weaknesses: yet even in them also he defeats him; and sets them off the field conquerors, one generation after another, without the loss of a man. It will last till the end of the world: and then Christ's victory with his weak men will be complete, Satan with his party being chained down under everlasting darkness. So there will be no more occasion for Christ's illustrating his power in weakness: consequently, there shall no more for ever be a weak one among Christ's party; all their weaknesses come then to an end.

USE. This may be of manifold use in the Christian life,

1. As an oracle to satisfy serious inquirers anent the whole of the divine conduct about believers, and particularly as to two difficult questions.

1st, Why the Lord leaves sin in the regenerate? Why though they pant, long, and breathe after perfection, yet they cannot reach it; though they would buy their freedom from sin with ten thousand worlds if they had them, and the bondage of a body of sin cleaving to them makes them long for cold death, to set them free, yet they must wrestle on with it? See what may satisfy. It is that the power of Christ may be illustrated in your weakness; therefore it is that the "wheels of his chariot tarry."

2dly, Why the Lord keeps his people under long and sore afflictions? The reason is the same. Satan might be too hard for the Christian, in a perfect calm of providence about him: yet our Lord will give the Christian a disadvantageous post in a thicket of afflictions and trials, therefore called temptations, James 1:2; and Satan having that advantage of the ground, shall be suffered to attack him, and yet be baffled: to the greater glory of the strength of Christ, and shame of the enemy.

2. As a way-mark, to direct us, if we mind for heaven, unto the King's high-way to it; that is, the way of faith, and not of sense, 2 Cor. 5:7. Whatever sweet clusters of sense the Lord may allow any of his people for their refreshment by the way; the life of sense is certainly reserved for heaven, where all weakness is put off. The life of Christians here is a life of believing, hoping, patient waiting, in a course of doing, suffering, struggling, and wrestling, where Christ's power is illustrated in their weakness.

3. As an interpreter of Christ's mind anent the actings of grace in his people. The carnal world despises these actings as things of no value. A look of a weak creature to Christ, a groan to him for help, believing

of a promise, hoping in his word, some confidence in him that he will at length appear for them, are but trifling things in their eyes. And in the eyes of believers themselves, except when they are bound up from them, they are but of small value, hardly worth their own notice, far less Christ's; especially considering that they are so weak, and so long a time intervenes between them. But certainly Christ notices them all, and looks on them as very precious, else this dispensation, whose end is to draw them out, had never been chosen by him, 1 Pet. 1:7, "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 Jesus Christ." Cant. 4:9, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck."

4. As a cordial to support, with the prospect of a happy event, all the followers of Christ.

1st, Under their own personal weakness and pressures. He that has brought them under them to illustrate his own strength in them, will surely make a shining morning follow their darkest night.

2dly, Under the low case of the church, whether in point of corruption or persecution. Though she be either of these ways brought to death's door, she cannot die out: for Christ will not let her fall so low, but for the clearer manifesting of his divine strength in her recovery. The utmost point of hopelessness is the usual signal for Christ's exerting his power for his people: Deut. 32:36, "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."

5. Lastly, As a persuasive to Christians, with a holy submission of spirit to this dispensation, resolutely to wrestle on, till the Lord have fully served the ends of his glory by all their weaknesses. This bids us,

1st, Stoop to the dispensation, and not quarrel; and after he has thus far discovered to us the design of it, to crucify all our hows and whys on the matter; and that both with respect to our spiritual and bodily weaknesses.

2dly, Resolutely to keep up the struggle, to get forward in the way the Lord calls us. What though we be weak? the works of the Christian life are not to be laid aside, but we are to stretch out the withered hand, that his strength may be perfected in our weakness.

Whoso thus struggle resolutely, and yet stoop humbly to the dispensation, shew their concern for his honour, insomuch that they are pleased his strength should be displayed in their weakness. Thus honouring him here, he will honour them in the other world.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

Several Sermons preached, at Ettrick, in the year 1717.

> I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. - LUKE 13:5.

WHEN we consider the abounding sin and hardness of heart prevailing under a preached gospel, it must needs let us see, that the doctrine of repentance is both necessary and seasonable, to pluck the brands out of the burning; or if that will not do, to leave men without

excuse. Sinners stave off repentance, as if they were resolved to persist in sin come what will, or at least as halting betwixt two opinions: But here is a peremptory decision of the case in this text, "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

In these words we have two things.

1. An abuse of a dispensation of providence corrected: "I tell you, Nay." Some had told our Lord the news of Pilate the Roman governor's falling on some Galileans, with his soldiers, and killing them, while they were sacrificing. It seems the tellers of this news, or others in the company, were apt to think, that these were sinners beyond others, because an unordinary judgment had fallen on them. Our Lord tells them, that it would not bear such a conclusion. He puts them in mind of another remarkable providence, viz. the tower of Siloam in Jerusalem its falling on and killing eighteen persons: but here he shews that this did not befal them, because they were greater sinners than all the rest in Jerusalem; nay there were as great sinners as those, which missed that stroke, and others like it too.

2. The right use of the dispensation instructed: "But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The right use is to learn repentance from the ruin of others; if others give us an example at their own cost, that we take heed to it and improve it to our repentance and reformation. This is the import of the particle but. These words are a peremptory certification given to sinners by our Lord. And the proposition in its own nature includes a twofold certification.

1st, A certification of ruin upon impenitence. Sinners go on in their course, yet hope that all may be well. No, says our Lord, deceive not

yourselves; for if ye do not repent, there is no hope of saving you. There is here,

(1.) The matter on which the certification is given, "Except ye repent;" i. e. If ye do not repent, if ye be not duly humbled for your sins, and sincerely turn from them. If ye harden your hearts under your guilt, keep still your sinful courses, and refuse to let them go, they will ruin you.

(2.) The thing certified, which is perishing likewise; not perishing in that very manner, but ye shall perish as surely as they did. The judgments of God shall pursue you, and ye shall perish for ever.

(3.) The extent of the certification, "All—perish." This clears the perishing to be meant of everlasting death. Q. d. Though signal temporal judgments do pursue all that are impenitent, yet eternal punishment will; no impenitent sinner shall escape that, however they may escape temporal strokes of signal vengeance.

(4.) The peremptoriness of it. This appears in two things. 1. That solemn assertion, "I tell you," supposed to be repeated in the last clause. Take it out of the mouth of the Lord himself, that ye shall perish except ye repent. Q. d. This has been told you by many, but ye would not believe: but now I tell it you out of my own mouth. And to hear this out of the mouth of the Saviour, may strike a sinner with concern, and let him see, that Christ's blood will never be laid out on a person continuing impenitent, to save him from death. 2. In the relation intimate to be between the punishment of those so signally smitten by the hand of God, and the future punishment of all impenitent sinners; the former is a pledge of the latter. This is intimated by the particle likewise.

2dly, A certification of life and repentance. This is implied here as Gen. 2:17. God has made as sure connection betwixt repentance and life, as betwixt impenitence and death. Be your sins never so great, if you repent of them, and turn from them, they shall never be your ruin.

Before I come to the main point I design, I shall lay before you some observations from the words.

Obs. 1. That those who meet with more signal strokes than others, are not therefore, nor are to be accounted greater sinners than others. The Lord spares some as great sinners, as he signally punisheth, I tell you, nay.

Reasons of this dispensation of Providence.

1. Because of God's sovereign power and absolute dominion, which he will have the world to understand: Matth, 20:15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" Thus our Lord accounts for the dispensation of the man's being born blind, John 9:3. All men have that in them and about them, which may make them liable to the heaviest strokes that any of the children of men meet with; And therefore whatever any suffer, the Lord does them no wrong, since he punishes them less than their iniquity deserves: but amongst many whom justice may strike, sovereignity picks out some, and causes them to smart. And who may say, "what dost thou?"

2. Because we are now under the mixed dispensation of providence; not the unmixed, reserved to another world, when all men shall be put into their unalterable state. Now, hereunto this is very agreeable that God signally punish some of a society, while others as guilty do

escape, that the whole may, with David, Psal. 101:1, "sing of mercy and judgment too." And thus the dispensation of divers colours is held up in the world, as a display of the manifold wisdom of God.

3. Because the mercy of God to some is magnified by his severity on others. As black set by white makes the white appear the better; so God's severity against some, may be a looking-glass to others, wherein they may see how much they stand obliged to free grace and mercy, Rom. 11:22. Men are never fairer to prize health in themselves, than when they see others tossed on sick beds; nor to prize the exercise of sense and reason, and other mercies, than when they see what miserable and pitiful sights they are that are deprived of these. And this should make folk patient and thankful under the strokes of the Lord's hand, because if he take away a mercy, health for instance, or perhaps a member or limb of their body, being taken away, it may be more serviceable for him, than when they had it, in so far as it shall serve to magnify the mercy of God to others, that see and notice the hand of the Lord. See Matth. 21:3.

4. Because in very signal strokes very signal mercies may be wrapped up. So it was in Joseph's case; there was a very singular blessing on the head of him that was separated from his brethren. Job's troubles were but a dark hour before a very glorious day. The halt Jacob got in his thigh, was more excellent, as a badge of his wrestling with the angel, than Esau's retinue of four hundred men.

5. Lastly, Because this dispensation is in some sort necessary to confirm us in the belief of the judgment of the great day. God punishes some remarkably, that the world may see that there is a God that judgeth on the earth; he does not so punish all, that men

may be assured that there is a judgment to come. If none were punished here, the world would improve that for Atheism; if all were punished, it would be improved to Sadducism.

USE 1. Then learn that unordinary strokes may befall those that are not unordinary sinners; and therefore be not rash in your judgment concerning the strokes that others meet with. It is true, whatever we or others meet with, it is deserved at the Lord's hand; and when God follows an unordinary seen sin with an unordinary judgment, as in the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, it is no breach of charity to judge that that stroke comes for that sin. But when people, in whose conversation ye see no signal sin, meet with signal strokes, beware of harsh judging. For in the way of the Lord's dispensation, some will meet with a signal stroke for some sin, such as the world would think little or nothing of, if they knew it.

2. Then adore the mercy of God to you, and wonder at his sparing you, when ye see others smart under the hand of God, which ye do not feel. Acknowledge, that whatever others meet with, the same might have been your lot, if the Lord had dealt with you as ye deserve; as the church did, Lam. 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

Obs. 2. That the strokes which any meet with, are pledges of ruin to impenitent sinners. But "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Reasons of this are,

1. Because they show how hateful to God sin is, in whomsoever it is: Is. 42:24, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did

not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law." God has no delight in the misery of his own creatures, Ezek. 18:23. He must therefore have a mighty hatred against sin, in that he is so heavy oftentimes on the work of his own hands for it. Not only his enemies smart for sin, but his dear friends; yea, his dear Son smarted for it, when it lay on him but by imputation. And therefore how can impenitent sinners think to escape? Luke 23:31, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

2. Because they shew how just God is. He is the Judge of all the earth, and cannot but do right, Gen. 18:25. Now, though justice may delay the punishment of one longer than another, yet it will not allow to punish some, and for ever to spare others, in the same state. For that would be manifest partiality, which God hateth, Ezek. 18:20. And therefore the apostle tells us, 2 Thess. 1:6. that "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble" the saints.

3. Because whatever any meet with in the way of sin, is really designed for warning to others, as is clear from the text. See 1 Cor. 10:11, 12. And they that will not be taught by the example of others, may expect to be made examples to teach others, as Lot's wife was. But the wise will have their eyes in their head, while impenitent sinners pass on and perish, as those that will not take, warning. Hence it comes to pass, that the stroke afar off not prevailing, is oftentimes brought nearer home.

4. Lastly, Because all those strokes which sinners meet with in this life, are the spittings of the shower of wrath that abides the

impenitent world, after which the full shower may certainly be looked for. As the joys in believing are the pledges of eternal joy, flowing from one fountain with it; the first-fruits of Canaan's land, which will be followed with the full harvest: so all the outlettings of God's wrath on sinners here, are the pledges of eternal wrath, and first-fruits of hell, which will be followed with the harvest of misery, being the same in kind, Rev. 20:14.

USE 1. Be not unconcerned spectators of all the effects of God's anger for sin going abroad in the world; for your part and mine is deep in them. There is none of them but says to us, as in the same condemnation, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." O how unconcernedly do many look on the miseries of others, how far are they from taking a lesson to themselves therefrom! But a hard heart and seared conscience, which cannot be awakened by the dispensations of providence far off from them, do but invite the heavy stroke to fall on themselves.

2. Consider, O impenitent sinners, how can ye escape, when your ruin is insured by so many pledges thereof from the Lord's hand, while ye go on in sin? When a sinner goes out of God's way, he leaves his soul in pawn for his return by repentance; but the impenitent sinner never returns to loose his pawn, and so loses it. When God lets out any of his wrath in any measure on the children of men, that is God's pawn for his bringing eternal wrath on the impenitent; and we may be sure, that however careless we be of our pawns, God will not lose his. Therefore consider your ways, and repent.

Obs. 3. The strokes that others meet with, are loud calls to to us to repent. That is the language of all the afflicting providences which we

see going on in the world. To confirm this, consider,

1. God does not strike one for sin with a visible stroke, but with an eye to all. The reason which God gives in his law for punishing some transgresssors severely, is, that "all Israel might hear, and fear, and do no such thing." In the infancy of the Jewish church, he consumed Nadab and Abihu with fire, Lev. 10:2 compared with ver. 9. In the infancy of the Christian church, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for a lie. Why all this, but to be a warning to all that should come after?

2. Thereby we may see how dangerous a thing sin is to be harboured; and if we will look inward, we may ever see, that there is sin in us also against the God of Israel. If we saw one stung by a serpent which he had taken up, would not we quickly throw away one which we had taken up too, lest we should fare no better? How can we think to prosper in that way, where we see it goes so very ill with others?

USE 1. We may see that none go on impenitently in a sinful course, but over the belly of thousands of calls from Providence to repent, besides all those they have from the word. Look abroad into the world, O sinner, and consider how many have fallen into ruin, and are still falling by their iniquity. As many as there are of these, so many mouths are there calling thee to repent, and turn from thy sin. "Who did ever harden himself against God, and prosper?" And dost thou think, that thy case shall be an exception to the general rule? No; so many witnesses give their testimony to thee, that "except thou repent, thou shalt likewise perish."

2. Impenitency under the gospel cannot have the least shadow of excuse. The calls of Providence common to the whole world, are

sufficient to leave the very heathens without excuse, Rom. 1:20: how much more shall the calls of the word and Providence too make us inexcusable, if we do not repent? Sinners make many shifts for themselves, to preserve the life of their lusts, and to keep themselves from this unpleasant exercise: but they will be but fig-leaf covers before the Lord.

3. How much more do strokes from the hand of the Lord on ourselves call us to repent? Hos. 2:6, 7, "Therefore behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And 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 was it better with me than now." What Absalom's design was in burning Joab's corn-field, is the design of afflicting providences. And therefore impenitency and hardness of heart under the strokes of the Lord's hand, is highly aggravated, Jer. 5:3. Every cross that we meet with, is a charge from heaven to turn from our sinful course, and from the particular ills of our way.

I come now to the principal doctrine of the text.

DOCTRINE. Sinners, except they repent, shall perish. This is an except without any exception. Be who they will, if they be sinners, they must repent or perish. All are sinners, and by sin depart from God; and they must come back again to him by repentance, else they are for ever ruined. Be they sinners of a greater or lesser size, they must be penitent sinners, or it had been better for them they had never been born.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall,

I. Explain the nature of repentance.

II. Apply.

I. I shall explain the nature of repentance. And here we may consider,

1. What it is in its general nature.

2. How it is wrought in the soul.

3. The subject of true repentance.

4. The parts of repentance.

FIRST, We may consider what repentance is in its general nature. It is a saying grace: 2 Tim. 2:25, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." It is a grace given us of God freely, enabling and disposing a soul to all the acts of turning from sin unto God; and it is saying, as in its own nature distinguishing a man from a hypocrite, and having a sure connection with eternal salvation. To unfold this more particularly, consider,

1. It is not a transient action, as Papists and some ignorant creatures imagine, as if a sigh for sin, an act of sorrow for it, a confession of it with a "God be merciful to me a sinner," were repentance. No, no; these may be acts of repentance while they proceed from a truly penitent heart. But repentance itself is not a passing act, but an abiding grace, Zech. 12:10; a continuing frame and disposition of the soul; a principle lying deep in the heart, disposing a man to mourn for and turn from sin on all occasions.

2. It is not a passing work of the first days of one's religion, as some professors take it to be; but a grace in the heart, setting one to an answerable working all the days of his life. It is a spring of waters of sorrow in the heart for sin, which will spring up there while sin is there, though sometimes through hardness of heart it may be stopped for a while. They that look on repentance as the first stage in the way to heaven, and looking back to the sorrowful hours which they had when the Lord first began to deal with them, reckon that they have passed the first stage, are in a dangerous condition. And whoso endeavours not to carry on their repentance, I doubt if they ever at all repented yet. As when Moses had smote the rock in the wilderness, and the waters began to gush out, those waters ran (it is thought, 1 Cor. 10:4.) and followed them while in the wilderness: so the heart first smitten with repentance for sin at the soul's first conversion to God, the wound still bleeds, and is never bound up to bleed no more, till the band of glory be put about it in heaven, Rev. 21:4.

Hence initial and progressive repentance, though the former be the repentance of a sinner, the latter of a saint, are no more different kinds of repentance, than the soul's virgin love to Christ, and their love to him through the course of their spiritual marriage with him; or than faith in its first, and after actings. But as the mid-day and evening sun are the same with the morning sun, so are these; though the rising morning sun may be most noticed by the traveller, who having travelled in the night, was thereby brought from darkness to light.

3. It is not a common grace, but a special saving one. Men may have a repentance for their sin, gnawing their consciences, and

tormenting their hearts, which they will carry on in hell through eternity: being only the first movings of the worm in the soul that never dieth: as Judas's repentance seems to have been Simon Magus's and Pharaoh's. They may bitterly rue their sin, as Esau, Gen. 27:34 who never truly repent of it, Heb. 12:17; and the stony heart may be broken in a thousand pieces, while yet every piece remains a stone. They may have a superficial sorrow for sin, and a light joy succeeding it, whose hearts were never pierced to the quick; and therefore the joy goes, as the effects of a scud of rain on the parched ground, Matth. 13:20, 21. But true repentance is a repentance never repented of, kindly working in the soul.

SECONDLY, We may consider how repentance is wrought in the soul. And here two questions must be answered, and two points cleared, namely,

1. Who works repentance, or is the author of it? And that is the sanctifying Spirit of Jesus Christ: Zech. 12:13. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Sometimes notorious prodigals become true penitents; as a persecuting Saul turned to be a preaching Paul: so that the world is amazed with the change, and are ready to say as in Saul's case, 1 Sam. 10:11. "What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? But that query, ver. 12. "But who is their father?" gives a rational account of the matter. All sort of timber to divine grace is alike easy to hew. And forasmuch as the house of God is ordinarily built of the knottiest wood, publicans and

harlots entering into the kingdom of God before Scribes and Pharisees, it may plainly appear, that repentance is not the work of nature, but of grace; not of men's own spirit, but Christ's Spirit.

This is evident from the word, Jer. 13:21, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is the Lord's own work to "take away the stony heart, and give an heart of flesh," Ezek. 36:26. It is the office of the exalted Mediator to give repentance, in whose hand it is to send the Spirit, Acts 5:31. Ministers may preach repentance, but cannot work in it themselves, and far less in others. They may sow the seed, but cannot make it grow, 1 Cor. 3:6, 7. It is but a peradventure if God give repentance, when they have done their utmost, 2 Tim. 2:25. But if at all their weapons be mighty, it is through God, 2 Cor. 10:4.

2. By what means does the Spirit work repentance? That is by the word, whether read or preached. The word is the channel wherein the influences of the Spirit flow; and from these it has its piercing, melting, and heart-softening virtue, as the pool of Bethesda had its healing virtue from the angel's troubling the water: Acts 11:20, 21. "And some of them were men of Cyprus, and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." Junius, who was deeply plunged in Athiesm, was brought to repentance by reading John 1. in a New Testament which his father had purposely laid down in his chamber, if perhaps he might take it up and read it. Augustine was converted by reading Rom. 13:13, 14. "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus

Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Three thousand we find were wrought on by one sermon, Acts 2.

Many and various are the occasions of repentance, which the Lord blesseth for bringing home the word to the soul, and the soul by it unto God. Personal afflictions have been so in the case of many, Hos. 2:7. The sight of strokes on others has been blessed to some. The first occasion of Luther's turning serious was a fright by the violent death of a dear companion of his. Nay, God has made falls into gross sins occasions of repentance unto many, whereof there are several instances, as Achan, the thief on the cross, &c. Flavel gives an account of one, in the case of an attempt of self-murder. Augustine heard a voice, saying, "Take up, and read." Nay, God can make a dream in the night such an occasion, Job 33:15, 16. But these are not properly the means, but the occasions which bring men to consider of the word, which is the true and proper means. And here the Spirit of the Lord makes use of both parts of the word.

1st, The law, to break the hard heart: Jer. 23:29, "Is not my word—like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? saith the Lord" It goes before like John Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord into the heart. And the Spirit of the Lord making use of it in a soul, is called "the Spirit of bondage," Rom. 8:15. And here each part of the law has its proper use.

(1.) The commands of it, to convince the soul of sin: Rom. 7:7, I had not known sin," says the apostle, "but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The commands of the law, held forth to the soul in their spirituality and vast extent,

are the looking-glass wherein the sinner is made to see his black face, the sins and sinfulness of his nature, heart, and life, which he must repent of.

(2.) The threatenings of it, to convince the soul of judgment: Gal. 3:10, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." These carried home on the soul, disturb its rest in sin, and let the man see that he has been sleeping within the sea-mark of divine vengeance, and so give him a frightful wakening. These discover the danger of sin for time and eternity, and tell him that he must turn over a new leaf, else he is ruined.

2dly, The gospel, to melt the hard heart like a fire, Jer. 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and so to bow and bend it from sin towards God," Zech. 12:10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Thus the soul that was driven by the law, is kindly led and drawn by the gospel to repentance. The law serves to make a terrible reel in the conscience and affections: but the gospel is Christ's key to open the heart, and to turn about the will that he may come in, Gal. 3:2. The stormy wind, and earthquake, may go before in the law; but the still small voice of the gospel is that which the Lord is in. This is evident, if ye consider,

(1.) That repentance is the doctrine of the gospel. I do indeed think, that it cannot be denied but that the law requires repentance as a duty, in so far as it binds the apostate sinner to return to God: but in the meantime it gives no hope of mercy to the penitent, seeing its constant voice is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." But the gospel gives the glad tidings of place for repentance, and shews how the apostate creature returning will be accepted. And there can be no true returning to God, where there is no hope of acceptance.

(2.) Repentance is a promise of the covenant of grace: Ezek. 36:31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." It is not only the duty of God's elect, but their privilege, made over to them in Jesus Christ, purchased by his death, and bestowed on them by virtue of his exaltation, Acts 5:31. And hence, as one of the benefits of that covenant, it is sealed in baptism, Mark 1:4.

The sum of what is said on this second head, is, that repentance is an evangelical softness of heart, and bent of spirit to turn away from sin, and to turn to God, wrought in a soul by the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of holiness being given to Christ without measure, he puts the same Spirit in his elect in the day of his power; who by his grace melts the heart for sin, and bends it away from sin to holiness.

USE 1. Repentance is not a man's taking up himself, in the point of his outward conversation. It is one thing to reform the life, another to reform the heart, by changing the will. The former is within the reach of mere nature, the other is not to be effected but by a

supernatural hand, Jer. 31:18. The former may make one a painted sepulchre, the latter makes him a new creature.

2. Legal repentance is no true repentance: and therefore though one have it, he may perish; as Pharaoh, Judas, &c. It makes a fretful restless conscience under the terror of God's wrath but mean while it leaves a hard heart, glued to sin. The law and its terrors coming into a sinful soul, may raise the dust ready to choke the sinner, as in a house when a sweeping; but it will never be made clean, unless the gospel have its efficacy on the heart, as the water which lays that dust. Hence it comes to pass, that sinners sometimes have sharp convictions, but mean while their lusts grow as rampant as ever after.

3. See the folly of delaying repentance, and not striking in with the motions of the Spirit, when one has them. How do people put off repentance from time to time, as if it were wholly in their power to do it at any time! But they that cannot command wind and tide, have need to fall in with them while they serve, least if they go, they be left hopeless. O delay not, lest the Spirit of the Lord be provoked to depart.

4. Lastly, Learn whom ye are to look to for repentance. It is the work of the Lord's Spirit; and unto him ye are to look for his grace to loose the bands of wickedness, to soften the hard heart, and to turn you to himself, Jer. 31:18.

Thirdly, We may consider the subject of true repentance, what it is. It is a convinced believing soul. An unconvinced sinner cannot be a true penitent; for what the eye sees not, the heart rues not. Neither

can an unbelieving sinner be so; for without faith the heart may be rent for sin, but not from it.

First, The soul wherein true repentance is wrought, is a convinced soul: Job 36:9, 10, "He showoth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." Acts 2:37. 38, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The first particular work in the creation was making light; and the letting in a new light by conviction, is the first work in the new creation. God begins his work, where Satan ends his; who having got the soul asleep in the arms of its lusts, shuts the windows, and draws the curtains, that it may sleep sound, till it awaken in bell. But the Spirit of the Lord by conviction opens them, and awakens the sinner ordinarily, if not always, in a fright. Here consider,

1. How this conviction is wrought. It is done by the erecting of a criminal court within the sinner's own breast, which the man cannot absent himself from, more than he can go out of himself. He must stay and answer, unless he prevail with the judge to let fall the process; as, alas! many do by silencing their consciences one way or other to their own ruin. And in this court,

1st, The Spirit of the Lord, awakening the sleepy conscience, sets it upon the bench, so that the man becomes his own judge: John 16:8, "And when he [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of

sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The man searches and tries his own heart and life, which was before neglected as the sluggard's garden. But now every corner thereof is ransacked, and secret things set in the light.

2dly, The man is convicted as a sinner by the law. His nature, heart, and life brought to the holy law and compared with it, he is found evidently to be guilty and a transgressor. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 7:9, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The law as a looking-glass is held before his eyes, and he sees his spots. His own conscience is as a thousand witnesses against him, and he cannot deny the charge. So his mouth is stopped, and his sin at length has found him out, Rom. 3:19.

3dly, The man is sentenced and condemned by his own conscience according to the law, adjudging him liable to death, eternal death, for his sins: Gal. 3:10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." He is therefore a condemned malefactor in his own eyes, by the sentence of the law pronounced against him. Consider,

2. The effects of this conviction; which are these.

1st, A painful sense of sin, an affecting sight of it, Rom. 7:9. forecited. For now the sore is lanced; and they see those sins, and that in sin, which they saw not before; and their eyes affect their hearts. As when the sun shines into a house, the motes are discovered, which did not before appear: so is it here. And the sin which sat light on them before, becomes a burden too heavy to them to bear; for now they are roused out of their lethargy, and feel their sores. It is a burden on

their spirits, which sinks them; on their backs, that bows them down; on their heads, which they are not able to discharge themselves of. Therefore the soul coming to Christ is represented as a man with a burden on him: Psal. 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Hos. 14:2, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, say unto him, Take away all iniquity;" (Heb.) Lift off iniquity as a burden.

2dly, Terror on their hearts: Psal. 9:20, "Put them in fear, O Lord; that the nations may know themselves to be but men." The convinced jailor, a man who wore a sword, falls a-trembling, Acts 16:29: for the terror of God is too high for the stoutest heart, that knows not what it is to fear the face of man. The soul that was fearless before, because blind to its own hazard, now that his eyes are opened, is magor missabib. For what heart can be strong before an angry God, brandishing the sword of a fiery law over the conscience, which awakened, is the tenderest part of the man?

3dly, Legal sorrow for sin: Acts 2:37, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." There are stounds of grief that go through their hearts like arrows, Psal. 45:5; and these are very piercing, Prov. 18:14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear? The man sees now that he has been murdering his own soul, and he groans out an elegy over his dead self; which is raised the higher, that he thought his soul was alive, when really it was dead. He calls himself fool and beast for doing as he did. But what is very sad, though his heart be rent in pieces for his sin, yet it is not rent from it. What grieves him thus, is purely selfish; his separation from God, without whom he sees he

cannot be happy; and his liableness to his wrath and curse, which he sees will ruin him for ever to lie under.

4thly, A racking anxiety how to be delivered out of this state: Acts 2:37, "Now when they heard this, they said,—What shall we do?" And here many times fear and hope take their several turns in his anxious soul; sometimes hoping, sometimes desponding, like Jonah in the whale's belly, Jon. 2:4, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Conviction of sin will make way for care into the most careless head, and will make folk bestow many thoughts on the neglected salvation, that used not to bestow one serious thought upon the business. And this care will swallow up all others, as that of a drowning man to save his life.

USE 1. The unconvinced sinner is an impenitent sinner. Hearken ye young ones, and old, that have lived at ease, and with a hale heart, in respect of your souls' state, all your days. They may sleep sound indeed, whom the devil is rocking in the cradle of a natural impenitent state. But ye will get a wakening yet, either in time to bring you to repentance, or when time is gone, and there is no more place for repentance, Jer. 48:11, 12, "For except ye repent, ye shall perish." Ah poor sinner, thou wast never yet in the next step to repentance. Thy sore has not been lanced yet, therefore surely the filthy matter is never yet cast out by repentance.

2. Convictions and legal qualms of conscience are not repentance: for they do but qualify the subject for it, and that in part only. These are very necessary things I have spoke of under this head; but they are but like the unripe fruit, which must be ripened by the work of the gospel on the heart, and brought to a perfection by the warm sun of

gospel-influences, ere he that has them can be accounted a penitent indeed. Or rather, they are like the blossoms which go before, and differ in kind from the fruit, which often fall off, and no fruit follows at all. Folk may have had these many days and years since, that never repented to this day, Hos. 6:4. The first-fruits of the second death may be mistaken by many for the pangs of the new birth. And therefore ye that have had them consider well what issue they have had; for it is not enough to have been in them, but to have got right out of them. Wrong curing of some diseases, breeds others, that prove mortal to many.

The right issue out of them lies in three things.

1. It lies in self-denial, or unselfing of the soul, when the soul is shaken out of itself for justification and sanctification too: Jer. 31:18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Compared with ver. 19, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed. I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." They see the heinousness of sin, and the corruption of their nature too, so as they conclude themselves utterly unable to help themselves in either of these points, and so come off from themselves.

2. It lies in faith, or believing; in coming to Jesus Christ for all, in point of justification and sactiflcation too: Is. 45:24. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." The soul being turned off its own bottom, comes and builds on him for what it

wants, and looks to him for his blood and Spirit. Thus "the law is a school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith," Gal. 3:24. See Jer. 3:22, 23.

3. It lies in repentance, or a kindly melting of the heart for sin, Jer. 31:18. Zech. 12:10 as done against a gracious God, whom the heart is knit to in love. The soul comes from before the throne of justice, where it stood weeping for itself and its own misery, unto the throne of grace, where it stands weeping for having offended such a gracious Father.

They land at this threefold shore, who come rightly out of these depths. But many plunge up and down in them a while, and land again just in the same side they went in at. Some land at the shore.

1. Of formality, or a legal walk, 2 Tim. 3:5. "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." They change their former ways but retain their old heart. They go indeed to religious duties, but they never go out of them to Christ. They act not as they did; but still they have the old principle of action, acting from self, and to self; so that though they change their work, they still work to the old master. And thus many continue in a profession of religion, living on their duties, never coming to Christ. Others land at the shore.

2. Of their former security. They are neither better inwardly nor outwardly; but they come out of their qualms of conscience, as one out of a fever, returning just to their old way of living; as was the case with Felix, Acts 24:25. who said to "Paul, go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Others land at the shore,

3. Of profanity; turning worse than before: Mat. 12:43, 44, 45, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Their lusts dammed up for a while, run with more vigour than ever thereafter.

Secondly, The soul wherein repentence is wrought, is a believing soul. Faith is the spring and sourse of repentance so that though the grace of faith and repentance are given together and at once in respect of time, yet, in the order of nature, faith goes before repentance, and the acting of faith goes before the exercise of repentance. And he that would repent, must first believe in Christ that he may repent. I know that some teach otherwise. But this is the doctrine of the Scriptures and our Catechism. To confirm it, consider,

1. That faith is absolutely the leading grace, and the first breathing of a quickened soul: Heb. 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" therefore it is impossible to repent, for that is very pleasing to him, Jer. 31:20. So John 15:5, "Without me," i. e. separate from me, and there is no union with him but by the Spirit of faith, "ye can do nothing" acceptable to God, therefore ye cannot repent.

2. It is particularly the leading grace to repentance: Zech. 12:10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son." Thus it is

represented in fact, Acts 11:21, "And a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." If repentance be the emptying of the soul by the dropping of the tears of godly sorrow, it is faith that generates them in the heart. It is faith that melts the hard heart, which droppeth in repentance. The eye of faith fixes on God in Christ, and then the soul turns to him by repentance, Jer. 3:22.

3. The scripture usually proposeth the objects of faith, and promises of grace, for motives to repentance; thereby discovering, that it is by a believing application of these, that a soul is brought to repentance: Jer. 3:14, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." Ver. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Joel 2:12, 13, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." Hos. 6:1, "Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. Chap. 14:1, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Nay the very law proclaimed on mount Sinai with so much terror, is graciously prefaced with gospel-grace for faith to work on in the first place; "I am the Lord thy God," &c. And thus the doctrine of the New Testament concerning repentance is proposed to sinners, Matth. 3:2, and 4:17, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

4. Lastly, The nature of repentance plainly teacheth this. It is a cordial turning from sin to God: but is it possible to turn to God, but

through Christ? John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And is there any way of coming to Christ, but by faith? The soul then that would turn and go to God again by repentance, must needs take Christ by faith, by the way. The people indeed wept; but did they put away the strange wives, or set to it, till Shechaniah cried, Ezra 10:2, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives, of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing?" They must not be only prisoners of fear, but of hope that will turn, Zech. 9:12, "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Repentance is a kindly humiliation and mourning for sin; but the faithless heart may roar under law-horror, will never kindly mourn but under gospel-influences.

OBJECTION. Repentance is placed before faith, Mark 1:15; and sometimes repentance only is mentioned to natural men as the way to salvation, as in our text, and Acts 2:38, and 3:19. ANSWER, (1.) Repentance no doubt is absolutely necessary to salvation; and no man needs pretend to faith, that does not repent, for they are inseparable. But that will no more infer the precedency of repentance to faith, than that, Heb. 12:14, will infer the precedency of holiness to it. Now, this is all our text aims at. (2.) Repentance being the end, and faith the means to that end, no wonder they be so placed: for the end is first in one's intention, yet the means are first in practice. So Mark 1:15. Christ commands sinners to repent; but then in order to repenting, he commands them to believe. So Acts 2:38, believing is implied in the command to be baptized. And therefore, speaking of the result of this work, ver. 44, it is said, "And all that believed," &c. So Acts 3:19, it is implied in being converted; compared with Heb. 3:12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of

unbelief, in departing from the living God," And that this is the true reason of this way of speaking, namely, that repentance is the end, and faith the means, is clear from Acts 20:21, "Testifying—repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:" for that Scripture can bear no other meaning, without destroying that fundamental truth, that Christ is the way to the Father. John preached repentance, Mark 1:4, but how did he direct them to it? Acts 19:4, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

USE 1. Then it is not gospel-doctrine, that Christ will receive none but true penitents, or that none but such have a warrant to embrace Christ by faith: Rev. 21:17, "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." The evil of this doctrine is, that it sets sinners to spin repentance out of their own bowels, and to fetch it with them to Christ, instead of coming to him by faith to get it. And it hinders sensible sinners from coming to Christ, as keeping them back till they be persuaded that they have true repentance. I say, persuaded; for how can a sinner come to Christ till he be persuaded he has a warrant so to do? If Christ will receive none but such as have true repentance, then none other are invited to come; for surely those that are invited, will be welcome upon their coming: if none other be invited, then impenitent sinners are not bound to come to Christ; for none are bound to come, but those that are invited; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." However, none are here in Christ by faith, but thereupon they become true penitents; and none but true penitents will see heaven.

2. Then for sensible sinners to think that they dare not and ought not to believe, and embrace Christ, till they be more deeply humbled, and do more thoroughly repent of their sins, and in a word, be more fit to receive him, is but a gilded deceit, and a trick of the false heart, to make the soul stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children, and die there at length. The Scripture holdeth forth quite other doctrine: Rev. 3:20. "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." Is. 55:1. "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." It is one thing what a sinner will do; another, what he may and ought to do. It is very true, there are many who will never come to Christ, if they be not made more sensible of their need of him than they are. But all that hear the gospel may and ought to come, be their case what it will; and those that come not, will be condemned for their not coming, John 3:19. Therefore let every sensible sinner under that temptation think, that he is in the case of a drowning man, who if he stand disputing whether he may catch hold of the rope reached to him to hale him to land, a wave may come and sweep him away; and therefore without disputing he must take hold of it.

3. This shews the true way to deal with a hard heart, to soften it, and bring it to hearty repentance. It is to believe. Ye must do like those fowls, that first fly up, and then come down on their prey; first soar aloft in the way of believing, and then come down in true humiliation: Zech. 12:10.—"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." One may otherwise toil long in vain with a hard heart. Unbelief will lock up the heart, as the

waters with a hard frost; for hard thoughts of God set the soul at a distance more and more from him, when the believing of the proclaimed pardon touches the rebels' hearts, and makes them come in.

4. Lastly, The more faith the more repentance; as the fuller the spring is, the streams run with the more vigorous current. According to your faith be it unto you, is the rule of the dispensation of grace. For faith is the provisor for all other graces, as being the conduit pipe by which grace comes from the fountain of grace to the soul; so that it failing, all fails; and it moving vigorously, the rest do so too.

QUESTION. How are we to act faith in order to repentance?

ANSWER 1. Firmly believe, that whatever your guilt be, God is reconciled to you in Christ Jesus; that there is hope of your case, if ye can attain to the way laid out for bettering it. You have God's word for this: Is. 1:18. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Ezek. 18:23. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways and live?" This will quicken your endeavours after the happiness of your souls. Satan strikes at this foundation, to keep the soul from repentance, many ways. He will tell you, it cannot be thought that God can ever love the like of you. But the Lord saith the contrary: Hos. 14:4. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." Again, Satan will tell you, that you were not elected, but made for destruction; though God never set him nor you in the secrets of his decrees: Deut. 29:29. "The secret things belong unto

the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us." But why does he tell you all this, but to make you careless? which being done, he knows you cannot repent.

2. Believe that Jesus Christ is both able and willing to save you from sin and from wrath. You have ground to believe his ability: 1 John 1:7. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Heb. 7:25. "He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And you have also ground to believe his willingness: Is. 55:1. Rev. 22:17. both forecited. This will set you a step further on; and truly this being believed by a sensible sinner, the bargain is almost closed. Therefore Satan works against the tossed soul's believing this, to the end he may not come to an anchor or rest, but may plunge up and down in the depths, knowing no landing place. Hence these hellish suggestions, What have you to do with the promises of grace? they will be made out to others, but not to you. But see Acts 2:39. compared with ver. 36. Hence also the suggestion of having sinned the unpardonable sin. But why is that sin unpardonable? not that the physician cannot or will not cure it, Heb. 7:25. John 6:37; but because the sinner will never after desire to come to him, but willfully and maliciously rejects him. Hence also that suggestion, that Christ died not for him. But surely Satan never saw the roll of those whom Christ died for, and knows it no more than we, Deut. 29:29. forecited. We ought not to call that in question, but leave that matter to the Lord. It is plain, that we are commanded to believe, 1 John 3:23. Let us do so, and we shall have evidences that Christ died for us.

3. Christ has given his consent to be yours in his word; believe it; and do you consent to be his, accepting of the covenant, and of Christ therein to be your head and husband. Take him in all his offices as offered; and solemnly lay the whole weight of your soul, for justification and sanctification, on him. Lay over the burden of your guilt on his blood, of your raging lusts on his blood and Spirit; confidently trusting in him for salvation from sin and wrath. You have good ground to do this: Matt. 22:4, "All things are ready: come unto the marriage." Is. 26:3, 4, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Chap. 44:5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Chap. 45:24, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." This being done, the bargain is closed for time and eternity; Christ is yours, and ye are his, and God is your God in him. Satan strives against the soul here; for he knows, that if this be done, the person is no more his. Hence are these suggestions, Christ is a hard master there is no living with; though Christ says the contrary, Matt. 11:28, 29, 30. Again, it is over soon for that serious work, Psal. 95. If none of these nor the like will do, then he will tell the person, that it is presumption for him to offer at any such thing. But that is but the devil's doctrine, that it is presumption to do it, since God has commanded it, 1 John 3:23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And do what ye will, ye cannot please God unless you do it, John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Heb. 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Well, if the soul will

venture, he is ready to tell him, he had as good let it alone as try it in vain, for Christ will never receive him, nor give his consent to the bargain. But Satan is a liar; for he has given it already: Matt. 22:4, "All things are ready: come unto the marriage. Hos. 2:19, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. The soul is like a traveller come to a deep water-side, over which lies a bridge appearing very thin and narrow; it is pouring on rain on this side, it is fair weather on the far side; he would fain be over; and while he is minting to take the bridge, a false friend tells him, that he will never get over, that the bridge will break with him, or that his foot will slip, &c. And thus the poor man stands, sometimes putting on his foot, sometimes drawing it back again, till the flood rising behind him, he sees he must venture or perish. So he ventures with a trembling heart, and gets safe over, and sees that it was an enemy that made him so distrustful of the passage.

4. This being done, believe that Christ is yours, Cant. 2:16; that God is reconciled to you in him; that your sins are pardoned for Christ's sake, and you are no more under condemnation for them, Rom. 8:1; that you are now in a state of peace with God, and safe under the covert of blood. This will effectually melt your hearts into sincere repentance. And the stronger your confidence be in this point, the fire will be the more keen to melt the soul. Satan will oppose you in this also, that raising the dust of doubts and fears, your hands may be feeble that should fight against your lusts, the legs weak and trembling wherewith ye should turn from sin unto God. But the more he weakens that, the more he serves his own purpose against you.

5. Stand upon this shore, and look to your sins, and Saviour, Zech 12:10. When a soul has, by a believing application of the blood of Christ, passed the gulf of condemnation and sees itself safe on the other side, it stands fairest for a hearty melting for sin, and a free and cordial turning from it unto God, Luke 7:37, 38, compared with ver. 47. It is slavish fear that may be greater before, but it is filial relenting that will be greatest then. The waters of sorrow may make greater noise before, but they will come sweeping down with a more full flood then, as when a hearty thaw comes after a long frost.

6. Lastly, Believing the promise of his grace, use the means. There are means of God's appointment to stir up a soul to repentance; namely, serious meditations on the sins of our nature, heart, lip, and life; the evil of it with respect to God, and to ourselves, &c. Rev. 2:5, "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent." Psal. 119:50, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." There are promises of repentance, Ezek. 36:31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." To believe the promise without use of the means is presumption; to use the means without believing the promise, is a selfish unsanctified work. What God has joined, either of these puts asunder, and so must be fruitless. God says to us in this case, as unto Moses, Exod. 17:5, 6. "Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel: and thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee, there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." The

means are as the rook, the faith of the promise the rod of God: the way to get the water was by smiting the rock with the rod.

FOURTHLY, Let as consider the parts of repentance. These are two, namely, humiliation for sin, and turning from sin unto God. These two put together, make up true repentance. Accordingly the Scripture speaks of repenting of sin, 2 Cor. 12:21. "which have not repented of the uncleanness," &c.; and likewise repenting from sin, Heb. 6:1, "Not laying aside the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c. So in the Old Testament repentance is expressed by two words; the one denoting remorse and sorrow, Job 42:6. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Jer. 8:6, "No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" the other denoting the turning of the soul, viz. from sin unto God, Ezek. 18:30. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions.

But however these may be distinguished, they cannot be divided in true repentance. The true humiliation issues always in turning; and turning always begins at humiliation. Hence very often the whole of repentance is expressed by returning, and sometimes by humiliation, as Lev. 26:41, "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity." 2 Chron. 33:12, "And when he was in affliction, he be-sought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." We have both together, Joel 2:12, 13, "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

1st, To begin with humiliation. This leads the van in the sinner's return to God by repentance. There is never a soul comes back to God, but it comes the low way of humiliation. The sinner gone from God, is set up against him: but grace puts down the sinner from that seat, and lays him down at the Lord's footstool, where the Lord takes him up: 1 Pet. 5:6. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." As it was with Benhadad's servants, 1 Kings 20:31. 32; so it is with the convinced sinner: faith teaches them, that the King of Israel is a merciful King; repentance girds sackcloth on their loins, and ropes on their heads, and in that posture brings them to him. Now, in this humiliation of the soul there are these five things.

First, A kindly sense of sin, whereby the soul sees and is deeply affected with its sins against a holy, gracious God. I call it so, to distinguish it from the legal convictions spoken of before, which make a terrible reel in the conscience and affections; whereas this kindly soaks into the heart. The former is at the bottom involuntary, comes in, and is kept on against the sinner's will; because the natural enmity of the heart against God is not broken; and makes the man like one under great pain, who would gladly sleep, but still the new stounds awake him, and keep him awake. The latter is voluntary, it is welcome in, and welcome to stay; because the heart is brought low, and would fain be lower before a holy God. When the light appears at a chink, they would fain draw the curtains, and open the windows, that they may get a better sight of their black face and foul hands, Jer. 3:18, 19. This sense of sin,

1. For the matter of it, is,

1st, A sense of the plague of the heart, or sin of the nature, 1 Kings 8:38; Rom. 7:7, 8. The man that is humbled, sees the corruption of his nature, himself to be a mass of corruption and confusion. He discerns the bias of his heart to the wrong side, the aversion to do good, the proneness to evil, that is interwoven with his very nature. The light of the Lord shining into his soul, gives him the affecting sight of the distortion and pravity that is in all the faculties of his soul, the blindness in his mind, rebellion in his will, and carnality in his affections. The want of this is a flaw in the repentance of many, of whom we may say, as Lev. 13:44, "He is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean, his plague is in his head." They never see the corruption of their nature, and so repent not of it.

2dly, A sense of actual sins: Job 36:9, "Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded." These are the poisonous streams flowing from the impoisoned fountain: Mark 7:21, 22, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Sin now lies at the door; for those things that were buried out of sight, have a resurrection, and stand before him as an exceeding great army which he has mustered against Heaven. Sins committed many years before, will appear more fresh and green than that day they were committed. What he justified before as no faults, he will be now ashamed of; and what were reckoned tolerable follies, will be accounted monstrous impieties.

3dly, A sense of the particular idol of jealousy, which the man has been most apt to be led away with. The soul is never truly humbled,

till deeply sensible of its weak side: Hos. 14:3, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods." For the penitent will be particularly set against that, as what is particularly offensive to God, Psal. 18:22. This right eye smarts and pains him so exceedingly, that now he would gladly have it plucked out. And as it does especially grieve the Lord's Spirit, it specially grieves his, as what has been the great make-bate betwixt God and him.

4thly, A sense of the numerousness and multitude of their sins; Job 13:23, "How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin." A true sense of sin will open men's eyes to see innumerable evils compassing them about, countable only by him who telleth the stars, Psal. 19:12. Hence the humbled soul is sensible of a cloud of guilt that it has been wrapt up in; and will see it must plead guilty to every line of the spiritual law: sees itself a mass of iniquity; "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." Is. 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," &c.

5thly, A sense of the heinousness of their sins, the aggravating circumstances wherewith they have been attended: Luke 15:18, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Each sin pierces the heart of the penitent. And so it is wonderful to see what a dexterity a repenting sinner has in aggravating his sins, in his prayers and complaints. Time, place, person, and each circumstance, shoots as it were a dart through the liver.

Lastly, A sense of the evil of sin. Men may see sin, that see not the evil of it. Hence professing sin, instead of confessing it; turning to it, instead of turning from it. But if one saw the serpent's sting, he would not take it into his bosom, Luke 23:34. But the Lord's language to the soul whom he is drawing to repentance, is that, Jer. 2:19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." And there is a twofold evil in sin, which the soul is now sensible of.

(1.) The evil of it with respect to themselves. They are sensible of the bitter fruits of sin: Rom. 6:21, "What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." They see now "the vine is the vine of Sodom, the grapes are grapes of gall, the clusters bitter, and their teeth are set on edge." They cry out, as the sons of the prophets in another case, 2 Kings 4:40, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot." This is the danger of sin, that they are made sensible of. They see the guilt of it, laying the soul open to temporal, spiritual, and eternal strokes: Jer. 14:7, "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee." Hence "horror takes hold on them, because of God's righteous judgments." They are made to wonder that they are not in hell, drinking the cup of the wrath of God. Their hearts tremble to look back on the ruin that was hanging over their heads in their natural state; that the poisonous cup which they drank has not despatched them. Hence they fear to meddle with sin again, as one would do to take a serpent into his bosom.

(2.) The evil of it with respect to God and Christ; and that in a threefold respect. [1.] As contrary to the holy law of God: 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." By sin one breaks over the hedge, yea, breaks it down, and so steps into the devil's ground; what wonder then a serpent do bite him! Now the sinner sees the equity of God's law, and so plainly perceives the evil of transgression: Rom. 7:12, "The law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good." And the breaking over this so glorious a hedge, galls the penitent heart, the ingenuous spirit of an evangelical penitent.

[2.] As contrary to the holy nature of God: Hab. 1:13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Sin is the worst of evils in itself, and in the eyes of the penitent. There is nothing so contrary to the chief good, and therefore it is the chief evil. Now, the true penitent loves God, his holy nature and perfections; and therefore his sin is heavy to him, because by it he has walked contrary to him: Lam. 5:16, "Woe unto us that we have sinned."

[3.] As the procuring cause of the sufferings of Christ: Zech. 12:10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him," &c. Mount Calvary is the Bochim to the true penitent; the sufferings of Christ are the commentaries on sin, which the true penitent reads; the groans of a dying Saviour rend their hearts; and by the wounds of a Redeemer they see the ill of sin.

This is the loathsomeness of sin, Is. 30:22; whereby it is not only hated for what attends it, but is abhorred for itself, as a thing which on no terms the soul could any longer digest.

2. For the qualities of it. It is,

1st, A particular and distinct sense of sin, not a general and confused one. No man that hears the gospel, having common understanding, but he confesses himself a sinner; but many nevertheless are blind as to particulars. But this puts one in a capacity to lay his hands on his sores, saying, as Psal. 51:4, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." It shews him his particular transgressions wherein he has exceeded, and the particular ills by which he has exceeded and offended in these. As the vermin appear crawling, when the stone is lifted up, which before lay hid; so the ills of the heart and life appear to the penitent: Rom. 7:9, "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

2dly, It is real, not imaginary. The Spirit of the Lord realizeth the evil of sin to the soul. And so it goes beyond a merely rational knowledge of sin, as far as the sense of the bitterness of gall got by tasting it, exceeds that got by the bare hearing of it: Jer. 2:19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." There is a spiritual sensation of spiritual things, arising from the new nature, as well as a natural feeling of what is grievous to us another way: 1 Cor. 2:14, 15, "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 he that is spiritual judgeth all things."

3dly, It is operative, not dead and idle. The eye of the penitent affects his heart; and the heart being touched, sets all the powers of the soul on work. It is the spiritual physic, that ceaseth not to work till the whole soul be purged; as in the case of Peter's hearers, Acts 2:37, "who were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" There is a sense of sin which vents itself in nothing but in sighing and going backward, or in dry and fruitless complaints. It is like the disturbance which the sluggard meets with on his bed, which never thoroughly awakens him. But this sense of sin is thorough work.

Lastly, It is an abiding sense of sin, not a transient one in a fit, and so away, Lam. 3:49, 50, "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission; till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." The humbled soul carries it about with him, as long as he carries the body of sin and death about with him, saying with the apostle, Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" For it is not a slight touch, which goes as it comes, very easily. The removal of the stroke carries off Pharaoh's sense of sin; but here the wound is deeper and so more abiding.

USE 1. An insensible sinner is an unhumbled impenitent sinner; as was the case of the church of Laodicea, who said, "she was rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. 3:17. They that never digged deep, are not built on the rock. They that have never got a broad sight of themselves in the sinfulness of their hearts and lives, have never yet got a believing sight of Christ. Consider this, ye that have still lived at ease, strangers to any

thorough exercise about your soul's case; though the door is shut, the thief is in the house.

1. This shews how it comes that the pride of people's hearts still remains, though under crying guilt of sin. Though they know their sin, they have no due sense of it. If they had, it would be such a burden on their backs as would soon make them stoop, as Peter's hearers did, Acts 2:37. Insensible sinners may sit high in the seat of the scornful, while they see not what a God they have to do with: but when the Spirit of the Lord opens their eyes, and touches their hearts, to let them see and feel the evil of sin, they will lie low in the dust. They will, with the afflicted man, "put their mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope," Lam. 3:29.

3. See here a difference betwixt the saint's humiliation, and that of the hypocrite's. An Ahab may humble himself from a sense of the danger of sin; but a true penitent is humbled from the sense of the loathsomness of sin, 1 Kings 21:27, 29. Job 42:5, 6. A slave may bow himself for fear of the whip; but the disposition of a son is to be affected with the offence done to a kind father. Many will seem very low under the rod of God, and the apprehensions of his wrath, who are never touched with his love. They will be cast down under the sense of the evil their sin does to themselves, while the dishonour done to God by it lies far from their hearts.

4. Lastly, Let me exhort you to get and entertain a deep sense of sin on your Spirits. See your sins, and be duly affected with them, and be humbled for them. O how sad is it, that amongst our many thoughts, sin gets so few of them!

For motives to press this exhortation, consider,

1st, That the Lord is anew calling the land by his providence to be sensible of their sins, and to be humbled for them. The Lord took it not long ago as a brand out of the burning; but he is threatening to cast it into the fire again, by a foreign invasion.* For though we were delivered, yet the controversy remains still. We have not been thankful for our deliverance; Atheism, profanity, formality, contempt of the gospel, and a spirit of apostacy and declining from the Lord, and his work and way, wofully abound. How can we miss to fall at length!

2dly, Consider the present dispensation of providence towards this congregation, threatening to leave our house desolate. It fills the mouths of many with what is little worth; would to God it might fill your hearts and mine with a serious inquiry into the causes of it before the Lord. It speaks aloud, O that we were taking up the language of the threatening rod. The melancholy state of this congregation, in the time of the last desolation, needs not be forgot. It would become us all very well on this occasion, to consider what a jealous God we have to do with, and what entertainment has been given to the preached gospel; to lay our hands every one on our own mouths, and consider well what we have contributed to the bringing of the matter to this pass. By taking with our sin, and humbling ourselves befor the Lord, way might be made for the acceptance of prayer through Jesus Christ; and them that humble themselves God will exalt.

3dly, Consider, that however lightly your sins may sit on your spirits, they are a burden to the holy Spirit of God: Amos 2:13. "Behold," says the Lord, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." And we may be sure the Lord will ease himself of that

burden sooner or later. And if it be not by our repentance and humiliation, it will be by his accomplishing his wrath on us: Is. 1:24. "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." Therefore consider your ways in order to a returning to the Lord. The lighter that sin sits on us, it is the more grieving to the Spirit of the Lord.

Lastly, Consider, that without sense of sin there is no humiliation; that without humiliation there can be no repentance; and that without repentance there can be no escape from the wrath of God. "For except ye repent, ye shall perish." Insensibleness of sin, and the evil of it, locks up the heart in obduration and impenitency; and that will shut up the soul under wrath. But God loves the sensible humbled son: Jer. 31:20. "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."

Secondly, In true humiliation there is a kindly sorrow for sin: Zech. 12:10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." The soul is not only filled with remorse, but true grief, for offending a holy, gracious God. He grieved the Spirit in committing sin, his spirit is grieved in repenting of it. The hard heart is broken, the adamantine heart dissolved into tears of godly sorrow, the rook is struck by the rod of the gospel, and the waters gush out. The way to Zion lies through the valley of Baca: Jer. 50:4, 5, "In those days, and in that time, saith the

Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." And it is the mourners for sin whom the Lord comforts with the consolations of his Spirit. This is that brokenness and contrition of heart, which God calls for, and takes so much pleasure in. This is the rending of the heart, which God requires, Joel 2:12, 13. This is godly sorrow, which hath these properties.

1. It is a sorrow for sin as sin; not only for the guilt of it, but the loathsomeness of it; not only for the ill it does to ourselves, but the dishonour and wrong it does to a holy gracious God, Psal. 51:4; Zech. 12:10. The penitent in his sorrow, goes farther than awakened reprobates, who seeing their souls ruined and dead, do put on their mournings. He grieves at the heart, because of the offence done to God, the defacing of his image, transgressing a holy and most just law, furnishing a spear and nails to pierce a Saviour.

2. It is an inward real sorrow. Not the hanging down of the head like a bulrush, Is. 58:5. Not a made sorrow in a disfigured countenance, which lies all in outward appearance. But it is a sorrow soaking into the soul, and piercing the very heart, Is. 61:3. And therefore it follows the man in secret, where no eye sees; making him mourn before the Lord, when the world knows nothing of it. For it ariseth from an inward principle.

3. It is a lively sorrow. The sorrow of the world worketh death. It stupifies a man, and takes heart and hand for duty from him. But the

spiritual pangs of godly sorrow for sin quicken a man to his duty: 2 Cor. 7:11, "For behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" It makes the man active in salvation-work. And the reason is, the one springs from slavish fear, which chills the soul, making it cold and stiff, and unfit for action; the other from love, which warms the heart, and disposeth it for action: Luke 7:47, "Her sins which are many, are forgiven: for she loved much."

4. It is an abiding sorrow. It is not a flash of an affection, which is deceitful, but a "spirit of heaviness," Is. 61:3. The sorrows of many are like a summer-shower, that wets the surface of the ground, but is presently dried up, ere it do any good. But godly sorrow is like that, Eccl. 7:3, "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." The soul, like Mary, mourns till it find the Lord, Lam. 3:49, 50. forecited. It may indeed remit of its degrees; but while sin abides, the spring of mourning abides too.

5. It is an universal sorrow. The true penitent heartily grieves for his own sin, Psal. 38:18, and for the sin of others, Psal. 119:136. It is like the letting out of waters: it may begin at one sin, but it does not stop there, but goes through all known sin, Psal. 1:5. and unknown too, Psal. 19:12, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." They never truly mourn for one sin, that do not mourn for all: for that which moves sorrow in the repenting heart for one sin, is to be found in all sins, namely, its contrariety to the law and nature of God, the loathsomeness as well as danger of it. And hence,

when once the floodgate of godly sorrow is opened, it overflows all; and the sweetest morsel becomes bitter.

6. It is deep sorrow. Peter repenting wept bitterly. He that would have a good crop, ploughs well; and he that would build surely, goes deep with the foundation. It was the want of depth of earth that was the ruin of the stony-ground hearers, Matt. 13:5. And deep digging was the safety of the house founded on a rock, Luke 6:48. This sorrow is a rending of the heart, Joel 2:13; a rending of it as the plough rends the earth, Jer. 4:3; a pricking and piercing of it as with daggers, swords, and spears, Acts 2:37, compared with John 19:34; a cutting it as with a knife, Jer. 4:4.

It is a question, Whether penitential sorrow exceeds all other sorrows for the comforts of this life, or not? If we measure by the moving of the heart and affections, it is evident, that at least always it doth not exceed other sorrows. But if we measure by the settled disposition of the heart, it is as evident that it does exceed them all. As the deepest waters ordinarily make least noise, so men will be more moved in a lesser joy and grief than in a greater; for they are but the lightest joys that move laughter, and oft-times the greatest sorrows are above tears. It settles more firmly, and continues more than any other sorrow whatsoever in the world.

7. Lastly, It is a heart purifying sorrow. It works repentance or forsaking of sin: 2 Cor. 7:10. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." True mourning and turning are inseparable companions; though there is a mourning for sin, that is not deep enough to turn up the love of sin by the root. True sorrow in the heart is a spring, which as it runneth will work out sin, as to the

love, habitual practice, and dominion of it, as a spring works out the mud thrown into it.

USE. 1. There is no repenting with a hale heart, and without repentance no salvation. People must either be broken for their sins in a way of mourning, or God will break them for them in a way of judgment. There are many stout hearts in our day, that will boldly outface challenges from the word and their own consciences, without either breaking or bowing. But let such remember, that there is a day coming when God will make the stoutest heart to tremble, and the heart of adamant to fly in a thousand pieces, Psal. 2:9. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

2. How far must they be from humiliation, that sin deliberately, glory in their shame, and rejoice in ungodly courses and practices! I think providences and ordinances are hardening to many in our day; they are not bettered by them, and therefore they are hardened and made worse under them. Our penny weddings and set drinkings, leaving such a stench behind them, and attended with before unheard of profanity, are speaking evidences of this. Are these Christian methods to help poor people? Will God accept the gift, where such a fat sacrifice is offered to the devil? Is that charity for which drinking must open men's hearts and hands to give? If some methods be not fallen on to prevent these things, they will bring wrath on the congregation.* I appeal to the consciences of all sober persons, if it looked not judgment-like, that in that very time when abroad a design was managing to lay the congregation desolate,* at home many were met for a set drinking, carried on to a monstrous height of profanity, in the day and in the night. It becomes us all to mourn

for this, lest we involve ourselves in the guilt. And particularly I warn all such as were any way partakers of that scandalous riot, to repent, lest wrath break out upon them. For it is a fearful thing to stand exposed to the lash of these threatenings, Hab. 2:15, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness." Is. 22:12, 13, 14, "And in that day did the Lord of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts."

3. The sorrow of many for their sins, will tend to no good account before the Lord. Few have any remarkable sorrow for their sins at all; but amongst those whose hearts are really grieved and pained for their sin, how few are there that have any right sorrow? The danger of it, the disadvantage by it, the shame of it before the world, pains them a little; but the dishonour done to God by it touches them not effectually. And so their sorrow will be but the beginning of hell, not of repentance.

4. Lastly, Be exhorted to mourn for sin. Labour to get your hearts affected with this mournful object, and be not strangers to this exercise. The sins and threatened judgments of this day call for it; and it is the way to attain particular safety in common calamity: Ezek. 9:4, "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations

that be done in the midst thereof." If we were more in the duty of mourning, we would share more of the gospel-comforts, Matt. 5:4, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." And the more of the Spirit one has, the more will he be taken up that way.

Thirdly, In true humiliation there is a holy shame upon the account of sin before the Lord: Rom. 6:21, "What fruit had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." The remembrance of sin fills the penitent with shame and blushing: hence says Ezra, chap. 9:6, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Shame was never known in the world, till sin entered; yet sometimes sin comes to such a height with sinners, that it quite banishes shame: but the case of such is very desperate, Jer. 3:9. "Thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed." Shame then is the remains of virtue in a sinner, to which whoso are lost, all are lost to all good, Is. 3:9. "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not." Now, the grace of God awakens this shame, and sanctifies it in the penitent soul, so that he hangs down his head before the Lord, as ashamed of his way and heart.

There are four things occasion shame, and meet here.

1. Nakedness causeth shame. Hence said Adam to the Lord, Gen. 3:10, "I heard thy voice in the garden: and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Sin strips the sinners of their beautiful garments, takes away the glory of the rational creature, and leaves them without a covering before the eyes of a holy God. The penitent

sees this, and is ashamed; and so the publican, cannot lift up his eyes to heaven, but smites on his breast, as if he would wound the breast that sin bred in, which has brought him to this shamful case.

2. Pollution and defilement, for that makes one loathsome to others, Job 9:31, "Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Sin defiles the soul, takes away and mars all its beauty, and deforms it in the sight of God. And the penitent sees this, and is ashamed, Is. 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Never was a man that had been plunged over head and ears in a mire, more ashamed to come before others in that case, than the penitent is ashamed to shew his face before God.

3. Disappointment of raised expectations, Jer. 2:36, 37. The sinner in his impenitent state, looked for his happiness and satisfaction in sinful courses. But when his heart is touched, he is ashamed; for he finds, that instead of bread expected, he has got a stone; instead of fish, a serpent. He finds, that he has been courting his own death and ruin; and that from the wall he leaned on there has come forth a serpent and bit him. And hence is that reflection, Rom. 6:21, "What fruit had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

4. Discovering of one's reproach, Jer. 2:26, "Sin is a reproach to any people." In the impenitent state the soul's reproach is hid to it; but when grace touches the heart, and the Lord brings the sinner's ways to mind, lays his sins in broad-band before him, how can he miss to be ashamed? In a special manner, a conviction of base ingratitude

fills one with shame, as to be convicted of designs against him who had saved our life. And thus the goodness of God duly considered, fills the penitent with shame and blushing, while he thinks what an ungrateful wretch he has been: Jer. 3:25, "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.

USE. 1. Shamelessness in sin is a badge of impenitency, and therefore a forerunner of destruction, Jer. 6:15. Phil. 3:10. A forehead of brass is a sign the heart is of stone. Impudence in sin argues a filthy heart, an obstinate disposition, and a seared conscience. And such are a stage beyond others from the kingdom of God. What hopes can they have of the glory of heaven, that glory in their shame?

2. We see then that sin will bring shame sooner or later, here or hereafter. As for them that live and die without repentance, their shame is sure, and they will be covered with it, before the great congregation of heaven and earth at the last day, and they shall never recover their countenance: Dan. 12:2, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to shame and everlasting contempt." And if people be recovered by repentance, they will be filled with shame before the Lord, even holy shame. But whatever shame men have, it is no holy shame that keeps them from glorifying God by taking shame to themselves when called thereto; for no grace of God keeps folk back from duty, Josh. 7:19. Common discretion teaches, that one ashamed of an injury done to the honour of another, cannot look him in the face but with shame, till he has done what he can to repair that honour.

3. Lastly, The penitent soul is an ingenuous soul, and heartily at odds with sin. For such an one will be ashamed before God, of what the world cannot tax him with. Many may be sorry for sin before God, because of the terrible consequences of it which they apprehend, who yet are not ashamed before him, because they see not the evil that is in itself. But it argues a child-like disposition, to be heartily ashamed of secret sins before the Lord.

Fourthly, In true humiliation there is self-loathing and abhorrence: Ezek. 36:31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." The penitent not only loathes his sin, but himself for his sin. He cries out with Job, chap. 40:4, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." Repentance sets a man at variance with himself. He sees his ugly face in the glass of God's law, Christ's sufferings, and the Lord's goodness, and he loathes himself. This self-loathing manifests itself,

1. In the low and mean thoughts the penitent justly entertains of himself. True penitents see such vileness in themselves, as makes them give a very mean account of themselves. Abraham owned himself to be dust and ashes; Jacob, less than all the mercies of God; David, a worm, and not a man; Asaph, as a beast before the Lord; Agur, more brutish than any; the centurion, unworthy that Christ should come under his roof: Paul, one born out of due time, the least of the apostles, nay, less than the least of all saints, nay, the chief of sinners; and the prodigal son, Luke 15:19, reckoned himself no more worthy to be called a son, but to be made a hired servant.

2. In the penitent's being heartily out with himself upon the account of his sin: Job 42:6, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." As one cannot with any pleasure touch himself, that has filth thrown on him, but his very heart stands at himself; so it is in spiritual self-loathing. He looks on himself as an ugly spectacle. He not only has nothing to say in defence of himself, but with indignation he rejects all the shifts and excuses for it, which he was satisfied with before: Luke 18:13. "The publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

3. In holy revenge, 2 Cor. 7:11. He that was going on in sin before, is now divided against himself; so that the devil's kingdom of sin in him must needs go to ruin. He acts the part of an accuser, advocate, and judge, against himself; yea in some sort lashes himself for his sinful heart and life. Hence we find the humbled sinner,

1st, Smiting on his breast, Luke 18:13, as it were thereby declaring, that he deserves to be struck at the heart, and die for his transgression; that within him is the cause of all his sin and sorrows, he may thank himself for all; the source and spring of all is the corrupt heart.

2dly, Smiting on his thigh, Jer. 31:19, as if he would thereby declare, that he would be willing to take vengeance on the feet that carried him out of the way of God; that he is filled with indignation against himself, for his unaccountable practices, saying, What have I done? what a wretched sinner have I been?

There are these five things that stir up this self-loathing especially, in the penitent soul.

(1.) The remarkable blots, and signal miscarriages in his way, that deeply wound and defile the conscience: like Peter's denying his Master, which made him weep bitterly, when he came to himself. These in a peculiar manner cover the soul with confusion, and fill it with self-abhorrence. And hence sometimes repentance begins at some such thing, from whence it spreads to the whole body of sin: Acts 2:36, 37, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(2.) The fulness of sin seen in the soul: Is. 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The penitent being made sensible of his soul's case, sees the leprosy spread over the whole man, his mind under much darkness, his will rebellious against the will of God, his affections disordered, his whole nature corrupted, the seed of every sin in it; so that he concludes, that his heart is full of iniquity, and that the lusts that are hatched there, their name may be Legion. His life is a loathsome spectacle of the outbreakings and workings of that corruption. So that he sees that "from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is no soundness; and therefore he loathes himself."

(3.) The pollution cleaving to his duties: Is. 64:6. forecited. While he sees how the running sore of his natural corruption drops on all his holy things, and defiles them, how can he choose but loath himself? He sees his best works are like a moth-eaten garment, full of holes; never a prayer, nor confession made, but there are provocations against the Lord in them. His mournings for sin must be mourned over, because of the woful defects thereof; while he goes to mend one

hole, still he is sure to strike out another. Thus the penitent is in his own eyes like Job, who had not whole fingers to dress his sores with; so he abhors himself.

(4.) The aggravations of sin, Luke 15:18. A sight of these makes sin look like an opened stinking sore, wherein each of them contributes to make it more and more loathsome. When the penitent considers with what bent of affection he has sinned, the light, the many mercies, vows, and resolutions, &c. he has sinned against, he cannot but loath himself as a wretched self-destroyer, as an ungrateful miscreant, and as a beast before the Lord.

(5.) Instability in any thing that is good: Hos. 6:4, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early due it goeth away." Wavering hearts, and wavering hands, are very humbling to a soul truly touched. A good frame is a rare hour, and stays but a short while. How often are resolutions fairly taken up, and begin to bud in endeavours for practice, that yet are quickly let fall again? How often do men relapse into the same sins they have sometimes had made very bitter to them? There is nothing more apt than this to stir up self-abhorrence.

USE 1. Self-conceit is a need-nail to a state of impenitency: Rev. 3:17, "Thou [the church of Laodicea] sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." No repentance can be where there is no humiliation, and there can be no humiliation while people are puffed up with a conceit of themselves. Publicans and harlots will enter into the kingdom of heaven, before such self-conceited professors. Whenever the Spirit of the Lord takes

a dealing with such persons, and discovers to them the signal miscarriages in their life, the fulness of sin, &c. that swelling conceit of sweet self will fall away, as ever the snow melts in a sunshine day. They that look on themselves as among the chief of saints, will see themselves the chief of sinners.

2. Look into yourselves, if ye would loathe yourselves and repent. Hence said Isaiah, chap. 6:5, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." Things may be going all wrong in the house, and the master not know it, while he is a stranger at home. Many a poor soul is pining away in its iniquity, and running with loathsome spiritual sores, threatening its ruin, while in the mean-time they are mightily in love with themselves, and fond of their own condition, like a miserable man that is happy in a dream. But heavy will the awakening of such be.

3. Lastly, Sin must needs be a very loathsome thing in the eyes of a penitent, since it makes him loath himself. Alas! many times we love that in ourselves, which we loath in others. But when one loathes himself for his sin against a holy, gracious God, it is an argument that that soul is heartily out with sin.

Fifthly, and Lastly, In true humiliation there is a penitent confession of sin. Hence is that exhortation, Jer. 3:13, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God," &c. This is the way that penitent sinners have always sought pardon and ease to their consciences in: Psal. 32:5, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Confession of sin is the vomit of sin, whereby the sweet morsel

is cast up again; and it is the vent of real sorrow, shame, and self-abhorrence. And when the heart is loosed to it, the man becomes like the fish that is boiled in the water which it swimmed in.

This confession is to be according to the nature of the offence. If the sin be a secret one, a confession to God in secret is sufficient. If it be a private offence, the confession is to be so too: Jam. 5:16, "Confess your faults one to another." If it be a public offence, giving public scandal, the confession is to be public also: 1 Tim. 5:20, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." So penitent David left his confession on record, for the church's edification. And so did the apostle Paul, 1 Tim. 1:13. And the reason is evident, since by sin God's honour is impaired, and we can repair it no other way, but by confessing it with sorrow, shame, &c. the confession must be according to the nature of the offence, else the wrong done to the honour of God is not repaired by it. And in the private and public confession God is our party, and not men only, as well as in the secret one.

Now, confession is a necessary part of humiliation. If the hard heart be loosed to be truly humblied for sin, it follows of course, that the tongue will be loosed to confess it. Hence confession is put for the whole of humiliation, yea of repentance, Hos. 5:15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence." 1 John 1:9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful, and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession of sin hath two parts.

1. Self-accusing. God has given a law, the sinner has broke it; the penitent confesseth his transgression with shame and sorrow, to the

honour of the lawgiver. He cannot hide it, he dares not deny it; his soul is humbled, and therefore he confesseth it: Psal. 51:3. "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." He approves of the law as holy, just, and good, and disapproves of the transgression. Thus the morsel that was sweet in the mouth, turning bitter in the belly is vomited up.

2. Self-condemning. Hence said the returning prodigal, Luke 15:18, 19. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The penitent looks to the law, and the demerit of his sin, reads his own doom, and passeth sentence on himself. He owns that all the evil he smarts under for the present, is just and righteous with God; Dan. 9:14. "Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth: for we obeyed not his voice." If his broken bones pain him, he will own that it is just. If his sin find him, so that he read it in his punishment, he will acknowledge that it is a just contrivance; and that he deserves to sink under eternal wrath for it, saying with the afflicted church, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not," Lam. 3:22. He will say, that God may justly take the filthy garments of his sin, coyer them with brimstone, wrap him up in them, and cast him into the pit, Psal. 51:4.

Now, this confession should be sincere, full, very particular, free, and accompanied with forsaking.*

USE. 1. Hiding and covering sin, and refusing to confess it in the way that God calls for a confession, is a sign of an heart not humbled for it: Prov. 28:13. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but

whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." Many in our day, falling into public scandals by their works of darkness, put on a forehead of brass, and refuse to confess them for the glory of God, cheating themselves with that, that they will confess their sins to God but not to men. But little do they consider, that by that means they put a bar in their own way to pardon, while by resolute lying they cover one sin with another, and by refusing to honour God at his call. Nor do they consider the weight of that word standing in the way of their peace with God, while they refuse to remove the scandal, that so they may be reconciled to the church: Matth. 18:17, 18. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." It is true, it is but a word; yea but it is God's word, that will be more terrible to an awakened conscience than any punishment men can inflict.

2. They that shun to see their sins, that they may confess them, cannot repent of them: Jer. 9:6. 7. "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit, through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, behold I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?" It is true, there are sins which we cannot so see in ourselves as to confess them particularly; but in that case the soul does not refuse conviction, as Psal. 19:12. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." But when one keeps the sweet morsel under his tongue, and has no will to see the evil of it, lest he should be obliged to confess it before the Lord, this is quite another case, and speaks a deceit of the heart, holding fast sin, and refusing to let it go.

3. Lastly Labour to be sincere, full, free, &c. in confessing your sins. We are in debt to the justice of God, we cannot pay our debt; let us confess our debt, to prevent a pursuit, and that we may be capable to pray for forgiveness of it, which otherwise we cannot be. O, if we had a due sense and sorrow for our sins, this would, like an overflowing flood, bear down before them all those things which now hamper us in confessing our sins.

Thus far of humiliation, the first part of repentance.

2dly, I come now to the second thing, viz. the returning of the soul unto God from sin. This is the completing of repentance.Whatever sense of sin, shame, sorrow, &c. for it one have, if it end not in returning to God, it is naught. It is under this notion that repentance is so often called for in the Old Testament, Return, Turn ye. And it may be well put for the whole of repentance: for,

First, The impenitent sinner is out of himself, out of his wits; but by repentance he returns and comes to himself. Hence we read, that the prodigal, Luke 15:17. came to himself. There is never a soul that is brought to repentance, but there is as great a change upon him, as on a madman that is returned to his sound mind. He has quite other notions of things than he had before; he looks upon his sinful courses as the effects of spiritual frenzy. This is the first part of repentance, namely, humiliation.

Secondly, The impenitent sinner is out of his place, like a wandering bird: Prov. 27:8, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest: so is a man that wandereth from his place." And so the soul is out of its rest, and out of its duty. Adam shook himself and all his race out of their rest, and out of that they wander up and down in the devil's common.

Repentance is the sinner's returning to his place again, to take up his place again in God's house among his servants. This is the second part of repentance. And whenever the soul comes to itself, it will come to God again. The grace of God finds the sinner, as the angel found Hagar, Gen. 16:8, 9; and as Paul found Onesimus, Philemon ver. 10, 11, 12. Now, in this returning, according to the two terms,

I. There is a turning from sin: Ezek. 14:6, "Repent, and turn from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations." 2 Tim. 2:19, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." Psal. 34:14, "Depart from evil." The sinner changes his course, and gives up with his former lusts. The impenitent sinner is a misled traveller, who finding himself wrong, will go no farther on, but leave the wrong way, and seek the right one. To repent of sin, and yet continue in the practice of it, is a contradiction. No; the true penitent ceases from sin, he gives over his work in the service of sin and lusts, Is. 1:16. He forsakes his former ways, chap. 55:7. And though sin remains in him, yet it reigns not as before. If the question be, How the penitent turns from sin, since he is daily offending, and sin abides in him, while he is here? I answer,

1. True penitents turn from it in their heart and affection. There is a bond in the impenitent state, whereby the sinner's heart is knit to his lusts, as ever the sucking child's heart is to the breast, which he can by no means want. Repentance looseth that bond: Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" So though sin cleaves to the soul, yet the soul cleaves not to it as formerly. It hangs on him, it is true, but only as the chains on the captive, which are his burden; as the grave-clothes on Lazarus

raised, which he is working to put off. Thus repentance makes a change of the heart. And,

1st, His esteem of sin is turned to despite. His judgment is set against it: Is. 2:20, "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." What he approved before, now he condemns; for the scales are turned, and what was highest before is now lowest. Grace and holiness get the ascendant of sin and wickedness in his esteem. Those he counted most happy sometimes, because they took the greatest liberty in sinful courses, he now accounts most miserable, as slaves to sin, and in the road to destruction; and therefore takes up Joshua's resolution, chap. 24:15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

2dly, His love of sin is turned to hatred of it: Ezek. 14:6. forecited. Psal. 119:113, "I hate vain thoughts." Ver. 104, "I hate every false way." It was good in his eyes before, better than the favour of God, and communion with him. He knew nothing good or desirable but the world and lusts, and what might satisfy the corrupt cravings of the soul. But repentance turns his soul against it, and he hates it as an evil thing, as the worst of evils, worse than suffering and afflictions. Were he left to his choice without fear of punishment, he would never choose it; for he hates it for itself, its contrariety to God's nature and will.

3dly, His liking of sin is turned to loathing of it. Hence repentance is called a casting away of sin, Ezek. 18:31. as one would do some filthy thing that he cannot endure to have near him. For the penitent looks not only on sin as an ill thing, but as a loathsome thing which his

heart stands at, Is. 30:22. And this is the ground of that self-loathing which the penitent is filled with.

Lastly, His cleaving to sin is turned into a longing to be rid of it, Rom. 7:24. The man longs to be free from it, as ever the prisoner for the opening of his prison-doors, the captive for his being set at liberty, and the dropping off of his chains. It is a burden on his back, which he groans under; a sickness to his soul, that he would fain have the cure of. And therefore Christ with all his salvation is lovely in his eyes; his sanctifying Spirit, as well as his justifying blood.

2. They turn from it in their life and conversation. He that stood in the way of sinners before, now leaves it, when once the grace toucheth the heart, Is. 55:7. The penitent not only has a pure heart, but clean hands. Repentance will make a visible change on one's life: for it sets men to mortify the members of the body of death, Rom. 8:13; to refuse compliance with lusts and temptations, Tit. 2:12; to starve the lusts of the flesh, Rom. 13:14; and to nail the body of sin with all its members to the cross of Christ, Gal. 5:24. And,

1st, They turn from the gross pollutions of the outward man, Psal. 24:3, 4. An elect soul before conversion may be a habitual profane person, as well as others: but if he may be so after conversion, where is the difference betwixt Christ's sheep and the devil's goats? It is true, they may make gross slips, as David and Peter did: but they do not lie in them, they recover again by repentance. But a profane life is the mark of an impenitent state, Gal. 5:21. And it is a wonder how men can pretend to repentance, while they live in the habitual practice of drunkenness, swearing, sabbath-breaking, lying, dishonesty, and other gross pollutions of the outward man, where

one would think the profane devil is not so much as gone out, far less cast out.

2dly, They become tender with respect to the sins of common infirmity, labouring to make conscience of their words and actions, Acts. 24:16. What others account light of, they will stand at a distance from, as having felt the smart of sin; and that not only before the world, but even in secret where no eye sees but God's. They will stand aloof from temptations, and even from the appearance of evil: and wherein they are overtaken through the frailty of the flesh, they will mourn for it before the Lord.

3. In respect both of heart and life. They turn against sin to oppose and resist it, in the inner and outward man, as taking now the contrary side to the devil, the world, and the flesh. The spiritual combat is begun in the true penitent, Gal. 5:17. The war with sin is proclaimed and begun, which never ends till death. They revolt from, cast off the yoke, and stand up against their old masters, 2 Tim. 2:19.

1st, They resist the motions of sin in their hearts, and endeavour after heart purity, as well as life purity: Psal. 119:113. "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love." The Pharisaical professor may cleanse the outside of the platter, while he is little troubled about its being within full of ravening. But the hardest work a gracious soul has against sin, is with the heart, with what the world neither sees nor can see in him. And the guiding of the heart is the hardest piece of management in his religion.

2dly, They resist the outbreakings of sin in the life: Psal. 18:23. "I was also upright before him: and I kept myself from mine iniquity." They see they are in a world where snares are thick laid; they see

their own weakness, and how ready they are to be entrapped, and therefore labour to be on their guard, lest they be carried away with the stream. Hence they are afraid of temptations, and therefore labour to shut their eyes from beholding vanity; sometimes fearing to fall one day by the hand of temptation, and therefore longing to be beyond the reach of sin.

4. And Lastly, Because their turning from sin is never perfect till death, therefore so long they are ay turning, and renewing their repentance, John 13:10, They are not true penitents who look on it as the work of some days or weeks, at the soul's first conversion to God. A true penitent will ay be repenting, as long as he is sinning. He sees that he is often falling into the mire, and therefore must be often washing; daily contracting new debt, therefore must be daily crying for forgiveness. And the more heinous his after miscarriages be, the longer he lies secure, his repentance will be the more bitter when he riseth up again.

Now, this turning from sin has these properties.

1. It is voluntary, as springing from an inward principle set up in the heart against sin: Job 42:6. "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The penitent does not only cast away sin as a live coal out of his bosom, that would burn him, but as some loathsome thing, that would defile him. Some turn from their sins against their will; they part with their sin as Phaltiel did with his unlawful wife Michal, 2 Sam. 3:15. They dwell in the tents of sin, till the rigging-tree break, and there is no abiding longer there for them; they part with their sins, as the covetous man with his riches at death, when, nill he will he, he must let it go. But true repentance is a turning from sin out of

choice: and forced reformation neither is sincere nor will last, Psal. 78:34.

2. It is sincere, as being a turning from sin as sin, a turning from it because it is a turning away from God, a turning from it for its contrariety to God's holy nature and law, Luke 15:18. The man leaves his sin, not for the inferior motives only of danger to himself by it, but from the higher motives, namely, because it is offensive to God, dishonours his Son, grieves his Spirit, transgresses his law, and defaces his image. If your turning from sin proceed not from these motives, God will never regard it as acceptable in his sight. It is done for self not for God; and God will never be the reward of that work whereof he is not the end.

Question. What should one do with respect to those sins he has turned from, from these lower motives of self, or those sins that have left him, before he left them? Answer. Do not turn back to them; but do with them as they use to do with those that die by their own hands, bury them disgracefully, and throw stones on their grave. Look on them and loathe them, rise higher in your motives to forsake them than before. Ye left them for your own sake, put them further away for the sake of God's honour. Set them before your eyes again, and see how provoking they have been to a holy God, how dishonouring to his Son, &c. repent and mourn over them on these accounts. And then your turning from them will be sincere.

3. This turning from sin is universal: Psal. 119:104, "I hate every false way." Ezek. 18:31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions." Whoever turns sincerely from one sin, turns from all known sin whatsoever; because the reason that moves the true penitent, is to be

found in all as well as any one. Partial reformation is not sincere; for God requires the whole heart, and will not be served by halves. Every sin is a deadly wound to the soul; and therefore though many be cured, if but one remain uncured, the man is a dead man by that one: Matth. 5:29. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." A drop of poison will make a whole cup of good win edeadly, and one sin retained will render all other reformation naught; as Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal's concubine was the death of all his seventy sons by his wives except one.

4. It is speedy, without delays: Psal. 119:60, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." As long as a man is undetermined to turn from his sin, or delays to do it, his repentance is not sincere. It is an evidence that the lance of humiliation has not gone deep enough, when the filthy matter does not presently spring forth. A man whose heart is truly touched with a penitent sense of sin, will delay as long the flinging a burning coal out of his bosom, as the casting away of his sin. No: when it goes to the quick, it must off presently; though it were an offending right hand, it must be cut off presently; though it were an offending right eye, it must be presently plucked out.

5. Lastly, This turning from sin is thorough; it makes complete work evangelically, though not legally. It was a flaw in Judah's repentance, that she turned not unto the Lord with her whole heart, but feignedly. Jer. 3:10; and in Ephraim's that he mixed himself among the people, and was a cake not turned, Hos. 7:8. Men turn thoroughly from sin in these four respects.

1st, The true penitent sticks at no known sin, but turns from all without exception, even those sins that are dearest and nearest to them, and which they have been most easily beset with, Heb. 12:1, "I kept myself from mine iniquity," Psal. 18:23. This turning from sin is never thorough, till it reach the sin that is the sin of one's constitution, the sin that is the sin which most attends his calling, stations, and relations wherein he stands; the sin that he has most frequent and strongest temptations unto. That is the predominant evil which the heart must be loosed from, the right hand and right eye sin, the one thing lacking, which mars all other things, Mark 7:21. Unless there be a turning from, a warring with this, it is all wrong; though indeed they may sometimes lose as well as win in the battle.

2dly, He turns from that which is the ensnaring hook in any of his sins, the handle whereby it caught hold of him, Psal. 131:2. Pharaoh would have been content to let Israel go, so be they would have left their little ones, which he was sure would have brought them back again. And Satan will let people turn from sin for a time, while they retain a reigning love to the bewitching thing that is in a sinful course. For while it is so, the tree is indeed cut, but the root is left in the ground, and will grow again.

3dly, He turns from the occasions of sin, Ezek. 14:6. Wherefore David prays, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;" and Solomon gives advice in case of drunkenness, Prov. 23:31, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. It is vain to pretend to repent and turn from sin, while men do not watch against the occasions of it, and wrestle against them, as against the sin itself. They that in a siege mind really to defend the town, they will defend the outworks

as long as they can; wilfully to let the enemy in there, speaks treachery. Much lies in this point for reformation: Prov. 4:14, 15, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

Lastly, He turns from the enjoyment of the fruits of his sin. To pretend to turn from sin, and yet to feed sweetly on the fruits of it, is an absolutely vain pretence. When sin itself is truly quit, the profit of it is given up with. This the prophet teacheth, Is. 33:15, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil," &c. This is so evident, that even Judas in his repentance, such as it was, could no longer brook the reward of his iniquity, Matt. 27:3. A philosopher had bought a pair of shoes, but had not paid the price of them; the tradesman died; the philosopher thought the money was gained; but his conscience caused him bring back the money, and throw it into the shop. "Take it," says he, "thou art alive to me, while dead to all the world besides." Hence two things belong to this part of repentance.

(1.) Restitution, or restoring the thing again, which has been sinfully and wrongously taken away from others. He that can do it, and will not, cannot repent of that sin; for he wilfully feeds on the fruit of his sin; and that is a continuing in it inconsistent with turning from it. And since there is no pardon of that sin which a man does not repent of, it is a maxim in divinity, Non remittitur nisi restituitur, namely, to a person that is able, but unwilling to do it. Hence Zaccheus proves himself a true penitent by restitution, Luke 19:8. And one may as well think a thief may repent in the time he is feeding on what

he has stolen from his neighbour, as that one may repent of what in other cases he has unjustly taken from his neighbour, and can, but will not restore. When lovers part, they give back their tokens; and so when a sinner parts with his sin, he restores all that he had unjustly taken from others.

(2.) Reparation as far as may be, in those cases wherein proper restitution cannot be made: as in the case of unjust wounding our neighbour's honour, reputation, peace, quiet, and contentment, &c. Hence is that exhortation, Jam. 5:16, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." One may as well pretend to repent and go on in sin, as wilfully to refuse this and repent of the sin. The like reparation is necessary in those scandalous sins, whereby the honour of God is impaired before the world, religion wounded, and exposed to the contempt and scorn of profane men, and the hearts of the godly saddened. To repent of such sins, and yet wilfully to refuse the way whereby the honour of God, and the credit of religion, might in some measure be repaired, is impossible. One may as well pretend to repent of his wounding a man, while he stands looking on him bleeding to death, and will not, though it is in his power, bind up his wounds.

USE. 1. Hence we may see what is the proper way to follow out the design of our congregational fast; namely, to turn from our sins which have provoked the Lord to wrath against us. For humiliation without reformation can do little service. Let each of us lay our hands to our heart, and consider what has been the coal that we have cast in to raise this flame, and heartily turn from these things. If so, we would readily wear with thankfulness the blessings obtained by prayers.

2. All the trouble, grief, and sorrow that men have for their sin is little worth, if it issue not in turning from sin. For men to be sighing, but still going backward, is not repentance, but of that sort which may be carried on in hell, through eternity. If turning be not joined to mourning for sin, it is unsanctified sorrow, that will neither be acceptable to God, nor profitable to our souls.

3. Turning from sin outwardly, while the heart remains glued to it, is not repentance either. It is an easy thing to reform outwardly; but the great business lies in getting the heart weaned from the world and lusts. If we would be satisfied as to the truth of our repentance, we must likewise examine the motives prevailing with us to turn from sin; for the mean and low motives that rise no higher than ourselves, our own advantage, ease, safety, &c. will never denominate us true penitents.

4. Repentance is not the work of a day or a year, but the work of our whole lives. For so turning from sin is. Sin follows us, while we flee from it; often does it overtake us, and so we must renew our flight. The whole life of a Christian is a war; in that war are many battles, sometimes the Christian gains the day, and sometimes he loses. If he lose, he must renew the battle; if he win, he must pursue the victory, and lay his account with a new engagement. The great comfort is, that though he may lose a battle, yet he shall be victorious in the war: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under his feet shortly," Rom. 16:20.

5. Lastly, See here the necessity of turning from sin. "Except ye repent," says the text, "ye shall all likewise perish." Now, if ye do not turn from sin, ye do not repent; therefore if ye turn not from it by

repentance, ye shall perish. Our sins or out souls must go. Turn, or burn in the fire of God's wrath, is the choice. Let us then return speedily and thoroughly from all our iniquities, so shall they not be our ruin.

II. In repentance there is a returning unto God: Hos. 6:1, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." This is the term to which the sinner comes back. Sin is a departing form God, repentance is a coming back to him again. It is a coming back, like that of a runaway servant to his master, returning to his place and duty in the family. Sin carried away mankind from God two ways.

1. Sin carried men away from God as a portion wherein to rest. He is all-sufficient to himself and to his creatures, and none but he is so. Sin carried man away from God to the creatures for happiness and satisfaction: hence says Jehovah, Jer. 2:13, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."* There he seeks a rest to his heart. By faith man returns to God as a portion, unites with him again through Christ, and takes up his everlasting rest in him. Thus he returns as the dove to the ark, Is. 60:3, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

2. Sin carried man away from God as a Lord and Master, to whom he owes obedience. In this respect man returns to God by repentance, returning to his duty, Psal. 119:59, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies;" as Hagar was by the angel sent back to Sarah, Gen. 16:9. Men turning from God, turn their backs on his laws, and make their own lusts their laws; but the repenting

sinner turns back to the laws of God, Psal. 119:59, forecited. He has slipt his neck out of the yoke of the commands of Christ, but he comes and takes it on again, never to throw it off more, Matth. 11:29. He has gone off the road, the strait way; but he comes back, and bids an eternal farewell to the broad way. And there is here,

1st, A return of the soul to God himself, 1 Kings 18:37, consisting in the heart's turning to the loving and liking of the Lord as a Lord and Master. Sinners departing from God, not only mislike their service, but the Master and his house: Luke 19:14, "His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." They are filled with prejudices against him, there is a natural aversion in the heart to him, they cannot away with subjection to him. Hence "they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job 21:14. But in repentance that aversion is cured, and the soul inclines and moves towards him in heart and affections. This consists in three things.

(1.) The soul is brought to esteem the Lord worthy to be served and pleased in all things. The name of God is to the penitent a worthy name, Jam. 2:7. The soul sees the transcendent glory and excellency of God, worthy of all adoration and obedience; and so slights and disdains all other masters, as unworthy of the service of an immortal soul.

(2.) The soul chooseth him as its only Lord and Master, saying, as in Is. 26:13, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." This was Joshua's choice, chap. 24:15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The enlightened mind beholds his

glory, the glory and excellency of himself, his image, laws, ordinances, and service; and the renewed will consents and cleaves to him. It has tried many masters, "serving divers lusts," Tit. 3:3; but could never have satisfaction in the service of any of them, and therefore says, as Hos. 2:7, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."

(3.) The soul looks upon the service of God as its great happiness. Hence said the prodigal, when he came to himself, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? Luke 15:17. And therefore the saints are found declaring them happy who are most employed in his service, as the queen of Sheba said of Solomon's servants: Psal. 65:4, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." And 84:4, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." And till the soul come to this, to account the Lord's service the only true freedom and happiness, though they may take up his service, they will not abide with it, because they do not like their Master.

2dly, There is in this returning a return of the soul to its duty to God. Hence said Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6. Whoever returns to God, comes home as a servant to enter to work: for idlers about God's house may be nominal servants, but real ones they cannot be. God's servants have higher relations which they stand in to him; but all of them have duty annexed to them. Are they married to Christ? they must bring forth fruit, Rom. 7:4. Are they friends? they must do whatsoever he commands them, John 15:14. See Mal. 1:6. Now, the penitent returns to his duty in these two respects.

(1.) The penitent returns to his duty in his heart. He is (1.) reconciled to the whole law of God, and the whole yoke of Christ, so far as it is known to him to be his law and yoke, Psal. 119:6. "I have respect unto all thy commandments." He has a love and liking of the duties of piety towards God, and righteousness towards men. Though there remain in him a contradicting principle, yet he can say, as Rom. 7:22, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." The heart-enmity against the law and the power of godliness is removed, and nothing is so desirable to him as to be holy as God is holy. (2.) He has a full and fixed purpose of new obedience: Psal. 119:57, "O Lord, I have said, that I would keep thy words." Ver. 112, "I have inclined mine ear to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end." He returns with a purpose never to be what he has been; to pursue holiness, to enter upon, and keep the way of duty, whatever be the hardships and difficulties he may meet with in it. And this purpose is for to-day, not for to-morrow only; not to delay a minute, but presently to fall in with every known duty, as knowing there is no time for delaying.

(2.) The penitent returns to his duty in both heart and life. He is brought to sincere endeavours after new obedience: 2 Cor. 7:11, "Behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Purposes without endeavours are but fair blossoms without fruit, which will never prove a penitent. If the lame man be cured, though not perfectly cured, he will rise and walk as he can. It is true, while here we can do nothing perfectly well; but the true penitent will endeavour to do all, and aim at no less than perfection. Hence said Paul, "I press toward the mark, for the prize of

the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. 3:14. So the penitent returning to his duty,

[1.] Returns to the practice of every known duty. Hence said David, "I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psal. 119:6. He labours to know what is duty, and is willing to know it; and when known, endeavours to perform it. He puts hand to external and internal obedience; to serve God in heart and life too; to perform his duty to God and to his neighbour; personal and relative, secret, private, and public.

[2.] Returns to spirituality in every duty: Phil. 3:3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."* The true penitent will not sist in the carcase of duties, but will endeavour to get in to those unseen things where lies the life and soul of duties; namely, to have his heart imbued with love to God as the principle of his obedience, touched with regard to the honour of God as his end, raised above selfish ends and designs, and performing all in faith, leaning on the Lord for strength.

Now, this returning to the Lord is,

1. A sincere returning, not feigned and hypocritical, with the whole heart, Jer. 3:10. Hypocrites are said to have a heart and a heart, a divided heart, one for God, and another for their lusts. But the Lord says in this case, If ye take me, let these go away. For no man can serve two masters. It is a returning to him to abide with him for ever, as Onesimus to Philemon, ver. 15. The penitent, like the servant under the law, his ear is nailed to God's door-posts, to serve him for ever. To return for a time is naught.

2. A voluntary return. The penitent comes back with heart and good-will, Psal. 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" as one that is going back to a good and honourable master, and will serve him with gladness: Psal. 100:2, "Serve the Lord with gladness." They that are only driven back to God, by heavy rods or sharp convictions, will come away again; yet people may be driven at first to God, who seeing his glory and excellency, and the desirableness of his service afterwards, do voluntarily and heartily yield themselves to him.

3. A speedy return: Psal. 119:60, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." They that are sincere will not delay for a moment; they will make no truce with sin. The moment wherein true repentance touches the heart, is the precise term of going home to God; for they know that if they delay a moment longer, that moment may be the fatal moment to them.

4. A thorough return. The soul sticks at no known duty, but embraces all, be it ever so hard, and unpleasant to flesh and blood. Hence said the Lord of David, Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse; a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." The penitent puts a blank in God's hand, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Speak, Lord," says he, "thy servant heareth." He is for the will of God, without disputing. For God is an absolute master, and is therefore to be obeyed without reserve.

USE of this point. It lets us see, that negative reformation is not sufficient for repentance. One must not only turn from sin, but turn unto God. We must not only put away evil, but take in to us the contrary good: Is. 1:16, "Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil

of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well," &c. We must not only give up with such and such lusts, but be endued with the contrary graces. Some people reform from the evils of their life, but they do not go forward to the positive ways of holiness. They satisfy themselves, with the proud Pharisee, that they are not unjust, no extortioners, &c.; but, alas! they do not consider, that when the house which the devil goes out of is empty, he returns with seven spirits more wicked than himself, and so the last state of such a person is worse than the first, Matt. 12:44, 45.

THE APPLICATION

I come now to the application of the whole. And here I would sound the alarm in the ears of impenitent sinners, to repent, and turn from their sins unto God. O sinners, repent, repent; ye are gone away to your lusts and idols, turn from them; ye have turned your back on God, turn to him again. In prosecuting this call to repentance, I shall,

1. Endeavour to convince you of the need you have to repent.

2. Lay before you a train of motives to repentance.

3. Shew you the great hindrances of repentance. And,

4. Give directions in order to your obtaining repentance.

I. I shall endeavour to convince you of the need you have to repent, to make way for the motives to it. There are three sorts of persons that will readily stave off all our calls to repentance.

1. One says, I repent of my sins daily. Well were it with thee, if it were so. Surely there is need for it. But none are so ready to pretend to

this, as those that never yet knew what it is to repent. If ruing the ill thou hast done, a sigh for it, and a short-winded wish for mercy, be repentance, it is easy work. But it is not so. Thou canst not repent with a hale heart: that heart of thine must be rent for sin, and rent from it; thou must turn from sin unto God in all known duties of obedience. If ye pretend then to repentance, bring forth fruits meet for it. But to such pretended penitents we may say, as Samuel to Saul, 1 Sam. 15:14, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen?"

2. Another says, I have repented already. But O consider, repentance is not the work of a day, but of thy whole lifetime, since thou art never free of sin, Jer. 8:6. New provocations require new repentance; nay, old sins are not to be forgotten. Hence said Moses, Deut. 9:7, "Remember, and forget not how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness." And hence prays the Psalmist, Psal. 25:7, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." And if thou repent of them thoroughly, thou wilt be ashamed, and the wound will bleed afresh at the remembrance of them. Hence said the apostle, Rom. 6:21, "What fruit had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?"

3. Another sees no need of repentance for him; for such persons are of that blinded generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness, Prov. 30:12. They deny their sin instead of mourning over and confessing it, saying as ver. 20. "I have done no wickedness." They possibly keep free from the gross pollutions of the outward man; and for the positive duties of religion, they either see no need of them, or if they do perform them too, they are blind to the corruption of their nature, and to heart sins, and the

spirituality of the law of God. But ye need repentance as much as the proud Pharisee, Luke 18 and as the Apostle Paul, Rom. 7:9. compared with Tit. 3. But O consider,

1st, Are there not many of us that never got a sound awakening all their days? They had lived under the sound of the gospel, but it never broke their rest effectually in a sinful course. I will read the mystery of your case, Luke 11:21. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." Repent then, else ye are undone.

2dly, Are there not many whose awakening has produced a partial change on them, but it has ended in a fearful apostacy from the way of God? 2 Pet. 2:22. "It is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and, the bow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." Their fair blossom they once had, has gone up as dust. Repent, or your backsliding will be your ruin.

3dly, Are there not many sleeping virgins at this day, who are in a course of departing from God? The life, vigour, and tenderness they sometimes had, is gone; and death has settled down on their eyelids, and they are turned to be of the colour of the earth. To these we must say, as Rev. 2:5. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

4thly, Are there not many living in known sin? They know the particulars wherein they are wrong, and yet on they go, as an ox to the slaughter. Their corruptions are too strong for conscience. Ye must repent, or ye will perish. Profane courses will make a miserable end, and one sin retained will ruin the soul.

5thly, Look and see whether thou canst perceive the footsteps of Christ's flock, or of the devil's drove, on the way which thou art going, Cant. 1:8. Is your case the case wherein the fair company walked with displayed banners to Cannan, or that wherein many have slept and slipped away to the pit?

6thly, Canst thou deny but that there are many foul steps thou hast made and art making? O then repent. Go no farther on; one step more may put you beyond returning, Luke 14:24. Little knows the sinner how soon God may take the foot from him, either by clapping a withering curse on him, as on the fig-tree, Hos. 4:17. or by taking him red-hand in his sin, and sending him to the pit, Prov. 29:1. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

II. I will lay before you a train of motives to repentance

MOTIVE 1. Consider the obligations that lie on you to repent. Sit down and consider how manifold ties are on you to it.

1. The command of God obligeth you to it: Acts 17:30. "God commanded all men every where to repent." And will ye not have regard to the sovereign authority of him that made you? The command to repentance is one of the two great commands of the gospel, Acts 20:21. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the command which the prophets of old did so often inculcate, Ezek. 18:30. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." This our Lord Jesus and the Baptist preached, and his disciples, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This the Apostles preached,

Acts 2:38. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And this all along is the joint sound of the preachers of the gospel. So it is an old and new command too. No command is more peremptorily laid on, as in the text. As ye regard then God's authority, repent.

2. Your baptism obligeth you: Mark 1:4. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." It is a solemn tie laid upon you to return to and serve God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to die unto sin, to live unto righteousness. Ye have then taken on the Lord's badge; how dreadful must it be to continue runaways from your Great Master? Repent, then, and return, as ye would not be treated as runaways from your colours, as rebels that cast off your allegiance sworn to the King of heaven.

3. Your mercies oblige you in point of gratitude; Rom. 2:4, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" your common mercies, and special ones, preventing, restraining, &c. Every mercy is forfeited by sin; yet ye are still in God's debt, and every day a new load of favours is laid on, and these are strong ties to repentance.

4. Lastly, Your profession obligeth you. Ye profess yourselves Christians. If ye will name the name of Christ, then depart from iniquity, 2 Tim. 2:19. Why do ye call God Father, if ye will needs do the works of the devil, (John 8:44.) which Christ came to destroy? Do ye profess Christ your Redeemer, the Holy Ghost your Sanctifier? why then do ye continue in bondage to your sin, in unholy courses?

Do ye believe every sin deserveth God's wrath? what madness is it then to be treasuring up wrath againt the day of wrath? Quit your profession then, or quit your sinful courses.

MOTIVE 2. Seriously consider what sin is, that ye are so fond of, prefer to Christ, and for the enjoyment of it forfeit the favour of God. What do you see in it, that does so powerfully charm you? If you are taken with the profit of it, ye would consider that no advantage will quit the cost of the soul's ruin brought about by it: Matt. 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Job 27:8, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" If you are taken with the pleasure of it; that is dear bought, being purchased at the rate of eternal flames, which sin will bring men to without repentance. The pleasures of sin are but momentary, Heb. 11:25. And there is far more in God's service, even in this world: Psal. 4:6, 7, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift 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." Consider, I pray you,

1. Has not every bait a hook with it? Prov. 23:31, 32. Is there not a trap, gin, and snare in them all for you? How often have ye seen there has been death in the pot, when ye have sit down to feed your corruptions? Ye have snatched at the bait, but have ye not in the meantime felt yourselves wounded with the hook? ye have smelled the rose, but have not the prickles mean while annoyed you? And how can it be otherwise? for "he that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him," Eccl. 10:8.

2. Is there any solid rest in a sinful course? No, surely: Is. 57:21, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Do not your consciences witness, that the sting of guilt in the conscience is like a dead fly in the ointment, causing all to be unsavoury? Is there not always a worm at the root of every sinful gourd you sit down under the shadow of? Do not the very may bees of conscience suck the sap out of your lusts many times? Will any man say, that ever he found rest to his soul in a course of departing from God? No, no; ten thousand worlds will not satisfy an immortal soul.

3. Do not ye find sin to be an insatiable tyrant, like the grave and the barren womb, never saying, It is enough? Is. 57:20. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." O but they have a hard task, that have living raging lusts to feed! James 4:2, 3, "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Psal. 78:18, 19, "And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meet for their lust. Yea, they spake against God: they said, can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" The more they are indulged, the more they grow rampant: the more their thirst is cared for, the greater thirst is created. Hence men in a sinful course go from evil to worse.

4. Is not a sinful course a most foolish course? No man is unfaithful to God, but he is unfaithful to himself, and his own interest and happiness. The Lord offers to reason the matter with you, and to make your consciences judge; Isa. 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as

wool." It stands betwixt you, and temporal and eternal happiness. It is a poisonous cup, bringing death along with it. And how foolish is it for men to hug a serpent in their bosom, when called to throw it out; to drink a cup of poison, when called to throw it away; to take coals in their bosom, when it is told they will burn them; to court their own death and ruin?

5. Is not sin the separation wall betwixt God and you? Is. 59:2, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Does it not mar your comfort from the word, your confidence in the Lord, and your access to God in duties? does it not make as it were a gulf betwixt Heaven and you, that whatever communion others have with Heaven, your unrepented-of sins lets you have none? Shall this be your choice? Sure, then, ye need not wonder, if ye will not come back to God, he bid you at last depart from him, "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

6. Lastly, Consider what will be the end thereof. Sorely it will be bitterness in the end: Jer. 2:19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." However pleasant the cup seem to be at the brim, the dregs of it will be bitter: Prov. 9:17, 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." However taking the entertainment be, the reckoning wilt be dreadful.

MOTIVE 3. Consider ye must die: Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die." Death is certain, and therefore repentance is necessary. O if men would realize death to themselves, sinners would soon find it necessary to turn a new leaf. One hearing Gen. 5. read in the church, was so impressed with the thoughts of death, that he presently betook himself to a new course of life, that he might die well. We must all meet with death, lie down in the grave; let us view it aforehand, and see how it calls us to repent. Look to thy dying hour, and to thy grave, O impenitent sinner, and consider these few things.

1. Wouldst thou be content to die as thou livest? Thou livest in thy sin, without God; wouldst thou desire to die so? Many indeed entertain Balaam's wish, for the death of the righteous, while they care not for their life, Num. 23:10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But remember he did not get it, chap. 31:8, "Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword." And while death is so uncertain, it is the hanging of an eternal weight on a hair, to look to get matters mended then, that are not mended now.

2. Consider, what will a sinful life look like on a death-bed? How will ye be able to look your unrepented-of guilt, and a long eternity in the face together? Ezek. 22:14, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." Sin sits easy now on a sleepy conscience, while health and strength lasts, and death appears not. But when death stares thee in the face, and the awakened conscience flies upon thee, it will cut thee to the heart, that thou hast not repented before.

3. What will it be to die, and go to another world with a load of unrepented-of guilt on thy back? Look to your grave aforehand; think with yourselves, how will it be to lie down there with your bones full of your iniquity? Is it not best now, to shake off and east away your transgressions, as knowing that however ye may live with them, ye cannot die with them well.

4. At a dying hour ye must part with the world, and the enjoyment of your lusts. The foul feast ye sit at now, death will overthrow the table, and the sad reckoning for it comes in then, and continues for ever. O rise up now, and leave it by repentance. Part with these things at God's call, which ye must part with ere long, whether ye will or not.

5. Lastly, There is no repentance in the grave, Eccl. 9:10. Ye must repent, or ye perish; and it is now or never. Mar matters now by an impenitent life, and let death catch you there, ye shall never be able to mend them more. The working time, and time of trial is over then. If the brittle thread of life were broke, which may be snapt asunder in a moment, then ye are beyond the line of mercy. The candle burnt to snuff, shall be as soon brought to born again, as time shall be recalled.

MOTIVE 4. Take a view of the tribunal of God, before which thou must appear: 2 Cor. 5:10, 11, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." O sinner, knowest thou not that there is a judgment to come, and how this calls thee to repent? Acts 17:30, 31, "God commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which

he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Were men to lie for ever neglected, without a future reckoning, as the beasts that perish, they might live as they list, the hazard of condemnation for an eternity would not press them. But it is not so: Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Consider,

1. While thou art going on in sin, thy debt to the divine justice is increasing, the accounts are swelling; and the reckoning for them before the tribunal will be terrible, however little ye think of them now, Eccl. 11:9. They may fall out of thy memory, but they will not fall out of the book of God's remembrance, Hos. 13:12. But now is the time to get them laid over on the cautioner's score.

2. Though thou wilt not seek them out now to mourn over them, and turn from them, they will find thee out before the tribunal of God, Happy would the sinner be, if his sins would part with him at the grave; but they "shall lie down with him in the dust," Job 20:11: or if they would lie down with him there, if they would lie still and never rise again; but "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil," Eccl. 12:14. The Judge is omniscient, nothing can be hid from him, he is not capable to forget the least injury which the sinner has done to his glory; all must come into the account.

3. When thou seest Christ come again, and his throne set for judgment, when the trumpet shall blow, and the dead arise, and made to compear before that tribunal, when the heavens and earth shall pass away, what will be thy thoughts of staving off repentauce?

4. Lastly, Thy state for eternity will be determined there according to thy deeds done in the flesh. Impenitent sinners will get a long eternity to rue their obstinacy in, while those that repented in time shall be happy for ever.

MOTIVE 5. To move you to repentance, consider the sufferings of Christ. A Roman senator intending to provoke the people to revenge the death of Cæsar killed by Brutus, brought forth his bloody robe, and cried, "Here is the robe of your late emperor." And O will ye look to the bloody robe of Christ, hung up on the pole of the gospel, to move you to repentance? Zech. 12:10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him," &c. And learn here,

1. How dreadful must God's indignation against sin be, which is written with the blood of Christ, pierced with the sword of justice. Is it not "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" And shall we continue in sin, against which such indignation appeared?

2. Sin appeared terrible in Sodom when in flames, but yet more terrible in mount Calvary, where the justice of God pursued the Son of God with the sword of vengeance. A spectacle of amazement, the Son of God set up for a mark to the arrows of God! Do ye not ask into the cause of all this? It was sin. The children ate the sour grape, and the father's teeth were set on edge. They contract the debt, justice lays hold on him, and he "restores what he took not away, Psal. 69:4. The elect took on the debt jovially, but he is put to tears and strong cries in the paying of it. And will we not hate and loath sin?

3. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods from above nor from below drown it. "Behold how he loved you." He

might have been happy in his Father's love, though mortals had never shared of it with him. But such was his love to sinners, as made him lay down his life for them, that so a way might be pared for the egress of his Father's love towards them. And will ye not hate and loathe sin which was the cause of his death? Is this your kindness to your friend?

4. When Christ suffered, the earth quaked, rocks rent, the dead arose, the sun was struck, blind with the sight, and hid his face for shame: and how can we stand unmoved, who were the first movers of the bloody tragedy, whose sins furnished a Judas to betray him, a Pilate to sentence him? &c. Look here, and mourn for, and turn from sin.

5. Lastly, Did he not suffer enough? must he suffer more still, even in his state of exaltation? will ye grieve his Spirit, trample on his laws, yea and his blood, continuing impenitent in your sins?

MOTIVE 6. Consider the wrong done to God by your sin, in which ye may see the ugly picture of it. This kept Joseph from yielding to a strong temptation, Gen. 39:9; and pierced David's heart with repentance for his sin, Psal. 51:4; and lay heavy on the prodigal son, Luke 15:18. Every sin reacheth the throne of God in heaven, and him that sits on it. It is true, the malice of sinners against God is impotent malice, and can do him no real prejudice, do their worst. They cannot make him less happy, they cannot disturb his peace, Job 35:6–8. But the sinner is like the beggar full of sores lying on a dunghill, venting his spite against the prince on the throne. He wrongs the honour of God, his declarative glory, though he can do nothing against his essential glory. Sinner, thou wrongest God by thy sin,

1. By setting thyself in opposition to his nature and will. What is sin continued in without repentance? "A walking contrary to God," Lev. 26:21; an interpretative aim to throw him down from his sovereignty, Psal. 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Thou mayst put what fair colours thou pleasest upon it; but it is a throwing out the flag of defiance against the God that made thee. For dost thou not thereby in effect disregard his all-seeing eye, and presence every where, bid defiance to his justice, and call in question his truth, despise his goodness and mercy, and run counter to his holy nature and will, while thou runest still on that of which he has said, Jer. 14:4, "Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate!" And is this a course to be insisted in?

2. Thou wrongest God by trampling on his laws, Is. 33:22. He has given thee a law to be the rule of thy life, he has stamped it with his own sovereign authority, fenced it with punishments threatened, suitable to his infinite greatness: but thou makest no more of these than if they were cobwebs fit only to catch flies. Thou breakest through the fences, and in contempt of his authority, will be over into the forbidden ground. Thus thou affrontest the God that made thee: will he sit with it think ye? No, he can avenge the affront, James 4:12, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to destroy;" and he will do it, Luke 19:27, "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

3. Thou wrongest God by despising his Son, John 5:40. Ye wrong God at the rate heathens cannot do, and therefore your condemnation will be greater than theirs, John 3:19. God has sent his Son into the world, by his death to procure reconciliation betwixt God and sinners; he has "exalted him to give repentance," Acts 5:31:

but by your continuing in sin, ye slight his death, and the purchase of his blood: you love your disease so, as you loathe the Physician. What will be the end of these things? Acts 13:41, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

4. Thou wrongest God by grieving his Spirit, Eph. 4:30. Hear God's complaints of impenitent sinners, Ezek. 6:9, "I am broken with their whorish heart which hath departed from me, and with their eyes which go a whoring after their idols." Amos 2:13, "Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." How often has the Spirit of the Lord been at work with you to turn you from your sins, speaking to you by the word, providences, the secret checks of your own conscience, and secret motions and whispers within your own breast, but all to no purpose? This will not last: Gen. 6:3, "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." And it will have a doleful end, if ye do not repent: Is. 63:10, "They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." If sinners continue to be a burden to the Spirit of God, and do not take off the burden by repentance, God will throw it off to their cost: Is. 1:24, "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies."

5. Thou wrongest God by defacing the remains of his image in your own soul, "God made man upright, after his own image." Adam's sin ruined his image in us. But the more we go on and sin, we render ourselves still the more unlike God, and the more contrary to him. How fearful is this, to be still blotting out any appearance of the traits of God's image in us?

6. Lastly, Thou wrongest God by the ill influence your example has on others. Hence says our Lord, Matth. 24:12, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Every impenitent sinner is an agent for the devil, and invites and encourages others to despise God and his ways, and so will be made to reckon for the mischief his sin does that way. The rich man in hell was sensible of this, though it would seem not before, Luke 16:27, 28, "I pray thee, father," said he to Abraham, "that thou wouldst send him [Lazarus] to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

Now, will ye go on, thus wronging God by your sin, and not turn from it unto him? Consider, I pray you,

1. He is your Creator, Eccl. 12:1. He gave you a being, and brought you out of the womb of nothing, and will ye not be for him? will ye be against him? Has not he that made you a right to rule you? does not reason itself say, that God's creating us gives him a sovereign dominon over us? O why will the creature thus set itself against the Creator? Will the potsherds strive against the potter.

2. He is your Preserver, Heb. 1:3. Acts 17:28. You live on his earth, feed on his good creatures, breathe in his air, and will ye not hearken to his voice? Who was it that preserved thee in the womb, that brought thee out of it, so that it was not made thy grave? Who has kept the brittle thread of thy life from being broken hitherto, and fed thee all thy life long? Is it not the Lord? And wilt thou fight against him with his own benefits which he has bestowed on thee, yea, is bestowing on thee while thou goest on in thy sin? Shall the life, strength, comforts of life, time, &c. which he has given thee, be

employed to the grieving of his Spirit? What will the end of these things be?

3. He can destroy you, and that when he will, Matth. 10:28. Your life and breath is from him, and he can stop it when he pleaseth. He does not suffer you to go on to your sin, because he cannot help it, nay, the moment thou provokest him, he can strike thee dead, or send thee down alive into the pit. But he waits to be gracious. And this one consideration might determine sinners to repent, if madness were not in their hearts, setting them to provoke him, who in a moment can destroy them, and make them silent in the grave.

4. He is your Witness, Psal. 51:4. Luke 15:18. Sinners that like not to retain God in their knowledge, do in effect please themselves with the notion that God is closed up in heaven, Ezek. 9:9. "For they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not." But the day comes when they will see themselves miserably deceived. No; he is a witness, though many times a silent witness; but he will speak in due time, Psal. 50:21, 22. The opening of the book of conscience, and of God's remembrance, will clear his being a witness of your whole way and every step of it.

5. Lastly, He will be your Judge, 2 Cor. 5:10. And he is an omnicient one, from whom nothing can be bid; a just one, that will reward every one according to his works; an omnipresent one, from whose presence there can be no escape; an omnipotent one who can without fail make his sentence take effect. Will men pretend to believe a judgment to come, and yet be at no pains to make the judge their friend aforehand, but keep up the war against him, and not

break it off by repentance? Alas! horrid unbelief is at the bottom of impenitency.

MOTIVE 7. God is calling you to repentance. Be not deaf to the calls of God, lest the Lord pay home your rebellion, by refusing to hear you when ye call to him, Prov. 1:24. and downwards. God is calling you to repentance,

1. By the mercies wherewith he is daily loading you. Quot beneficia, tot ora. Rom. 2:4. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? These are the cords of a man wherewith God is drawing you. That you are spared on God's earth, that you are kept out of hell, that he gives you daily bread, and does not lock up heaven and earth that they may not help you, call aloud to you to repent, and turn to him. And he takes notice how little these prevail, Jer. 5:24. "Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

2. God is calling you to repentance by the crosses and afflictions, either laid on you, or threatened. Every cross providence is a messenger from Heaven calling you to repentance: Mic. 6:9. "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. They meet you in the way of sin, as the angel did Balaam; they bid you halt, and go no farther on; nay, they bid you return to the Lord. God is speaking to the land this way, to this church, and to the congregation, and to every one of us at this day.

3. God is calling you to repentance by the preaching of the word, Acts 17:30. This is the great scope of all our preaching, that ye may repent and turn from your sins unto God. And while God continues his gospel with us, it is a sign he is waiting for our repentance: but to continue in sin over the belly of all warnings, will have a fatal end to take us from the gospel, or the gospel from us; which we have ground to fear at this day on more accounts than one. Hence says Christ to the church of Ephesus, Rev. 2:5, "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

MOTIVE ult. Consider the text, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." There are two things in this to press you to repentance.

1 If ye repent not, ye shall perish. Sin unrepented of, brings ruin upon kingdoms, churches, congregations, families. And that is like to be the ruin of our land, and of our church, at this day. For, alas! the face of all at this day is like that described, Jer. 8:6. "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned unto his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." God has threatened us with desolating strokes, and is yet threatening but the generation is like to those scoffers spoken off, 2 Pet. 3:4. saying, where is the promise of his coming? And because God does not speedily execute the sentence, therefore men cast off fear, and go on in their sins, in defiance of heaven. But that concerns us nearly: Jer. 9:9. "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Sin unrepented of will ruin your souls; Except ye repent, ye shall perish. Consider, your life, your souls lie at stake. Sinner, thou hast gone away from God, thy soul is left in pawn that thou shalt return by repentance. If thou return not, thy pawn, thy soul is lost, lost for ever. Heaven's gate is too narrow to let you in there with a burden of unrepented-of sin on thy back. Nay, heaven thou canst never see; hell thou canst not escape, if thou repent not. The gospel calls you to repent; if not, the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on you that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. 1:7, 8. Have pity therefore on your souls, Ezek. 18:31, 32, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make yon a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." To this narrow point the matter is brought, Repent, or perish eternally; quit your sins, or quit heaven.

Now, I pray you consider here,

1st, The certainty of your ruin in an impenitent state. Ye have it from the mouth of the Lord himself, in most plain and peremptory terms, that "except ye repent, ye shall perish." If it were but a may-be, it were sufficient in all reason to determine us to repentance; for it is unaccountable to put the soul in hazard of everlasting destruction, for all the profit or pleasure of a sinful course; a thousand times more than for one to put himself in hazard of drowning to catch a fly. But it is not a may-be, but certainly it shall be.

2dly, All other grounds of hope are out off, if ye repent not. Tell me, O impenitent sinner, that will not turn from thy sin, what wilt thou trust to for salvation from the wrath of God? Wilt thou trust to the mercy of God? I tell thee thou art a despiser of mercy, Rom. 2:4; and thou canst not have it in this case, but over the belly of the truth of God; for he has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." Pray consider, if thou wouldst have mercy, thou must seek it in God's way: Is. 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Wilt thou trust to Jesus Christ, his blood and merits? Do not deceive yourself. Is not this Christ's own word, "Except ye repent ye shall perish?" does not the Saviour tell thee this? Q. d. None of my blood shall ever be wared on a sinner to save him from wrath, that will not repent and turn from his sin. Why does any body at all perish that hears the gospel, if folk may continue impenitent, and yet share of Christ's blood? No, no; to whom Christ will be a Saviour from wrath, he will be first a Saviour from sin, Matth. 1:21. He will first give repentance, before he give access to heaven; for Christ's blood was never shed to bring in dogs and swine into his Father's house, but shed, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. 2:14.

3dly, Where will the fruit of sin be, when this dear reckoning begins? Heb. 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Thou mayst get a time to run thy course: but at length thy eye-strings will break, the last pulse beat, and the soul will take wing and go to another world, and because of unrepented-of sin, be condemned to everlasting flames. And when thou enterest there,

what will abide with thee of all the satisfaction thou hast had in thy sinful courses? No; then thou must bid an eternal farewell to all satisfaction, ease, or delight whatsoever, either in God or thy lusts.

4thly, How wilt thou be able to stand under the load of wrath in the pit of destruction? Is. 33:14, "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? How wilt thou be able to grapple with vengeance, the Mediator's vengeance, while God shall hold thee up with the one hand, and punish thee with the other? Think in time on the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched: for either thou must repent now, or that worm will gnaw thee, and that fire scorch thee for ever.

Lastly, Consider the eternity of this state. The pleasure, profit, and ease of sin are but for a moment; but the destruction for sin unrepented of is for ever, 2 Thess. 1:9. O madness! to run the risk of everlasting pain for a moment's pleasure! If ruing, sorrow, remorse, rage against one's self for sin, were repenting, there would be repentance enough in hell. Men stave off repentance now for the bitterness of it; but there is a sweet in it too: but then ye shall have the bitterness of it in full measure, but never taste of the sweetness of it; for then the hopes of mercy are razed; and a fearful sight of an everlasting continuance of misery, without end.

Have pity then on your own souls, and throw them not away for that which cannot profit.

2. If ye repent, ye shall never perish. Repentance is the way to keep off the wrath of God from nations, churches, &c. Repentance is the

way for each of us to escape the wrath of God: Ezek. 18:30, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions;, so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Acts 2:38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." All the threatenings of wrath are summons to repent, and have always that clause understood in them, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish:" Rev. 2:22, "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." Though ye have sinned with the world, if ye repent with God's elect, ye shall not perish with the world. Consider,

1st, It is not falling into sin, but lying in sin without repentance, that ruins folk to whom the gospel comes, John 3:19. For there is a remedy provided; and it is for all diseases of the soul, even the worst and most desperate: and so nothing can be fatal to those that are willing to employ the Physician, and to undergo his method of cure. They are in glory this day, whose sins have been of the first magnitude, as David, Paul, Manasseh, Peter, &c. but they were repenting sinners.

2dly, There is mercy for thee, if thou wilt repent, and come to Christ. Good news, O sinners, If ye repent, all your sins shall be blotted out, ye shall be embraced in the wide and warm arms of mercy; if, as ye have gone away from God, so ye will come back again; Is. 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Rev. 3:20, "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." O sirs, will not bowels of mercy draw you? God is now on a throne of

mercy; he stretches out the golden sceptre to you for peace, if ye will have it in his own way: and in his name we proclaim mercy to all poor sinners that desire to turn from their sins unto God. O will not the proclamation of the indemnity touch the hearts of rebel sinners, and cause them to relent?

OBJECTION 1. But my sins are many and great sins, ANSWER. God's mercies are many, Psal. 51:1. and great too, Psal. 86:13; and his mercy is magnified in pardoning of such. If thy sins were as great as mountains, as many as the catalogue of them would reach from heaven to earth, there is mercy for thee, if thou wilt repent: Is. 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." There are riches of mercy, Eph. 2:4 abundance of pardoning grace, Is. 55:7.

OBJECTION 2. I have relapsed, gone back with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow that was washed, to the wallowing in the mire. ANSWER. There is mercy for backsliders too: Jer. 3:14, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." Ver. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." If it were not so, who could be safe? Men must forgive in that case, and much more God will, Luke 17:4. For as the heavens are above the earth, so are God's thoughts above ours: Jer. 3:1, "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord."

OBJECTION 3. But I have despised and alighted mercy, and the remedy of sin. ANSWER. They had gone all that length, who had so far despised mercy, and the remedy of sin, as they had murdered the Lord of glory, and yet they obtained mercy, Acts 2:36, 37, 38. Despise and slight it no more, and your former sins shall not be remembered.

OBJECTION 4. I have so long gone on in sin, that I can have no hope. ANSWER. The longer the greater is your sin; yet God has not discovered to us any particular time, beyond which he will not wait. There are some called at the eleventh hour; and those that come in then, are not rejected. So was the thief on the cross. See Ezek. 33:10, 11; Luke 14:22; Joel 3:21.

OBJECTION 5. But there is no body's case like mine. ANSWER. Consider the case of Manasseh, 2 Chron. 33. and of Paul, 1 Tim. 1:13. Such instances are designed to encourage sinners to repent in hope of mercy, Eph. 2:7. Adam's case was more hopeless, who had sinned against more light and mercy, than ye were capable to do. But suppose your case is a non-such evil, the mercy of God and the blood of Christ are non-such remedies. And ye may be sure, since he has said, John 6:37, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," that he will work a new thing on the earth, rather than that your case be unhelped, if ye will put it in his hand. So I conclude that there is mercy for you, if ye will repent.

Lastly, Thou shalt certainly be saved for ever, if thou dost repent: Ezek. 18:30, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." No true penitents go to hell. Heaven is the landing-place of all true penitents. They that

turn from their sins now, and turn unto God, shall for ever be with the Lord in another world.

O look to the glory that is above, and let your souls be moved to repentance by it. Cast not away the hope of eternal happiness for what does not profit.

Now, sinners, consider these things, and be stirred up to repentance, and do not adventure over the belly of fair warning to go on in a course of impenitency. Impenitency under the gospel is a sin of a deep dye; beware of it.

1. It is a continuation of sin; it draws out the thread of a God-provoking course, adding sin to sin, till God cut the thread of life. And O are there not enough of items standing in God's accounts against you already? why will ye be still adding more, instead of diminishing and breaking off the course by repentance?

2. It seals sin and guilt on your soul. Impenitency keeps all the rest of your sins fast on your souls: John 3:19, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." If you would repent, no sins whatsoever you are guilty of should ever be able to ruin you: but if you do not, that one will keep all the rest in life and vigour, to your utter ruin.

3. It flies in the face of the gospel, of Christ himself, his apostles and ministers, who with one voice call sinners to repentance. If ye do this, ye do all; if ye do not this, ye do nothing; ye receive the grace of God in vain; it will be in vain to you that ever you heard the gospel,

that Christ died for sinners, &c.; for ye will hare no benefit by any of these things.

4. Lastly, It is a bloody sin, that will involve you in everlasting misery. For there is no escaping of the wrath of God; if ye do not repent, ye are undone for ever. For "except ye repent ye shall perish."

Now, ye have had a message from the Lord, what answer shall I return to him that sent me? I think I may rank up all in these six sorts of sinners.

1. The brutish sinner, that hears as if he heard not. The word makes a noise in their ears, because they are capable of hearing; but, alas! they are no better than the beasts, in so far as they make no reflections on it, with respect to their state and case. What shall I say to you, but that the time comes when these souls of yours, drowned in a moss of flesh and blood, will be separate from your bodies, and get a long eternity to reflect on the calls ye have had to repent? Is. 1:3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Psal. 32:9, 10, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked."

2. The sullen, desperate sinner, whose answer will be that, Jer. 2:25, "There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Their hearts are glued to their sins, they have no will to part with them, and they have no hope that ever they shall be made willing, or if they were so, that God would receive them; and therefore they are resolved to take their time. But O consider, they have been reformed that have been as mad on their idols as you, as

Manasseh and Paul. If that cannot draw you, pray answer that question, Is. 33:14, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

3. The crafty, subtile sinner, whose answer will be that of Saul to Samuel, 1 Sam. 15:13. "Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But let the return to them be that of Samuel to Saul, ver. 14. "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" What means your continuing in sin, your not wrestling and striving against it in heart and life, if it be so?

4. The presumptuous sinner, whose answer will be that, Deut. 29:19. "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart." There are some who have a heart of adamant, and put on a forehead of brass, that nothing of this sort can affect them. Let the messengers of the Lord be saying what they will, they will be doing. They will have their course, and persuade themselves all shall be well. To such I would say, as vers. 20, 21. "The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant, that are written in this book of the law." See Is. 28:16. and downwards.

5. The slothful sinner, whose answer will be that of Felix to Paul, Acts 24:25. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." They are convinced that they must repent, and resolve to do it, but not yet. Young folk put it off to old age; old folk

delay it till a death-bed. Every one puts it off from time to time. But O sirs what certainty have ye of an hour, much less of a year? How many are there that never see old age? How many drop into eternity ere ever they are aware?

6. Lastly, The convinced sinner, who being awakened, says, "What shall I do to be saved?" For which reason I shall,

III. Show you the great hinderances of repentance. And,

1. Thoughtlessness is a great hinderance of it: Jer. 8:6. "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." Men do not consider their souls' state, case, and way. They sleep away their time carelessly without due reflection; and therefore their spiritual state goes to wreck and they pine away in their iniquity, and are not aware of the same.

2. The love and cares of the world are great hinderances of repentance, Luke 8:14. These take up men's hearts so, as that they have neither heart nor hand for the case of their souls. How many are there, whom the world keeps in a constant hurry all their life long, that they never come to consider their way till death stare them in the face?

3. Prejudices against religion and seriousness are great hinderances of repentance. Some see no profit in it; but "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. 4:8. Some see no pleasure in it; but "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are

peace," Prov. 3:17. Some think that it is needless to be at all that pains, for less will serve: but, alas! they do not consider what a holy jealous God the Lord is, and how many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

4. Presumption is a great hinderance of repentance, Deut. 29:19. They hope still all shall be well, however they take their liberty in a sinful course. They abuse the mercy of God as a screen to their lusts; not remembering that he will by no means clear the guilty.

5. Unbelief, the not embracing of Christ, and apprehending the mercy of God in him, is likewise a great impediment in the way of repentance. And,

6. Lastly, Slothfulness, whereby the business is still put off from time to time.

IV. I shall give directions in order to your obtaining repentance. Supposing what I have said before of the way to gain repentance by believing, I offer further these following directions.

1. Labour to see sin in its own colours, what an evil thing it is. Jer. 2:19. What makes us to cleave to sin, is false apprehensions we have about it. To see it in itself would be a means to make us fly from it. For this end consider,

1st, The majesty of God offended by sin. Ignorance of God is the mother of impenitency, Acts 17:30.

2dly, The obligations we lie under to serve him, which by sin we trample upon.

3dly, The wrath of God that abides impenitent sinners.

4thly, The good things our unrepented-of sins deprive us of.

Lastly, The many evils which are bred by our sin against the honour of God, our own and our neighbour's true interest.

2. Be much in the thoughts of death. Consider how short and uncertain your time is. Hopes of long life bring many into a hopeless case. And who knows when he may have outlived his day of grace, when the moment comes that God shall say, "My Spirit shall not strive any more with this man, for that he also is flesh?"

3. Dwell on the thoughts of a judgment to come, where ye shall be made to give an account of yourselves.

4. Meditate on the sufferings of Christ.

5. Pray for repentance and believingly seek and long for the Lord's giving the new heart, according to his promise, Ezek. 36:26. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ver. 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."

6. Lastly, What ye do, do quickly. The sooner you begin, the easier trill the work be.

Take the three following marks of true repentance.

1. Sorrow for sin, as offensive to a good and gracious God, Zech. 12:10.

2. Hatred of sin, as the most abominable thing, Rev. 2:6. This will be, 1. universal, against all known sin; 2. constant, without in termission; 3. implacable, without reconciliation; and, 4. vehement, without tolerating it.

3. A fixed purpose and desire of eschewing sin, and following duty; guarding against present sins, and the occasions of these we are in hazard of; honestly endeavouring after it in the use of means, and labouring to remove the hinderances to a holy life.

THE DANGER OF DELAYING REPENTANCE

> Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man. - PROV. 6:10, 11.

I HAVE been pressing sinners to repentance from the former text, and I hope by this time all of you may be convinced of the necessity of it But, alas! delays in this matter kills their ten thousands. Men put off the work from time to time, till time be gone, and they are surprised into ruin, as we may learn from this text. Where,

1. We have the sluggard's picture drawn in reference to his eternal concerns; which is the main thing here aimed at. He is one that puts

off his great work from time to time, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep."

In the 6th verse the slothful sinner is set to school to learn a lesson of the emmet; which though she has not the advantages that he has, yet has so much natural sagacity, as to provide for winter, in the time of summer and harvest, when meat is to be got. In the 9th verse there is a rousing call to the sinner to follow that example. But behold how he entertains it; as a person that is loath to arise, he begs "a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." Here is,

1st, Something supposed; and that is threefold.

(1.) The sleeper convinced that he has slept, and neglected his work. There are many who see themselves wrong, yet have no heart to endeavour to get right. They are convinced that their great work is far behind, yet have no heart to stir to set it forward.

(2.) The sleeper convinced that he must awake, and set to his work. Slothful sinners may see that the case they are in, is not a case they would venture to die in: they see that it is necessary to turn over a new leaf, to mind their salvation at another rate than they have done, or are doing.

(3.) The sleeper resolved to awake, and mind his business. He would fain sleep, but he does not design to sleep long, to sleep always. No; he designs but a little sleep, if ye will believe him, and afterwards to awake; though, poor soul, he does not consider that he is sleeping within the sea-mark, and may be swallowed up ere he awake out of his little sleep.

2dly, Something expressed; and that is threefold too,

(2.) A delay craved: "Yet a little sleep," &c. He is not thinking never to waken, never to repent, but only he cannot think on doing it as yet. However long a sleep he has taken in sin, yet he must have more. For as men, the more they sleep, the more they would sleep; so the more they continue in sin, the more they would continue. And the more they put off repentance, they are the more unfit for it.

(2.) The quantity of this delay: it is but a little in the sluggard's conceit. Though the Spirit of the Lord be grieved and wearied with waiting on his awakening, yet he thinks that all is but little. If the sluggard considered that his whole time is but little in comparison of eternity, the least time he spends in his sleep would appear very great. But, alas! he considers it not.

(3.) The mighty concern he is in for this delay. Though his ruin be wrapt up in it, he is fond of it, his heart is set upon it; and he pleads for it, as a starving man for bread. Ease is sweet to him; and so he speaks, "A little sleep, a little slumber." There are three things here which he craves, each less than the other; which shews how loathe he is to bestir himself. (1.) "A little sleep;" not a dead sleep, but a moderate one. (2.) If that cannot be granted, let him have but "a little slumber;" a napping, as it were, a middle betwixt sleeping and waking. (3.) If he cannot get that, yet he would have "a folding of the hands to sleep;" (Heb.) to lie a-bed. Let him but lie still loitering, and embracing his sweet self, and not presently be obliged to rise to put hand to work. Love to folded hands goes deep with him.

Observe, how the hearts of sinners are glued to their sins, and carnal security. When conscience begins to draw them out of their bed of

sloth, they will not yield, they will dispute every foot of ground with it. And they will take very little ere they want all. O were we as nice in the point of our salvation, as in the state of blindness, in the point of our ruin, how happy might we be?

2. We have the fatal issue of this course. Delays are dangerous, but most of all in matters of eternal concern. The issue of these delays is, the man is ruined, he never awakes till it is out of time. His little sleep, &c. spends all his little time, and throws him out quite unprovided into a long eternity. Here consider,

1st, What ruin comes upon him: Poverty and want. It is held forth under these notions, to answer to the provision the ants make for themselves. They provide for themselves in summer and harvest: so that when the winter comes, when they cannot stir out of their holes, they live on the provision they have laid in. There is a winter abiding us, a time wherein no man can work, when there will be no access to God's grace and favour. Death brings in this. This time is our summer and harvest, wherein matters may be secured for eternity: but, alas! the sluggard sleeps in working time; and so when it is over, he must starve and perish for ever.

2dly, How this ruin comes upon him. It comes on,

(1.) Swiftly and speedily. So the word rendered one that trarvaileth, imports: one that walketh vigorously, as a man in a haste upon the road. Though the sinner lies at ease on his bed of sloth, yet his ruin hasteth on apace, 2 Pet. 2:3. The sun stands not still, though the sluggard's work goes slowly on. Every breath he fetches in his spiritual sleep, draws his destrnction a step nearer.

(2.) Silently and surprisingly; "Thy poverty shall come as one that travaileth." If we send one on an errand, we will be looking for him again at the time appointed; but we know nothing of the traveller, till he come at us. So ruin comes on the delaying sinnerere he is aware; destruction is at his bedside ere he is awakened, Prov. 29:1.

(3.) Irresistibly: "Thy want shall come as an armed man;" (Heb.) a man of a buckler, who may hurt thee; but not thou him, for his buckler defends him. Were this traveller unarmed, the danger were not so great; or were the party attacked watching, and armed too, he might possibly come off safe. But alas! the poor man is naked, and sleeping too; how then can be make his part good against his enemy? He cannot; he must fall a sacrifice to his own sloth. Which brings me to consider,

3dly, What all this it owing to: "So shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth," &c. It is all owing to the cursed love of ease, to sloth, to the delays and pot-offs, wherewith precious time is squandered away, and the precious soul is irrecoverably lost, They delay and delay on, till the golden opportunity is lost, and they are swept away into the pit, with all their good resolutions for the time to come, which they never see.

The point I intend to speak to from these words, is,

DOCTRINE, The delaying and putting off of repentance or salvation-work, is a soul-ruining course among gospel hearers.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. Why it is that gospel hearers delay and put off repentance.

II. That this delaying is a soul-ruining course.

III. Lastly, Make application.

I. I shall shew why it is that gospel hearers delay and put off repentance. There is a generation that are not resolved never to repent, never to ply salvation-work; but only they are not for it yet. They hope to mend and reform afterwards, but for the present they have no heart to it: so by cheating themselves out of their present time, they put a cheat on themselves for ever. They are called by the word, and by their own consciences, to make ready for another world, to work out their salvation; but their hearts say, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep;" and their practice is conformable thereto. Why is it so?

1. Satan has a great hand in this. If he cannot hold out the light altogether from disturbing them, he will do what he can to lull them asleep again, before they be fully wakened: Luke 11:21. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." Thus he did with Felix, Acts 24:25, who, "as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." When the soul begins to think on making its escape, all the art of hell will be employed to hold it fast; and it is easier to get one to put off salvation-work till afterwards, than downright to refuse it altogether. And thus Satan is always on one of the two extremes, urging either that it is too soon, or else that it is too long a doing.

2. The cares and business of the world contribute much to this. Hence our Lord explained "the seed which fell among thorns, to be

those, who when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection," Luke 8:14. How often are people in such an unsanctified throng of business, that they cannot find a convenient season for putting their salvation-work to a point? They have so many other cares upon their hands, that they jostle out the care of their souls. They find themselves wrapt up in a cloud of cares; but think with themselves, that were they but once through that, they shall ply their main work. Well, but they are no sooner out of that, than they are in to another; and so on, till the work being put off from time to time, is quite neglected. The truth is, persons in such a case will hardly find a time for that work, till they be resolute that they shall take it as they can find it.

3. The predominant love of carnal ease: Prov. 26:15, "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom, it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." We are all naturally like Issachar, who saw "that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute," Gen. 49:15. Could people get sleeping to heaven on the sluggard's bed, would drowsy wishes carry them thither, many would be the passengers in that way. But that will not do. Men must labour, strive, and wrestle; and that is hard in the eyes of carnal men; and therefore, if it cannot he altogether refused, it is put off as long as may be. And hence never will a soul ply salvation-work in earnest, till it be effectually roused out of its lazy disposition.

4. The predominant love of sin. Why do persons stave off repentance, but because they are like those who entertaining their friends whom they have no will to part with, do therefore put off their departure

from day to day? The parting with sin is like the cutting off of a member of the body, Matth. 5:30; which one will never yield to, unless he be very resolute. No man will delay a minute to throw a burning coal out of his bosom; but they will love to keep a sweet morsel under the tongue, who yet know that they must spit it out at length. And hence it is, that no purpose of reformation, which is only for afterwards, can be sincere; because it argues a love to, and loathness to part with sin.

5. A natural aversion and backwardness to holiness: Rom 8:7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The heart will never be reconciled to the yoke of Christ, till grace make it so, Psal. 110:3. But like as the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke is loath to stoop to it, and therefore still draws aback; so will the heart of man do, till overcoming grace reach it, Jer. 31:18. Hence, when light is let into the mind, but the aversion still remains in the will, what can be expected, but that the business of repentance, which they dare not absolutely refuse, will be delayed?

6. The hope of finding the work easier afterwards. The sluggard thinks with himself, that a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep, would make it easier to him to get out of his bed; though, on the contrary, the more he sleeps unseasonably, the more he would sleep; and the longer persons delay the work of repentance, it is the harder to go through with it. For sin is a disease, which, the longer it lasts, gathers the more strength, and is harder to cure. And he that is not fit to-day to repent, will be less fit to-morrow.

7. A large reckoning on the head of time that is to come: Hence the rich man reckoned, "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But let us hear the judgment of God concerning this speech: "But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke 12:19. 20: God has given no man a tack of years, no nor hours; yet every body is ready to tell what they will do to-morrow, next month, or next year. The young people think they have a great deal of time before their hand for repentance; the old people think they have enough before them for that too: and in people's conceit there is always enough, till their time be gone quite, and they be wakened out of their dream. Hopes of long life have ruined many a soul. O to be wise! James 4:13. 14. "Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go unto such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: 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." But what folly is it to venture eternity on such uncertainty!

8. A fond conceit of the easiness of salvation-work. There is a generation that please themselves with the thought, that it is but to believe and repent, and that is soon done. What persons can do with a touch of their hand, they think they need to be in no haste with. But O how contrary is this to the whole strain of Scripture, and the saint's experience? Matth. 7:14, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Luke 13:24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Eph. 1:19, 20, "The apostle speaks of the exceeding greatness of God's power toward them who

believe, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ, when be raised him from the dead. 1 Pet. 4:18. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Did men believe this, that there is such a difficulty in getting to heaven, they would not dare delay for a minute entering on the way.

9. A conceit of sufficient ability in ourselves to turn ourselves from sin unto God. That the doctrine advancing the power of natural reason and ability in spiritual things, does take so much with the world, is no wonder, since man naturally is such a stranger to his own spiritual impotency. Hence it is observed, that the first question with the awakened is, "What shall I do to be saved?" It is worth observing how the carnal heart turns itself into different shapes, to retain its sinful lusts. Sometimes the man says, that he is not able to do any good; but when his sin cannot find shelter under this covert but he is pursued hot with conviction, he puts off his reformation and repentance to another time; thereby in effect declaring that he can do it, if he had but a season for it. He that is to use his oars may row at what hour he pleases; but he that must sail by the help of the wind must set off while it blows, because he cannot command it.

II. I shall show that this delaying is a soul-ruining course.

This is evident if ye consider,

1. It is directly opposite to the gospel call; which is for to-day, not for to-morrow: Heb. 3:7, 8, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." All the calls of the gospel require present compliance, and do not allow sinners to put off till another day. It is true, salvation-work must be deliberate work; but ye are not allowed a

time to deliberate whether ye will come to Christ and be holy or not. It is like the call to quench fire in a house, that must presently be done, yet done deliberately, so as the work be not marred in the making. How then can it be but a soul-ruining course?

2. It is threatened with ruin. The text is very express, "So shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man." And one with a thousand times more safety might venture on a sword-point, than the edge of such a divine threatening. See Prov. 23:21; Eccl. 10:18. And this threatening has been accomplished in many, whom their slothful delays have caused to perish; as in the case of Ephraim, Hos. 13:13. and of Felix, Acts 24:25. Many have been not far from the kingdom of God, who yet never came to it.

3. Whenever grace touches the heart, men see that it is so. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 119:60, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." When men are in earnest to get into Christ by faith, and to get back to God by repentance, they dare linger no more in the state of wrath, they flee out of it, as one fleeing for his life, Matt. 3:7. Their eyes are opened to see their danger, and therefore they are presently determined.

4. It has a native tendency to soul-ruin, which inevitably overtakes them, if they do not at length break off all delays, and come away. This is evident, if ye consider,

1st, The state of sin is a state of wrath, where ruin must needs compass a man about on every hand: John 3:36, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." To have staid in Sodom that day it was to be burnt, was dangerous; but to abide a moment in the state of wrath, is far more dangerous.

Who would venture into a house that is about to fall? who would not presently leave it? And will men venture "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," in a state of enmity with God? Surely such persons know not God's greatness, nor the worth of their own souls.

2dly, The longer ye continue in sin, your spiritual death advanced the more upon you. Every sin sets you a step farther from God, is a new bar in the way of your peace with him, strengthens your natural enmity against him, and alienates you more from the life of God. And where can this natively end, but in your souls' ruin? Ah! are we not far enough on in that way already? why delay more, that we may go yet farther off from God?

3dly, While ye remain in this state, there is but a step betwixt you and death, which you may be carried over by a delay of ever so short a time. All that is your security in this case, so far as ye can see, is the brittle thread of your life, which may be broken with a touch, and then ye are ruined without remedy. So that every delay, shorter or longer, of repentance, is a venturing of eternity on that uncertain life of yours, which in a moment may be taken from you.

USE I. For Information. This lets us see,

1. That delayers of repentance are self-destroyers, self-murderers. Well may it be said to such, as Ezek. 18:31, "Why will ye die?" Should a man wilfully neglect a remedy for his disease, which puts him in hazard of his life, he could not be guiltless of his own death; more than one who being called to rise and quench the fire in his house, and yet would lie still till it were consumed to ashes, would be blameless of its ruin. Self-love, that is, love of sinful self, is the source

of the greatest cruelty; whereby lusts are spared to the destruction of the life of the soul.

2. By delays the interest of hell is advanced; where many are this day who had resolved to repent, but death did not wait their time, and so they were disappointed. No wonder new grounds of delay be still laid to persons' hands, for it is Satan's great drift to get men entangled in the wilderness, that they may not make forward to Canaan's land. And every new entanglement sets the soul a step nearer to destruction: and who questions but Satan has art enough to coin new pretences for delays?

3. No wonder Satan is most busy to ply the engine of delays, when a sinner is somewhat awakened by conviction; as he did with Felix, Acts 24:25. "A soft answer turneth away wrath;" and delays will blunt the edge of convictions, as much as a peremptory refusal. Under convictions, at a sermon, or on a sick-bed, the sinner is awakened out of his sleep; but then nothing can serve Satan's purpose better, than yet a little sleep: which if they get, they sleep off the edge of convictions.

4. They are sinners' best friends, that give them least rest in a sinful course. And whatever men think of them now, they will think so afterwards, Prov. 5:11, 12, 13. Every body loves ease, and therefore faithful preaching and dealing with souls, is a torment to those who love to be undisturbed in their rest in sin, Rev. 11:10. But what suits best with our sinful inclinations, is worst for our souls, and will in the end be found so. Flattery has ruined many, when plain dealing and fair warning has brought many out of the snare.

USE 2. Of Lamentation. We may lament here the case of many, nay of most that hear the gospel. They put off their work from time to time, and so their spiritual case is going to wreck day by day. This is the case in natural things: Eccl. 10:18. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." They are in a dying condition, the physician comes to their bed-side, and offers them a remedy; they do not absolutely refuse it, only they put off the taking of it. In the meantime their distemper increases, and death is advancing apace. The market of free grace is opened, and they are called to come and buy: they see they need to buy, yet they are not like to stir till the market be over. O madness and folly to be lamented with tears of blood! Poor slothful creature, that is yet for a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, there are four things thou knowest not.

1. Thou knowest not the worth of a precious soul, which thou art throwing away for what will not profit. Will the sweet sleep is sin quit the cost of the soul's ruin? No, no: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matth. 16:26. Christ left the bosom of the Father, and shed his precious blood to redeem the soul. He was wise that paid the price; and if less would have done, he would not have been at needless expense of blood: he was a Father that received it; and would not have put his Son to that if it had not been necessary. Satan goes about without intermission to ruin it. But what low thoughts dost thou entertain of it, that wilt not break thy rest to save it from ruin?

2. Thou knowest not the excellency of precious Christ; sleep locks up thine eyes that thou canst not see the ravishing sight, John 1:10. The eyes of saints and angels are fixed on him, as the glory of the upper house: the eyes opened here by grace, are arrested by his overcoming glory. Hence are these rapturous expressions in Scripture, Psal. 73:25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Cant. 1:3. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." Zion's crowned King is making his progress through the city where thou dwellest; the cry to come out and behold him, reaches thine ears, Cant. 3. ult; but while he goes by, thou must have "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," and so thou losest the sight. The royal Bridegroom stretches forth his hand unto thee, to espouse thee, saying, Behold me, behold me: thou openest thy drowsy eyes, and beginnest to stretch forth the hand; but sleep overcomes thee, thine eyes close, and thy hand falls down again, and the match is marred. The chariot of the covenant that is driving on to his Father's house halts at thy door, and thou art called out: the ship is to sail to Immanuel's land, thou art called to come aboard: but "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep," and all is lost.

3. Thou knowest not the worth of precious time. The Apostle will have time redeemed, Eph, 5:16; but thou squanderest it away as a thing of no value; and working time is turned by thee into sleeping time. Precious moments slip away, and thou regardest not; though once gone, they can never be recalled. What would those who are past hope, give for an hour of that time, whereof thou lettest days, months, and years slip, without any improvement for eternity? O

unhappy soul, who "knowest not in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!"

4. Thou knowest not the weight of the wrath of God. It is true none can have a full comprehension of it, Psal. 90:11. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" But all the elect of God get such a notion of it, as rouses them up to fly from it, 2 Cor. 5:11. "Knowing the terror of the Lord," says the Apostle, "we persuade men." And if thou hadst tolerable apprehensions of it, it would break off thy sleep and slumber, and cause thee put forth thy hands to work. Didst thou consider what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, and how when thou fallest down again into thy bed of sloth, thou art truly in hazard of it, it would give thee such a gliff as would keep the waking.

There are three things thou dost not observe.

1. Thou dost not observe what speed thy ruin is making, while thou liest at ease; how thy judgment lingereth not, "and thy damnation slumbereth not," 2 Pet. 2:3. The avenger of blood is pursuing thee, though thou art not fleeing from the wrath to come. Thou art like a man sleeping in a leaky ship, which is drawing water every moment, and within a little it will be full, and sink to the bottom of the sea, if he do not awake and help it. Every hour thy debt is growing, the cup of wrath is filling, and fills so much the faster, as thou art secure.

2. Thou dost not observe how near thy destruction may be. Thou art like the old world, who "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away," Matt. 24:38, 39. Thy spiritual lethargy and dead sleep hinders thee from hearing

the sound of the feet of the approaching stroke. Thou liest open to the most terrible surprise, to sleep the sleep of death, which thou mayest never awake out of till in hell, Luke 12:19, 20. and 16:23. And O how sad is it for men to be past hope, ere they begin to fear; to have the house falling, ere they get over their bed!

3. Thou dost not observe how utterly unable thou art to ward off the blow when it comes: Is. 33:14, "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Ezek. 22:14, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." Can worm man stand before the almighty God, whose patience may be worn out ere thou awake? And if mercy and patience quit the field, justice will succeed into their room; and then there shall be no more sleeping, nor ease for ever.

USE 3. Of Reproof to delayers of salvation-work. Why do ye go on in this soul-ruining course? Have ye no respect to the calls of the gospel, none to your souls, none to eternity? Why do not ye with all your might whatever your hand findeth to do? I would apply myself here,

1. To delaying saints.

2. To delaying sinners.

1. To delaying saints; for such there may be, and of such there are many at this day, Cant. 5:2, 3; and our text is a general truth and warning. Spiritual sloth is so interwoven with our corrupt natures, that it will never be quite rooted out, till the corrupt nature be

perfectly expelled. And as it remains in great measure in the saints, so it is fruitful of delays. There are these five delays incident even to the saints.

1. A delay of righting their case when matters are wrong, by renewing their repentance, and the actings of faith. Sometimes their case is quite out of order: their graces are not in exercise; they are strangers to the Spirit's influences, and to access to and communion with God in duties. They have a secret dissatisfaction with this, and are resolved to get to their feet again; but sloth masters them, and the work is put off from time to time; as was the case with the spouse, Cant. 5:2, 3, "I sleep, but my heart waketh," says she, "it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?"

2. The delaying to give up with some bosom-idol that mars their communion with God, Cant. 3:1; Psal. 66:18. They are convinced, that the harbouring of it does much harm to their souls' case, and many resolutions they have to put the knife to the throat of it, but still they draw back their hand. And from one time to another the crucifying of it is put off; so that still it lives, like a waster in the candle, causing the soul's case go to wreck.

8. The delaying to clear their state before the Lord. They see need to have marches rid, and to be brought to a point whether they be in Christ or not, whether in a state of grace or not. They have resolutions to put it to a solemn trial, to examine themselves, and

search what evidences they have for a title to heaven: but still the heart draws back, and the trial is put off.

4. The delaying of some particular duty, or piece of generation-work, which they are convinced God calls them to. They have often thoughts of setting about it in earnest; but still some one thing or other intervenes, and it is put off. They begin perhaps sometimes; but it is broken off again, and they must yet have "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep."

5. Lastly, The delaying of actual preparation for eternity; like the virgins, Matt. 25:5, who, "while the bridegroom tarried, all slumbered and slept." They see that it is no easy thing to die; they resolve to labour to put themselves through grace into a case for it; but day after day it is delayed. The lamps are not trimmed for meeting the Bridegroom. Though they be in a good state, they have not a dying frame.

To all such I would say, as Jon. 1:6, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not." Let me expostulate with you upon this head, O delaying saints.

1. Do ye find yourselves any thing the nearer your purpose by all your delays? Nay the longer ye delay, do not ye find yourselves the farther from it? Does not your aversion and backwardness to duty grow upon you the more? and is not your confidence in the Lord still the more lessened? Yes; the more ye give yourselves to spiritual sleep, the more ye will desire to sleep.

2. Do not ye find this the way to rank poverty and want? Your consciences will witness the truth of that, that where the diligent shall abound with blessings, the idle soul shall suffer hunger. Is it with you as in months past? Have ye that sense and gust of religion, that access to God in duties, which ye have had when ye were doing with your might what your hand found to do?

3. Has not your poverty come upon you as one that travaileth? Have ye not been sometimes like Samson awaked out of Delilah's lap, and found your strength gone from you when you had most to do with it? Perhaps thou hast spent many days in estrangement from God, with much ease; but at length some strong temptation, or piercing trial has overtaken you; and then you have sucked the bitter sap of your slothful delays.

4. A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep, and the occasion may be lost, the opportunity for doing neglected duties may be lost. Either they may be taken from you, or ye from them. No man has a tack of his life, nor of occasions of doing good; and therefore "as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," Gal. 6:10. And though the soul that is in Christ shall be saved surely, yet this will make the salvation to be so as by fire.

5. Lastly, The long delayed work is hard work when it comes to the setting too, Cant. 5:5–8. When the awakening comes, there may be little time, much opposition, and less strength than otherwise thou wouldst have had, and yet more to do with it than otherwise. The longer thy hand is from thy case the more ravelled will it be. And it

will readily occasion much fear, darkness, and perplexity in a dying hour.

II. I would apply myself to delaying sinners, to those that are yet out of Christ, and have all to do for eternity still. They are living in a state of wrath, and yet they linger, and put off their removal from Sodom. They delay repentance, and go on in their sin. I would say to you, as Prov. 6:9, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" I must expostulate with you on this head.

First, Ye young people, why do ye delay repentance? why are ye like the wild asses' colts, untractable and unteachable? No doubt, ye think it is too soon for you; that it may be time enough several years after this. Ye think repentance and seriousness suits best with the wrinkled brows, the pale face, and hollow eyes, &c.; that it is pity to spoil the bloom of youth with such work. When do ye mean to repent then? It is like, it is when ye are settled in the world, or when ye grow old; at least the days of youth must be over first. But, poor fool,

1. Is the debt of sin so small upon thy head, that thou must run thyself deeper in the debt of God's justice? Dost not thou know that thou wast born a child of wrath? Eph. 2:3; that thou broughtest that into the world with thee, that will damn thee, if thou repent not, and come to Christ? And will not that sink thee deep enough in destruction, though thou add no more to it, unless thou repent?

2. Is not the same holy law binding on thee, since thou couldst discern betwixt good and evil, that is binding on the oldest alive? Have the young a liberty to sin, and to cast off the fear of God and religion, more than the old? See Gal. 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every

one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Here there is no exception. The follies of youth men may pass; but assure yourselves, God will not pass them: Eccl. 11:9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." And I doubt not, but if ye saw your sinful thoughts, words, and actions, whether vain or vile, laid before you, as you must reckon for them at length, how few soever your years have been, you will see them to be more than the hairs on your heads. And I must tell you, that being yet unrenewed, and strangers to the life of grace, all your actions have been sin: Prov. 21:4, "An high look, and a proud heart, and the ploughing of the wicked, is sin." And is it not then time to repent?

3. Who has assured thee, that ever thou shalt see the age thou speakest of? Go to the churchyard, and ye will see graves of all sizes, of your length and under. There are far more young corpses, than there are of those that carry gray hairs, ten to one.* Most men and women are cut off before they come to old age. What has befallen others as young and flourishing as you, may befal you too. And therefore, since ye know not but ye may die young, repent while ye are young, lest in the end ye find yourselves miserably disappointed.

4. Who has best right to your youth and strength? God or the devil? God is courting you for his own gift: Eccl. 12:1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Satan will labour to keep his possession. God is the first and last; and he required the first and best, the first-fruits, the first-born, the morning-sacrifice; and he requires the first of your days, and he takes pleasure therein: Jer.

2:2, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." And will ye devote the first and best to sin and Satan, reserving the last and worst to your Creator?

5. Great is the advantage of those that get a gripe of religion while they are young, beyond others, in many respects. (1.) Readily their passage in the pangs of the new birth will be easier than that of others. In none is that scripture fulfilled more, Mark 4:27. of the seed's springing and growing up, none knoweth how, than where grace joins with good education in young persons. The nail lately driven, draws easily in comparison of that which has been long rusted in. Where grace catches persons before they begin to dip into the gross pollutions of the world, it frees them of much remorse that these must occasion to those that have been led away with them. (2.) Young people's affections are easiest moved; and as they move easiest, so they move most vigorously, whatever way they be set. Hence they lie most fair for tasting the sweet of religion: Hos. 2:14, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." God sometimes dandling young converts upon the knees, and giving them sensible tastes of the pleasure of religion, is agreeable to the particular promise made for their encouragement, Prov. 8:17, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." (3.) They are in the fairest way to have most access to serve God in their generation. Suppose a man to be converted when he is old, his salvation will be secure; but, alas! his time for serving God's honour in the world is almost gone ere he puts hand to work.

6. Lastly, God commands you to repent presently, and therefore it is on the peril of your soul, that ye venture to delay a moment longer: Heb. 3:7, 8, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Remember that word, Eccl. 11:9, 10, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity." A sinful youth will at length make a sad soul. Ye know not how soon God may be provoked against you to cut you off, if you delay. Monuments of the Lord's anger have been set up in childhood and youth, as well as in old age. Witness the children at Bethel, 2 Kings 2:23, 24.

Let not Satan deceive you, as if there were no pleasure in religion. No, Wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," Prov. 3:17. There is a sweet in religion a thousand times preferable to all the pleasures and vanities youth gades after.

Secondly, Ye middle-aged people, why do ye delay repentance? why do not ye think with yourselves seriously, where ye are like to take up your eternal lodging, and prepare for eternity by repentance? No doubt ye think ye have time enough too; but no time at present, for ye have another thing ado, the care of a family upon your heads, Luke 14:20. When is your term-day of repentance? It is like it is when ye shall have more time than now, or when ye grow old. But, O sirs,

1. What know ye that ever you shall see old age? Yea what dost thou know, but, as Luke 12:20, "this night thy soul shall be required of

thee"? Alas! shall men thus from time to time venture their eternal state upon a mere uncertainty? Thy life is but a day, a short day, a winter day, and thou hast a long journey to go; thy forenoon is past already, and wilt thou sleep on till the evening that will soon be upon thee? The declining sun calls thee to awake.

2. What reason is there, that thy business in the world should shuffle out thy business for eternity? Remember they had as good excuses as you, who upon the sending of them were rejected, and it was declared their day of grace was past, Luke 14:18, 19, 20, 24. Oh hast thou not a soul to provide for, thy eternal state to look after? Can ye wonder, if, as ye prefer the world to Christ now, he give you your portion in this life; and if ever the time come that thou set thyself to repent, he deny thee his grace, and hid thee go to the gods thou hast served?

3. Consider the advantages thou hast now for seriousness, when the foam of youth has settled, and the infirmities of old age have not yet drawn on. O consider, and shew yourselves men. Ye have spent your youth in vanity, and will ye spend this age too that way? What is it ye design for God, the dregs of thy years, that age that is the sink of infirmities? and ye will part with sin, when ye can follow it no longer. O sirs, what confidence can ye have, that God will accept that off your hand? Mal. 1:8. "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."

4. Suppose ye should live till ye grow old, O how few are there that get grace to repent when they are old? I shall not say, there are none

such; but truly though they be, they are very rare. Be not ye encouraged to delay, because some were called at the eleventh hour, Matth. 20:6; for if ye mark the text, these were others than those that were standing there at the third, sixth, and ninth hour. We set no bounds to sovereignity; but as for those that live under the gospel, and spend their best days in sin and estrangedness from religion, common observation tells us, that it is God's ordinary way to plague them with hardness of heart, when they grow old: Job 20:11. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." About three hundred years after Christ, there was one that had lived a pagan till he was an old man; when he told Simplicianus that he was a Christian, he would not believe him: but when the Church saw that he was really so, their was great shouting and gladness, saying, Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian! They wondered to see a man when he was old born again.

5. Lastly, Will ye see the deceit of delays. When ye were young, did ye not put it off to this time? and now when that is come, ye are as unready as before. Delay no more then lest ye sleep the sleep of death.

Thirdly, Old people, why do ye delay repentance: why is not your heart bowing to God's call, when ye are begun to bow to meet the grave? Ye that have always thought ye had time enough all your days, ye will think there is time enough yet. But when is your term-day for repentance? a death-bed, it is like. And when ye come there, ye will hope it will be but a sick-bed, and so drive off your work till the utmost point. But, O sirs,

1. May not the time past of your life suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh? Most ye have "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep?" Well, when ye have taken it over the belly of God's call to you all your days, what confidence can ye have to look for grace or mercy then? Sin, Satan, and the world shall have all your time, and ye will look to God, and seek his favour, when ye can do no more. O, are ye not afraid, that that be accomplished on you? Prov. 1:24. &c. "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 have 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 whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you," &c. I trow, if your conscience were awakened just now, ye should have enough ado to fasten your feet on a promise of mercy.

2. How do you know, that ye will get a death-bed or sick-bed? What do ye know, but that in a moment ye may drop into eternity, as many have done? Mind him who used to say, three words would do his turn at death. Death does not always send messengers to warn us of its approach. Nay, see what our Lord says expressly, Matth. 24:48–51. "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming. And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not ware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3. Lastly, And is dying such an easy business, that ye must be laying up other work, yea your main work, for a dying time? I should think,

that dying itself, with the pains, throes, and sickness that ordinarily attend it, were enough of themselves. Surely, if we were rightly exercised in health, we would endeavour, that when we come to die, we should have nothing ado but to die. But I pray you remember, you may come to die roving, without the exercise of your reason. But though ye should have it to the last, I pray you consider, is the work of repentance such an easy work as to leave it till the time you can do nothing else? Will ye put off turning to God, till ye are not able to turn yourselves on a bed, but as ye are lifted? taking heaven by storm, till your strength be gone? crying to God, till ye are not able to speak two sentences at once? making ready for death, till it be come to your bed-side?

USE ult. I exhort you all to delay repentance and salvation-work no longer.

MOTIVE 1. Consider ye do but mock God, and cheat yourselves by your delaying. For it is inconsistent with a sincere purpose to repent and turn from sin, 1 Pet. 4:1, 2, 3. For he that sincerely minds to turn from sin, will presently turn from it.

MOTIVE 2. Repentance is not in your power; it is God's gift, which he gives when he will, Acts 5:31. "God hath exalted Christ with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel." The time of God's grace is limited: a time wherein he will be found, and when not: Is. 55:6. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Death certainly puts a period to it. But it seems to be clear, that men may outlive their day of grace: Luke 14:24. "I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." Time was when Esau might

have had the blessing, but then he despised it; but the time came when he could not have it: Heb. 12:17. "Ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Strike in then with the occasion; for if wind and tide fail, there can be no setting to sea.

MOTIVE 3. Though we knew certainly, that our day of grace were far from the end; yet it is a most unworthy thing so to deal with God. Shall men abuse mercy and grace because the Lord waiteth to be gracious? Will men abuse the divine patience, because it suffers long? What a folly is it to stand off as long as we can from him to whom we must needs submit ourselves at length?

MOTIVE 4. The time is short, the work great, and so is the opposition. Salvation-work is a great work; it is no easy thing to be a Christian; ye must lay your account with all the opposition the devil, the world, and the flesh can make you; ye have but an age that is an handbreadth, as nothing to do it in.

MOTIVE 5. Your life is most uncertain. We are tenants-at-will, we have no tack for to-morrow, Jam. 4:13, 14. forecited. We are agreed about the necessity of repentance; the only question is, When shall it be done? God says, To-day; and to morrow is not yours, but God's. How then can ye destinate for this use the time that is not yours? Return to God one day before thy death, say the Jewish doctors. Wisely said; return then to-day, for it may be ye shall die to-morrow.

MOTIVE 6. The longer ye delay, the work will be the harder. For sin becomes stronger, as the waters, the farther from the head, the greater they grow. And the arrow that going from the bow strays

from the mark, how far wide will it be ere it come to the utmost point? It is observed, that Christ groaned at the raising of Lazarus four days dead; but not so at the raising of the young man of Nain, or Jarius' daughter. Jer. 13:23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Their number increaseth; the devil who comes alone at first, at length his name is Legion. The heart grows harder, the mind blinder, the will more perverse, the affections more carnal.

MOTIVE 7. A moment's delay may be an eternal loss, because thou knowest not any moment that may not be thy last.

MOTIVE ult. God commands you to repent presently, Heb. 4:7. Therefore upon your peril it is, if ye delay any more.

OBJECTION. The thief on the cross repented at the last gasp. ANSWER. His repentance was one of the miracles at Christ's death; and he glorified God more at his death than ye could if ye had been a penitent all your days. But though there was one that none might despair, yet there was but one that none might presume. The other thief even died as he lived.

THE EXTRAORDINARY CASE OF THE THIEF ON THE CROSS NO ARGUMENT FOR DELAYING REPENTANCE

Two Sermons preached, at Ettrick, in June, 1717.

> And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. - LUKE 23:42

THE love that sinners bear to their lusts, and the conviction men generally have of the necessity of repentance, each of them putting in for a share, do natively produce a delay. And Satan and the corrupt heart join to support the delaying temper, both by pretended reasons, and abused examples: amongst which last none is more so than this of the thief who repented on the cross.

My great design being to convince you, that this instance can be no encouragement to delay repentance, I need not here lay for a foundation the proof of this man's sincerity, which the text and context put beyond all doubt; nor insist on explaining this his prayer, full of faith and repentance, which had a most gracious answer.

Every body knows the story; and they that know very little of the Bible, will be found acquainted with this instance of the penitent thief on the cross; and they abuse it to their own ruin, drawing encouragement from it to put off repentance till they come to a death-bed.

We need not much wonder, that this becomes a stumbling-stone to many, on which they are ruined. Hearing the thief was converted near the last gasp, and having led a sinful life, the thread was suddenly broken, and he died happily; his day was a dark day all over, till in the evening, the sun broke out with a bright though short glimpse, and then set; That this, I say, is abused and turned to a stumbling-stone by impenitent sinners, is no great wonder, if ye consider the following things.

1. As a vicious stomach corrupts the best of meat; so impenitent sinners abuse the best things to their own ruin: so that what raises up others taught of God, is an occasion of falling to them. The altar of God, and the whole law was so to the unbelieving Jews, Rom. 11:9. Is not the very gospel, and the preachers thereof, a savour of death to some? 2 Cor. 2:16. Nay, Christ himself is a stumbling-block to them. 1 Pet. 2:8.

2 There is a particular disposition in the hearts of impenitent sinners to abuse and wrest the Scriptures. Hence Peter, speaking of Paul's epistles, says, "In them are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction," 2 Pet. 3:16. The Scripture is a light, and a rule of divine authority; and it may well be expected, that if sinners can persuade themselves of a shelter there for their sins, it will be the most effectual one. This is the most feasible means for stilling the clamours of an ill conscience, and cheating men into their own ruin.

3. Abused Scripture is one of the chief pieces of Satan's armour, wherewith he maintains and promotes his kingdom among those

that have the Scriptures. Thus Satan said to Christ, Matt 4:6. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Hence unclean persons still their consciences with the example of David, swearers with that of Joseph by the life of Pharaoh, or Peter's, &c. Men that are mere moralists screen themselves with that, Mic. 6:8, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And others satisfy themselves with good meanings and desires, because of that, Matt. 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Others think, they may repent at any time, from that Scripture, Ezek. 18:27, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." And thus it becomes harder to convince men that have some notional knowledge of the Bible, than those that never knew it.

4. Reigning love to sin makes people very dexterous to find out shifts to preserve their lusts; as in Saul's speech to Samuel, 1 Sam. 15:15, "They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed." What people would fain have to be true, it is easy to persuade them of: and what they are loathe to part with, it is not hard to invent shifts to hold it still. Were men willing to be the Lord's, they would be so presently; and they would be loathe to delay one moment, lest they should never see another.

To come to this particular instance in the text, I must tell you, That though here is ground of hope for poor trembling sinners, that they may be brought to repentance, and be accepted of God; yet there is no ground here for crafty delaying sinners to put off repentance, in hopes to go through with it afterwards, especially in a dying hour.

I. There is ground of hope for trembling sinners. And we may learn from this instance these following lessons.

1. They may go long on, and far on in the way to hell, whom yet God may bring home to himself. Here is a man, a thief, whoso course brought him to an ill end, to a violent death, and yet grace reaches him. See the following remarkable passage, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 11, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." From this it appears, that some of the Corinthian converts had been formerly the vilest of wretches, and guilty of the most enormous lewdness and impiety; and yet became famous monuments of the triumphs of sovereign efficacious grace. What a length did Manasseh and Paul go; and yet what illustrious penitents did they afterwards become? The latter justly acquired the character of the greatest of saints, and the most eminent of all the apostles.

2. Grace sometimes catches them that in appearance, and to the eyes of the world, are farthest from it. It passeth by the most likely, and

pitches on the most unlikely objects. While chief priests, scribes, and elders mock Christ, the thief on the cross is converted. The Lord loves to set up the trophies of his victory in the midst of the devil's kingdom. Hence is that promise, Is. 55:5, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee, shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God; and for the holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee."

3. Grace makes a vast difference betwixt those betwixt whom it finds none. Here are two thieves, both on the cross: grace touches the heart of the one, but passeth by the other; and makes the one a convert, while the other dies hardened. So true is Paul's observation, Rom. 9:16, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

4. Lastly, While there is life there is hope. Here is one converted when near the last gasp; while his last sand was running, grace overtakes him, opens the eyes that before were closed, wins the heart that had been all along hardened. But I stay not on these things. Only the use that is to be made of this, is,

1. Let those that seek God early be encouraged from this, that they shall find him: Prov. 8:17, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Was he so ready to receive a penitent soul coming in at the last hour, then surely he will be very ready to receive thee that comes in before that time. He rejected him not because he was long a-coming; but received him because he came. Come then forward with assured hope of thy acceptance upon thy early return.

2. Let not those whose day is almost gone, before they have begun their work, despair. Who knows but that may be done in the evening, that was neglected the whole day before? A gale for heaven may blow, that may put life in an old sinner, and make his flesh fresher than that of a child. The door of the vineyard stands open for labourers to come in even at the eleventh hour. Sovereignty is not pent up to times and ways, but takes a latitude in both.

3. Lastly, Let us sow beside all waters, in the morning and in the evening. It depends on the working of free grace, which shall prosper. We are ready to be hopeless of success, where persons have long stood out against the Lord. But God's heavy hand on a man, and a view of eternity, may afford a season wherein the wild ass may be caught.

II. But there is no ground here for the crafty delaying sinner to put off repentance, especially till a dying hour. To set this matter in a true light, consider these following things.

1. It is a most rare example. There is not an instance like it in all the book of God, unless it be that of Achan, Josh. 7:20, 21. Yet the Lord has left that case of Achan's much under a cloud; so that it is not positively determined as this is, though we may charitably hope the best in his case too. Now, here I would have you to consider,

1st, What less could there have been to have cleared a possibility of acceptance with God, for a sinner at the last, after he has spent all his days in sin? If we had not had this instance, what could have been said to shew such wretched misspenders of time, that ever any that was so long a setting off in their journey to heaven did get in? And because this says, that none should despair; must it therefore import,

that they may safely delay? The sun once stood still in the days of Joshua; which says it is possible such a thing may be: but will any man delay his work in hope of such an extraordinary cast again? And why will ye?

2dly, As one swallow makes not spring, so neither can this one event make a general rule that you or I may trust to. The ordinary rule is, that as men live, so they die; a holy life, a happy end; a graceless, careless life, an unhappy and miserable end. Because Providence may go off the ordinary road, and do that in a few minutes with some, that ordinarily costs many years to others; can you venture eternity on that, that he will do so with you? Moses fasted forty days and nights, Exod. 34:28: yet who will venture on that in hopes of having his life preserved without food?

3dly, Are there not eminent instances to the contrary, wherein men living in their sin have been struck down in a moment, getting no time to repent of them, but fiery wrath has put an end to their days? Consider the case of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. 10:1, 2, of whom it is thought they had erred through drink, ver. 9; Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numb. 16:31, &c.; Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5, who died instantly with a lie in their mouth. But why do I instance in particular persons? Did not millions die together in their sins, by the deluge that swept away the old world, the fire and brimstone that burned up Sodom, Gomorrha, Admah, and Zeboim? What multitudes were there there, who, being warned, put off to the day they never saw? And shall this one instance encourage you to delay, over the belly of the dreadful example of millions on the other hand?

4thly, The most that this so rare an example can amount to, is a possibility. It is not to so much as a probability or likelihood. That is a probable event, which though it does not always fall out, yet for the most part it does so; as that the husbandman shall get more than his seed again. But from what is said it appears, that for the most part it falls out otherwise, namely, that people even die as they live. So that it is probable, that if thou do not repent before, God will deny thee grace to repent at the last. How then can a man that has any belief of a God, a heaven, and a hell, venture his salvation on a mere possibility, while the probability lies the other way?

2. Though there were two thieves on the cross at that time, yet it was but one of them that got grace to repent. The one indeed was a true penitent; but the other died as he lived, hardened in his sin; nay, perhaps worse; for he died blaspheming the Son of God, before whose tribunal he was to appear, ver. 39. Now, upon this I would make these rational reflections.

1st, Is it not possible that thou mayst die blaspheming, if thou do not repent now in time? Thou canst not deny the possibility of it, when there is such a plain instance of it in the case of one of these thieves. Thou thinkest it may be thou may die a penitent with the good thief; and I say, it may be thou mayst die blaspheming with the other. The one is even as certain, as to us, as the other. Thou livest impenitent all thy days; when thou comest to a death-bed, God may withhold his grace from thee which thou hast all along refused; he may let thee see thy case hopeless for ever, and thou mayst be filled with despair; and in that case it is more than possible that both tongue and heart may rise against God.

2dly, It is at least an equal venture, that thou mayst die impenitent, as that thou mayst die a penitent. Thou hopest to repent at the last; why? because the thief on the cross repented. And I must say, that delaying repentance till then, thou runnest the risk of dying impenitent; for the other thief died so. And who has told thee, whether thy lot shall be with the one or with the other? Now, to repent presently, makes thy salvation certain; to delay it, does at best leave it to a venture. And consider with yourself seriously, if salvation and damnation be such trifling things, as to be left to an uncertainty, you do not know how it may fall.

3dly, It is inconsistent with common sense, to leave that thing to a venture, which may be made sure, where a hit or a miss is of the utmost concern. Suppose a rebel might certainly have his life by a willing submission to his prince, should he choose to stay till he were apprehended by the officers, he would act most unreasonably, sonably, and put his life in hazard where there is no need; as in the case of Shimei, 1 Kings 2:42. A thousand times more unreasonable art thou in such delays of repentance, for now thou mayst make heaven sure: but if thou delay, thy soul is left to a dreadful venture; and if thou miss when it comes to the point, thou art ruined for ever.

4thly, Nay but the venture is very unequal; for it is far more likely that delaying thou mayst die impenitent, than that thou mayst die penitent. Few took part with the good thief amongst all the crowd of spectators; the multitude went the other thief's way, mocking, ver. 35. And what casts the balance here in case of likelihood, is,

(1.) Common observation, that tells us, that most people even die as they live. Repentance is a flower rarely seen springing up from a

death-bed. A melting of heart for sin, because of the dishonour done to God by it, is seldom seen in such as have lived a graceless, careless, presumptuous life; but that disposition even hangs about them to the end.

(2.) It is certain that few are saved, in comparison of them that are left: Matt. 7:14, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." As to what some say of the infants of all mankind; all that are saved must go by the strait gate, and still these are few. It is evident, that most men live impenitent; yet all must die; and therefore it follows, that few get grace to repent at their last, but most of those that live impenitent even die so too.

(3.) The sad threatenings denounced against sinners going on in their sin, with respect to their latter end: Prov. 1:24–27, "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 whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." Ezek. 24:13, "In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee." Now, show me one promise in all the Bible, promising the grace of repentance to those that delay, for to balance this. It is true, the gospel-offer is general, and excludes none while in this world: but O what a hazard is there, that these threatenings be accomplished to the denying the grace to lay hold on them then.

(4.) Corrupt nature sticks fast in thee; and it will harden thee in the face of death as well as it does now, unless thou get grace from above. Now, that corruption has possession long continued already, thou art sure of it; but thou hast no certainty for the grace of God to break it in thee, and work repentance in thy so long impenitent heart. And therefore I must conclude the venture to be very unequal.

(5.) Repentance is not to be wrought by the sinner's being brought to an extremity, as you may possibly imagine. Here was a man that was hanging on a cross, bleeding to death in great torment, having a present prospect of eternity before him, who could have no more pleasure in the world. But did that humble him? No, no. His heart remains obdured to the last gasp. He is going into eternity; yet he is adding sin to sin, and going out of the world as he lived in it, if not worse. We find from Matt. 27:44, that after the chief priests, scribes, and elders had mocked and railed on Christ, it is added, that "the thieves also which were crucified with him" joined in the railing. Whence some think, that even the other too joined in this railing on Christ, till grace broke in upon him and overcame his nature.

(6.) The most powerful and likely means of grace will not prevail, unless accompanied with a special operation of the Spirit. This blaspheming thief was near Christ himself, and might hear his words and groans. He had the example of his companion moving him to repent. Grace was at work working wonders upon his neighbour. He had a dying preacher to call him to repent. The sun's light was eclipsed, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, the graves opened: yet for all these he died impenitent, and hard-hearted. Think on this, ye that deem it so easy to repent, if ye were come to your last.

(7.) They that delay repentance till a dying hour, readily find they have another thing to do then, than to repent; as is evident from the case of the other thief on the cross, ver. 39. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, if thou be Christ save thyself and us." Death is the destruction of nature, and therefore nature wrestles against it, though there be no hope. This man was more concerned to get his body saved than to get his soul saved. And, alas! is not this the case of the most part at that time? They have so much ado with the disease, that they can hardly get a due concern for their souls, or a composed thought.

3. There is no evidence that this thief had before such means of grace as you have. Who can say, that ever he heard the gospel preached by Christ or any of his disciples? It is most likely he was a rake; that if he heard any thing of God, it was from the Scribes and Pharisees at times; and may be, when he might have heard either them, or Christ and hit disciples, he was about his thievish trade. Now,

1st, It is unreasonable to think, that it should fare at the last with those who have had means of grace all their days, and despised them, as it may do with those who never have such means till they come to die. One would think it no wonder at all, to see a man converted at his last, who gets the first notice of Christ and the way of salvation when on his death-bed. But what is that to thee, who hast all along been invited to repent, and come to Christ, but wouldst not? The former is no wonder in comparison of the latter.

2dly, This conversion of the thief doubtless was a perfect surprise to him, a thing he was not looking for. But thou art setting tryst with repentance at thy last hours. Can you believe, that ever this thief

delayed repentance in hopes of what he met with, namely, to die on a cross with Christ, and then to feel the power of his grace? Nobody can believe it. What is his example then to thee? Is it rational for thee to expect that favour which one has sometimes been surprised with, and got when he was not looking for it?

4. This thief was converted, when by the hand of public justice he was to die. When he was made a public example to the world, and as a malefactor brought to an untimely end for his crime, he got repentance at the gallows, not on a death-bed. He was cut off perhaps in the midst of his days; at least he died not by the course of nature, nor by any sickness, but was executed for his evil deeds. And it is observable, that the one other case which looks likest to this in the Bible, was of the same sort, namely Achan's. Now,

1st, It is evident, that wicked men who are running on in such courses as will bring them to an untimely death, by the laws of the land, such as thieves, robbers, murderers, &c. have a fairer ground from this to delay repentance till they come to the scaffold, than you have, who are looking for a death-bed, and delay repentance till you come there. For their case is nearer akin to this than yours. But are not they most foolish if they so do, even in your eyes? No doubt they are. And so are ye in the eyes of others, whose eyes God has opened.

2dly, If we compare the case of this thief put to death for his crimes, and of other malefactors so dying, with the case of men that have lived impenitently dying in their beds; though grace is alike free to both, yet, humanly speaking, there is more hope of the repentance of the former than of the latter. And this I say on these three grounds.

(1.) It is more easy to convince a malefactor upon the scaffold, of his crime, and the evil of it, and of those other sins that have been the inlets to it, than to convince another of his sin upon a deathbed, as common observation sheweth. Hence our Lord says, "that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before the self-righteous Pharisees," Matth. 21:31. Many a time is sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, drunkenness, neglect of the means of grace, confessed and regretted on a scaffold, while there is not one word of them from a death-bed, in cases where there is perhaps as good ground for it. When the corruption of nature breaks out in some atrocious crime that brings a person to an untimely end, there is more access to convince them of it, than others who have the same plague in them, but it has not so appeared.

(2.) The view that the thief had of eternity upon the cross, and that other malefactors have in such a case, is more certain than what impenitent sinners generally have on a death-bed. The one see they must die without peradventure, the other have some hopes of life generally while they have breath. And so the terror of death must needs be more operative in the one than the other; forasmuch as there is such a difference in the certainty of the view of it.

(3) If we except the time wherein both are actually grappling with death, the one with a violent death, the other with a natural one; the former have less hinderances from the body to prepare for death than the latter; forasmuch as the one is tossed with bodily sickness and indisposition, the other commonly is not.

5. The conversion of the thief on the cross was an extraordinary manifestation of our Lord's power, made for special reasons. And

therefore though it shows what the Lord can do; it does not show what ordinarily he will do. Consider here, to evince this, that,

1st, It was done in such a juncture of time, as the like never was, and the like never will be again; namely, when the Lord of glory, the Saviour of the world, was actually hanging upon the cross, paying the ransom for the lost elect world; Rom. 6:9, "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."

2dly, It was a wonder wrought in a time allotted in a particular manner beyond all times, for God's working wonders. The time of the Lord's giving the law on Mount Sinai, was a time of wonders; but not comparable to this. The leading wonder there was God's making his voice to be heard, and speaking forth a holy law; and it was attended with other wonders, namely, thunders, lightnings, a thick cloud upon the mount, smoke, and fire, and the sound of a terrible trumpet waxing louder and louder, Exod. 19:16, &c. But the leading wonder on Mount Calvary was yet greater, namely, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, hanging, groaning, dying on a cross: and therefore the attending wonders were proportionably greater. For,

(1.) The sun was under a dreadful eclipse, for the space of not a few minutes, but three hours, Matth. 27:45. The eye of the visible world was struck blind at the sight.

(2.) The vail of the temple was, without hands, rent from the top to the bottom, Matth. 27:51; to shew that by this death an end was put to the ceremonial law, and the way unto the holiest of all made open.

(3.) The earth quaked at the dreadful fact of crucifying the Lord of glory, Matth. 27:51.

(4.) The hard rocks rent, upbraiding the spectators and guilty multitude with the hardness of their hearts, Matth. 27:51.

(5.) The graves were opened, and many of the dead saints arose, to shew that Christ by his death had overcome the power of death over his people, Matth. 27:52.

(6.) The spectators of those strange things smote their breasts, being struck to the heart, Luke 23:48.

(7.) Lastly, The centurion and his soldiers were convinced, that he whom they had crucified was the Son of God, Matth. 27:54.

Now, upon all these I would make these reflections.

[1.] Is it reasonable, because the thief was converted at the last hour, in a time that the like never was, nor will be, for thee to expect that it shall fare so with thee? Thou mayst as well throw thyself into a burning fiery furnace, and hope to come forth safe, because Daniel and his fellows were once so delivered. Were Christ to come again, and to be crucified a second time between two malefactors, and thou wert one of them to be crucified with him, it might be that thou mightst be converted at thy last hour. And yet thou couldst not be sure; for it might be thy lot to be the hardened one, as it was the other thief's. But since it is not so, how darest thou trust to such a late repentance?

[2.] Is it any wise strange, that amongst all these wonders of justice, power, and faithfulness, there was one wonder of mercy upon the thief on the cross? that the same power that was rending the rocks, did mercifully open the heart of one of those thieves to receive Christ

and his grace? But how canst thou think, that the time of thy departure will be a time of such wonders? And if not, how canst thou deceive thyself into a delay of repentance, in expectation of receiving such a signal display of divine grace and mercy?

[3.] Was it not very becoming the divine wisdom, that when the divine glory of the Son of God was veiled upon the cross, a ray of it should break forth in the conversion of one of two that were hanging there with him? that when his judges, and the rulers and people had got him on the cross as a malefactor, he should have his glory owned by one of those crucified with him: but what is that to thee in a day wherein it is long since Christ was set down at his Father's right hand, and his glory published through the world by the gospel?

[4.] Is it any thing strange, that when our Lord was triumphing over principalities and powers, he set up one trophy, one sign of his victory, in the field of battle? Col. 2:15. Was it not very natural, that he who when he should be lifted up, was to draw all men after him, should actually at the time draw one after him? But what encouragement can that be to thee to delay to the last, when that nick of time is over long ago? And now there are thousands of visible monuments of Christ's conquest by his death set up, so that thou wilt never be missed, though thou die as thou livest, impenitent.

6. Lastly, The penitent thief on the cross was not only sincere, but he glorified Christ more in his late repentance, than thou art capable to do by thine, nay more than if thou hadst lived a penitent all thy days. For consider,

1st, When our Lord was in his lowest step of humiliation, he professed his faith of his divine nature, and his being King of the

other world: "Lord," says he, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." What wonderful faith was this, that while Christ was so low as hanging on a cross, he owns him King of heaven; that dying, he was going to receive a kingdom; that he has all power there; that he is full of mercy, compassion, and faithfulness; so that the very remembrance of him would be sufficient to secure his eternal welfare! thou mayst believe and profess all this, but never at such a time. He is now the exalted Redeemer, who has ascended far above all heavens, and sits on the right hand of God. But what is that to the glorifying of him in his lowest humiliation?

2dly, When others had crucified him as a malefactor, and were mocking him, and railing on him, as one that deserved not common compassion, he was praying to him, as Lord of the other world. If thou shouldst now do so too; yet remember how small a thing is that in comparison of what the good thief did in these circumstances.

Lastly, All this he did, and more, publicly before a multitude of spectators, which thou art not likely to have when thou comest to a death-bed. He justifies God before them all; he condemns himself; he does what he can to convince and convert his poor graceless companion, who possibly sinned with him as he did suffer; he condemns those that crucified Christ, and gives his public testimony against them, as men that feared not God.

To conclude this matter: Repent ye timeously, and trust not to a late repentance. Let not this example of the thief on the cross, or any thing else, make you to delay. Many a call ye have had to return to the Lord; but, alas! to the most part they have been ineffectual. God is giving us a providential call to repentance, at this time: he is saying

to us, as he did to the church of Ephesus, Rev. 2:5, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." God knows what our present trial may end in. But in that dark dispensation we may clearly see that God is a jealous God, and makes people's sins to find them out. Repentance would be the most feasible means to extricate us out of our difficulties. If there were a spirit of prayer and mourning for the causes of the Lord's controversy with us, it would be a token for good. But, alas! the work of repentance for the most part is put off from time to time, till it be put off to a death-bed; and who can secure the tryst to be kept there?

There are three things I would say of death-bed repentance.

1. If it be got, it is the most unuseful repentance for God, and the most uncomfortable for one's self. Unuseful; for then men begin their work for God, when their time is ending; and so though they may be saved, yet God gets little honour from them. And uncomfortable to persons themselves; for being saved, they are saved so as by fire; they must go to heaven by the brink of hell; while they see their last sand running, and get their consciences awakened, eternity must be to them a dreadful spectacle.

2. Death-bed-repentance is seldom sincere. The king of terrors may make a Pharaoh say, I have sinned. But what sincerity is in the most part of those things that begin on death-beds, may be learned from the case of many, who being past hopes of recovery from their sickness, either as to themselves or others, do yet recover, and turn just the old men and women they were before. When the best

appearances of death-bed repentance are, it is hard to make sure conclusions; but as Augustine said in such a case, Non dico damnabitur, non dico salvabitur; sed tu, dum sanus es, pœnitentiam age.*

3. Lastly, Many trust to deathbed repentance that never see it. Some are surprised into eternity; some are tossed so with sickness that they cannot have a composed thought; some quickly lose the use of their senses and reason; and most part die as they live: Therefore repent ye in time, and delay no more, lest ye bring the ruin on your souls that will never be recovered.

GOD'S DELAY OF EXECUTING THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION AGAINST UNGODLY MEN, OFTEN MISERABLY ABUSED BY THEM

Several sermons preached at Ettrick, in summer, 1728.

> Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. - ECCL. 8:11.

THIS book of Ecclesiastes is in a particular manner a book of providence, wherein Solomon gives his observations upon it. It is a subject that has puzzled the best of men, how to reconcile it with the being and attributes of God: but there is no inconsistency; all odds will be made even at length.

He had observed some set on high to their ruin, made rulers of others to their own destruction, to the feeding of their own lusts, and so aggravating their own condemnation, ver. 9. He had observed them live prosperously in their wickedness, die in honour, and buried magnificently, ver. 10. He opens the secret of this dispensation in the text, namely, That a reprieve is no pardon. In the words we have,

1. God's patience with, and forbearance exercised towards ungodly sinners: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily." (1.) It is supposed that sentence is passed in their case. There is a righteous sentence standing against an evil work, and the evil worker for what he has done: it is not overlooked, nor forgotten. (Heb.) doing of the evil; by which is meant an ungodly course. This is plain from 1 John 3:8, 9, "He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. See the sentence, Rom 2:9, "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil." (2.) The execution is oft-times delayed; it is not speedily execute. Though the word is gone out of the mouth of the Judge, he does not presently bring on the blow; he spares the criminal a while for holy ends. (3.) It supposeth, that though the execution be slow, yet it is sure, if the sentence be not got reversed, and a pardon obtained. Saying, that it is not speedily executed, he intimates that it will be executed at length.

2. The wretched abuse sinners make of this patience of God with them. "Therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to

do evil." Because sentence is not executed speedily, they think it will never be executed; and so they give themselves the loose. "Their heart is fully set in them to do evil." They find providence gives them head, does not check and strike them down in their course: and so they even run away with themselves. Their impunity fills their heart for their sinful courses, that they drive on like a ship with a full sail before a brisk gale.

Three doctrines may be deduced from the words thus explained.

DOCTRINE I. There is a sentence passed in the court of heaven, and standing, against ungodly men, evil-workers, however easy they be under it for a time.

DOCTRINE II. The Lord oftentimes does not soon come to the execution of the sentence against ungodly men, evil-workers; but delays it for a time.

DOCTRINE III. God's delay of execution is often miserably abused by sinners, to the filling of their hearts to do evil, and sinning more and more.

I shall handle each of these doctrines in order.

DOCTRINE I. There is a sentence passed in the court of heaven, and standing, against ungodly men, evil-workers, however easy they be under it for a time.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew, that there is a sentence passed in the court of heaven, and standing, against ungodly men, evil-workers.

II. Explain the nature of this sentence.

III. Make some practical improvement of the subject

I. I shall shew, that there is a sentence passed in the court of heaven, and standing, against ungodly men, evil-workers.

1. They are already judged and condemned of God: John 3:18, "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Ungodly men, evil-workers, are unbelievers; and being unbelievers, they have not the benefit of absolution by Christ: so they are under condemnation of the law for their evil works. For whom the gospel doth not absolve, the law doth condemn.

2. Only those that are in Christ, are not under condemnation; and their freedom from it is of no older date than their believing: Rom. 8:1, "Their is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But evil-workers are not in Christ, 1 John 3:8, 9, fore-cited. If they were in Christ, they would be new creatures; 2 Cor. 5:17, "For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Therefore they are still under condemnation.

3. They are in a state of death, dead in sin, Eph. 2:1. They who are morally dead in sin, being without a principle of spiritual life, Eph. 4:18, are legally dead too; they are dead men in law, under a sentence of death, John 5:24. Hence they are called children of wrath, of hell, &c.

4. The power that Satan has over them, proves this. They are close prisoners, bound hand and foot, Is. 61:1. Satan is the keeper of the

prison, Heb. 2:14; and they are under his power, Acts 26:18. What gives him the power over them, but that they are condemned in law? Let the sentence be reversed, and he has them no more under his power, 1 Cor. 15:56.

5. Lastly, The spirit of bondage witnesseth the truth of this, convincing the sinner that he is a dead man, Rom. 7:9, and that he stands in need of a remission, chap. 3:19. This testimony is true; for it is the testimony of the Spirit of God, whereby he brings sinners to see their need of Christ.

II. To explain the nature of this sentence, consider,

1. Every evil work is a breach of God's law; and every sinful thought, word, or action is an evil work: 1 John 3:4. "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." No man is lord of himself but is answerable to God for every action of his life: and being guilty, if out of Christ, he is liable to vengeance, under the curse; if in Christ, he is liable to temporal strokes. So all ungodly ones, evil-workers, are liable to the curse for their sins.

2. The law is the accuser, that accuseth the sinner of rebellion against God, and demandeth vengeance on him, John 5:45. Every command broken by the sinner accuseth him before God; and as many breaches as he has made of it, as many articles there are of the libel against him. And though these be innumerable to men, and many of them unknown to them; they are not so unto an omniscient God.

3. God is the judge that judgeth and paaseth the sentence against the guilty, Psal. 50:6. And he is a judge whom no artful concealment can

beguile. He cannot be blinded, bribed, or biassed, 1 Pet. 1:17. His sentence, hower severe, is always righteous, Rev. 16:7. And there lies no appeal from his tribunal; for there is none above him who is the Most High. Only, while the sinner is, in this world, there is access to a remission in Christ.

4. The sentence is a sentence of death, Gen. 2:17; death in its full latitude, comprehending all miseries of soul and body; eternal death, in which the gnawing worm never dies, nor is the fire quenched. The sentences of men are at most the death of the body: but his sentence adjudgeth the soul to die eternally. The reason is, the infinite dignity of the divine Majesty offended by sin.

5. The grounds of this heavy sentence, are the transgressions of God's holy law: Gal. 3:10. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The holy law is a transcript of the purity of the divine nature; in it he hath set forth his own image. That image the sinner does what he can to deface, by violating the law: but God will magnify the law, and make it honourable, though in the destruction of the sinner.

The grounds of it more particularly are,

1st, The sin of nature, original sin imputed, Rom. 5:12; and original sin inherent, that corrupt frame of soul that is natural to us, whereby we are prone to evil and averse to good, Gen. 6:5. By reason of this we come into the world under the sentence of death. And as serpents and vipers are objects whose destruction men seek on the first sight of them, because of their poisonous nature; so it fares with men, the very first sight of whom, in respect of their original sin, is loathsome

unto a holy God, and thereby they become objects fit only for destruction.

2dly, The sins of the heart, Psal. 24:4; Matt. 5:28, 29. Heart-sins are not liable to man's judgment: but how can they escape the judgment of God, to whose all seeing eye our hearts are just as open as our lives? He sees the rottenness that is within the whited sepulchers, and passes his sentence against lusts of covetousness, uncleanness, malice, revenge, &c. burning within the heart, as well as against the same defiling the conversation.

3dly The sins of the tongue, Matt. 12:37. It is a channel by which the heart veuts much of its inbred corruption, contempt of God, &c. Jude 15, in his mocking, maligning, and running down seriousness, and agenting the cause of irreligion; and contempt of our neighbour, in railing, reproaching, obscenity, lying, &c.; which may shew why the rich man in hell is represented as seeking water to cool his tongue.

4thly, The sins of the life, wicked actions, whether of impiety against God, unrighteousness against men, or intemperance against ourselves, Jude 15. None of all these will escape the judgment of God, however craftily they be managed, whatever fair colours be drawn over them: Eccl. 12, ult "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Sinners may forget them, and let them slip out of mind: but "the Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works," Amos 8:7.

5thly, Omissions of duty, Matt. 25:41, &c. Men will find sentence passed on them by a just God, not only for the ill they have done, but for the good they were obliged to have done, but did it not. The man

that hid his talent, and improved it not for his Lord, is doomed to outer darkness, Matt. 25:24, 30.

6. This sentence against the ungodly is openly pronounced in the word: Rom. 2:8, 9, "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness: indignation, and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil." God speaks from heaven to men, Heb. 12:25; not by a voice coming through the clouds, but by his voice in the written word, 2 Kings 22:19, compared with ver. 11. The Bible is God's word to us, whereby he is speaking to us, and will speak to men unto the end of the world, either absolution or condemnation according to their state.

7. It is registered there too; Gen. 2:17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Ezek. 18:4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The Scripture is the records of the court of heaven, where the ungodly may read their doom, and see the sentence standing against them. And that certainly is one of the causes of the neglect of the Scriptures in our day; for in it "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness," Rom. 1:18. Ahab hated Micajah, because he never spake good of him. The Scripture never speaks good of a man that is wedded to his lusts, and has no will to part with his beloved liberty in the way of sin; and therefore he hates or neglects it.

8. It is secretly intimated by the conscience sometimes, 1 John 3:20. Conscience is God's deputy within the man; and when his corruption drives him full to do an ill work, and when he has done it, to defend it; conscience will be condemning it, and him too, from the holy law,

Rom. 2:15. And when it is thoroughly awakened, it will so pronounce the sentence against the man as will fill him with the greatest terror.

9. It will he openly pronounced before all the world at the last day: Matt. 25:41, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Where it is observable, that they are declared cursed and condemned ones, before that solemn publishing of the sentence against them. For none will be condemned then, but such as are in this world before that in this life condemned already.

10. Lastly, Howbeit, the time of the execution of the sentence, in particular, is not now intimated to the sinner. The Lord keeps that a secret, that sinners may not adventure to live a moment in the state of condemnation; but not knowing but it may be executed next moment, they may not put off a moment the suing for a remission.

USE 1. Of Information. Hence learn,

1. The state of every ungodly person, worker of iniquity, and all unbelievers, is a miserable state, a state of condemnation. They are as really under a sentence of death, as ever any malefactor was: John 3:18, "He that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Think on this, ye young and old ungodly ones: though the sentence is not executed against you, it is passed on you; look into your Bible, and see it.

2. As silent as God sits on heaven, while sinners on earth are neglecting and affronting him, he is no idle spectator of their way and manner of life: Psal. 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I

kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." He has sentenced them, and "sees their day is coming," Psal. 37:13. They have their sinning day, and God sees their day of count and reckoning is coming on, wherein every item shall be distinctly charged on them: Eccl. 11:9, "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." They laugh at the evil day, because they do not see it come; God laughs at them, because he sees it coming; and his will be when theirs is done, Prov. 1:26, when he will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh.

3. It is not strange, that the world is filled with the noise of men's lusts and ungodly lives. If ye were gone into a prison filled with condemned men, ye would think it melancholy indeed, but not strange to hear the iron chains rattling in every part of the room. This world is such a place, crowded with condemned people; unmortified lusts are the chains on them: and that is the reason of the grating noise which the serious godly hear from every corner. And the jailor, the devil, is going among them.

4. Lastly, No wonder that most men love this life, so as to loath exchanging it for another; Psal. 55:23, "But God shall bring them down into the pit of destruction." The prison is a heavy place to the condemned man; but to go out of it is more so, for that is to go to execution, Jer. 17:11. Death brings the execution of the sentence.

USE 2. Of trial. Try whether that sentence is standing against you, or whether it is reversed, and ye justified.

To move you to put this to the question, consider,

1. One thing is sure, that once it was passed and standing against you: Eph. 2:3, "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. Gal. 3:10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Compared with Rom. 3:19, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Now, what course have ye taken to get this sentence taken off? and if you have been aiming at it, have ye carried it?

2. As your state is in this life, condemned or justified, so it will be determined at death and judgment: Eccl. 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest. Now, there is access for a remission; but when death comes, there will be no more for ever.

3. Men are apt to mistake in this point. Many draw an absolviture from the sentence for themselves, which God will never set his seal to: Luke 16:15, "Christ said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God." Is. 44:20, "He feedeth of ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? The foolish virgins called themselves the Bridegroom's friends; but he shut the door on them as his enemies.

4. Lastly, A mistake here is very fatal. By it men let the time of obtaining a remission slip. The oil might have been got for the lamps,

if they had missed it timely. It brings a ruining surprise: dreaming of peace, they are awaked with the noise of war for ever.

MARK 1. They that never saw themselves in a state of condemnation, are under it to this day. For they are strangers to the very first work of the Spirit, conviction, John 16:8, "The law is our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith, Gal. 3:24. They that have never been at the law's school, to learn that they are cursed and condemned sinners by nature, are not Christ's disciples.

MARK 2. They only are absolved, who laying hold on Christ in the covenant of grace have applied to the law's sentence of condemnation against them, the righteousness of Christ wrought by him, and offered to and accepted by them. Hence says the apostle, Phil. 3:7, 8, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:—and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." They continue not in mere suspense, but renouncing self-confidence, law-confidence, and creature confidence, have betaken themselves to him as their only refuge, casting anchor on the promise of the gospel.

MARK 3. If the condemning power of sin is removed, the reigning power of sin is removed too, and contrariwise: Rom. 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." If the condemned man has got his remission, he is taken out of his irons, and his prison, and the power of the jailor. The chains of reigning lusts rattling about thee, declare thee a condemned man still; but it is otherwise with the pardoned, Rom. 8:1, 2, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,

who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." If ye are justified, ye are washed, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 11.

MARK 4. If the sentence be reversed, ye will be habitually tender in your conscience with respect to temptations, sin and duty, and appearances of evil. Hence Paul could say, Acts 24:16, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." The man who under the sentence of death, has obtained a remission, will readily fear falling into the snare again. Hence we find this was Hezekiah's exercise, Is. 38:17, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Ver. 15, "What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." Absolved persons may be guilty of acts of untenderness; but habitual untenderness is a black mark of condemnation.

MARK ult. The fruits of faith in a holy life follow the reversing of the sentence. We are justified by faith without works; but the faith that justifies, produces good works. Hence we read, Acts 15:2, of purifying the heart by faith. If the curse is removed, the fruits of the Spirit will spring up in the soul, Gal. 5:22, 23, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The apostle James shews that faith not to be true, that is not attended with the fruits of holiness."

Now, if the sentence once standing against you is reversed, then,

1. Love the Lord, who freely gave you your remission, instead of leading yon forth to execution; as did the woman of whom our Lord says, Luke 7:47, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." Remember the day when ye stood self-condemned and law-condemned before the Lord, and he said, Job 33:24, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom."

2. Pity and be concerned for those that are as yet under the condemnation which ye are freed from, Tit. 3:2, 3. Where people's contempt and disdain have the heels of their pity, compassion, and concern for the welfare and recovery of sinners, it is a sad sign; speaking forth more of pride and presumption, than of themselves being in a state of remission.

3. Walk humbly and tenderly. The remembrance of the sentence of death sometime lying on you, may humble you while ye live. It sets us ill to be proud and conceity, who owe our life to a remission. Stand aloof from the deadly snare; a pardoning God has said, "Go, and sin no more," John 8:11.

4. Bear your troubles and trials in a world patiently. Your life was forfeited, and that is safe by grace. Why does a living man complain? This is a day wherein the Lord seems to be rising up to plead against the generation, bringing on common calamity. Take thankfully what falls to your share of it, in consideration that the sentence against your soul is reversed. If the seed should rot under the clod, and the beasts of the field perish under the stroke; kiss the rod, and be thankful, that the execution is not upon yourselves.

5. Lastly, Be of a forgiving disposition: Eph. 4:32, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for

Christ's sake hath forgiven you." The Saviour that brought in remission of sins, binds us to love our enemies; and the bitter revengeful spirit against others speaks as unforgiven, Matth. 6:15, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

But if ye are of those against whom the sentence still stands in the court of heaven, lay the matter to heart, and consider it as a most heavy case, as it is indeed, deserving tears of Wood. And so I proceed to

USE 3. Of Lamentation. We may here lament over the case of every ungodly one, and natural man. The state of one under sentence of death, is a lamentable case. O ungodly sinner, however easy thou art, God's law has condemned thee, and thou art under the sentence of eternal death, John 3:36, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." See thy heavy case in this glass.

1. You are forfeited of your covenant-right to the creatures, as a condemned person. Whether thou hast little or much in the world, it is a sorry right you have to it; a mere providential right, such as a condemned man to his meat, till the day of execution come. Therefore "a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked," Psal. 34:16. There is little satisfaction in that.

2. God is your enemy, befriend you who will, John 3:36. fore-cited. He bears a legal enmity against thee, as a just judge against a condemned man. Ye can have no communion with him: Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" All comfortable intercourse betwixt God and thy soul, is drowned in the gulf of thy

state of condemnation. There can be no peace between God and you. To allude to the conference between Joram and Jehu, 2 Kings 9:22, "And it came to pass when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?" How can they have peace with God, whom his law condemns? What peace ye have in your consciences, God allows not, Is. 57:21.

3. Nothing you do can be acceptable to God; there is a lasting cloud over your heads that never clears: Psal. 7:11, "God is angry with the wicked every day." While the condemning curse of the law lies on a man, it blasts all the good he does: Tit. 1:15, "Unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Hag. 2:12, 14, "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is unclean." It mars sanctifying influences, without which there can be no fruit, John 15:5, "for without me ye can do nothing." Hence all ye do is turned to sin.

4. The sentence against you is confirmed daily. The truth of God confirms it: Num. 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? And the cords of thy guilt are growing stronger and stronger; for the grounds of condemnation against thee are multiplying; while none of the old debt is removed, but new is still contracted. And though one

may think, that it is but dying for all; yet the punishment will be increased, as evil works are; for men will be rewarded according to their deeds.

5. Justice craves execution against thee. There was a cry to heaven against Cain, and against Sodom: and so there is against every ungodly sinner, Jer. 9:9, "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Mercy may suspend execution a while against the ungodly; but if they continue in that state, it cannot reverse it; since God cannot cease to be just.

6. All is ready for the execution. The bow is bent to let fly the arrows of wrath against thee, the arrows of death, Psal. 7:12, 13. The pile of fire is set on, Is. 30:33, "For Tophet is ordained of old: yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." When thou liest down, thou hast no security, that it shall not be executed ere thou arise, &c.

7. Lastly, Thy life depends, as to thee, only on God's long-tried patience and long-suffering, procuring thy reprieve from day to day, if so thou wilt sue out thy pardon. As secure as thou art, the sword of justice hangs over thy head, by the worn hair of long-tired patience; which if once broken, thou art gone for ever.

USE ult. Of Exhortation. Wherefore bestir yourselves to get out of the state of condemnation, to get the sentence reversed.

MOTIVE 1. It is a sad and miserable life to live in the state of condemnation. For in effect such a life is a continued death. (1.) It is

a dishonourable life. Condemnation fixes a blot and stain on man, speaks him guilty of crimes for which he is not worthy to live. And surely the judgment of God is according to truth. (2.) It is an uncomfortable life: Is. 57:21, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." There is enough in it to squeeze the sap out of all created comforts; and for the consolations of God, they can have none of them, Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The joy and comfort of a natural man is but like that of a madman; and so when he comes to himself, all is swallowed up in that, he is a condemned man. This the prodigal found, Luke 15:17, "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! (3.) It is an unsafe life; John 3:36, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Amidst all thy mirth and jollity, the sword of justice is hanging over thy head by a hair, and every moment, for all that thou knowest, it may fall, and cleave thee asunder. This our Lord threatens in the parable of the wicked servant, Matth. 24:50, 51, "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

MOTIVE 2. The reversing of the sentence by a remission, is not so easily obtained as men are apt to imagine. Many think there is no more ado, but after a careless graceless life, when they come to die, to commend their souls to God, with a "God have mercy on me;" and all will be safe. But they that get out a remission, get it so as they are taught other thoughts of it. Hence is that exclamation of the church, Micah 7:18, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he

retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Consider,

1st, Sin is the greatest of evils, the deepest of all stains to wash out. Fair words, nay tears, nay not the blood of bulls and goats, not the blood of one's own body will wash it out; only the blood of the Son of God: Heb. 11:22, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Compared with 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Sin is the most contrary to God's nature: Hab. 1:13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." And therefore it is the object of his greatest loathing. Going on in sin, thou art engaged against all the attributes of God. Sin has marred the whole frame of God's workmanship, provoking him to break it in pieces. Can it be easy to get all this buried in forgetfulness with a jealous God?

2dly, God's giving remissions, is one of his greatest works. Hence is that prayer of Moses, Num. 14:17, 19, "And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." This is a work greater than the making of a world. That was done by a word spoken But in this case, justice stands up for satisfaction, truth for the honour of a broken law, and wisdom finds a way for mercy only by the blood of Christ: John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, bat hare everlasting life."

3dly, Sad breakings of heart do sinners ordinarily endure, ere they being once touched with sense of sin, get the pardon of it. This was the case of Peter's hearers, Acts 2:37, "They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Paul can tell you from his experience of the terror of the Lord; David of broken bones. However lightly ye think now of the way of coming at it; a medicine given you for sweating out the poison of sin, will readily make you sick at heart, and perhaps bring you to the last gasp, Is. 33:24.

MOTIVE 3. Howbeit, God is now on a throne of grace to grant remissions: 2 Cor. 5:19, "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Ye may get a pardon now in the Lord's own way: Is. 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Heaven's white flag of peace yet hangs out, the market of free grace stands open, an indemnity is proclaimed in the gospel: Acts 13:38, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

MOTIVE 4. Lastly, Access to remissions will not last: Is. 55:6, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Abused patience will break out into fury: Luke 13:24, 25. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not whence you

are." Beware ye sit not your day of grace, and delay not till ye will find no place for repentance: Luke 14:24, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper."

OBJECTION. My sins are great. ANSWER. Neither the greatness multitude, nor backsliding into them will hinder: Is. 1:18. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as now; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 55:7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Jer. 3:22. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." The Lord has set up instances of pardoning mercy, that none may despair; as Adam, Manasseh, Paul, and the Jews, crucifiers of Christ.

DIRECTION 1. Be sensible of your sin; of the evil of it; of the mischief done to yourselves, and the injury and dishonour done to God. Look to the law, the justice of God, &c.

DIRECTION 2. Go to God, and confess your sins fully and freely: and condemn yourselves, acknowledging yourselves justly condemned by the law, and God to be righteous if he should execute the sentence.

DIRECTION ult. Look to Jesus Christ the propitiation held forth to you in the gospel, his unspotted righteousness offered to you, and the covert of his blood, the retiring place for safety to guilty creatures. Believe the gospel, that these are made over to you therein, and take possession thereof, by trusting wholly thereon to your remission, and the santification of your nature; John 3:16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him,

should not perish but have everlasting life." So shall ye be united to Christ by faith.

Take that advice, which the servants of Benhadad offered to their master, 1 Kings 20:31. Put on the sackcloth of deep humiliation, ropes about your necks, acknowledging ye are worthy of death, and go forth to Christ by faith; for the King of Zion is a merciful king, and will save your life.

DOCTRINE II. The Lord oftentimes does not soon come to the execution of the sentence against ungodly men, evil-workers; but delays it for a time.

In prosecuting this doctrine, we shall,

I. Take a view of the method of Providence in this matter.

II. Account for this slow method of Providence.

III. Make application of the subject.

I. We shall take a view of the method of Providence in this matter. There is a twofold method of Providence with the ungodly, evil-workers, in respect of execution against them; namely, a swift and a slow method.

First, There is a swift method the Lord sometimes takes with sinners: Mal. 3:5. "I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers," &c. Sinners adventure on evil works; and God sentences them for them presently, and pursues them hard with execution, without delay. (1.) Sometimes the sinner has an ill work in design, and the Lord counts his will for the deed, and

prevents by a speedy execution; as in Haman's case. He hatched the mischief, but he did not see it come forth. (2.) Sometimes the sinner is in actual motion to the ill work, and execution is done on him ere he get it performed. So it fared with the rebellious Israelites, in their attempting to go into the promised land, Num. 14:44, 45. And so it fared with Jereboam, putting forth his hand to lay hold on the prophet, 1 Kings 13:4; and with Uzziah having the censer in his hand, 2 Chron. 26:19. (3.) Sometimes the execution trysts with the very doing of the ill work, so that the sinner is taken away with the stroke in his sin. Thus fared it with Nadab and Abihu offering strange fire, Lev. 10:1, 2; with Zimri and Cozbi cut off in the act of uncleanness, Num. 25:8; and with Herod, who was eaten up of worms for his Atheism and blasphemy, Acts 12:23. (4.) Sometimes as the ill work is done out and ended, the execution begins. So it fared with Sennacherib's blasphemous letter. He had writ it, and it was read; so his sin was completed; and that very night the Lord smote his army, and soon after himself, 2 Kings 19:14, 35. &c. (5.) Sometimes the execution keeps pace with the ill work, and the one goes on as the other does; judgment in the several degrees following hard at the heels of the sin. So it fared with Hiel, in his building of Jericho, 1 Kings 16. ult. (6.) Sometimes execution begins with the sinner's beginning to reap the fruit of his sin when he leans upon his wall, a serpent bites him. So it fared with Ahab taking possession of Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kings 21:18, 19. And so it fared with the lusters in the wilderness, Psal. 78:30, 31. (7.) Lastly, Sometimes when one's sin begins to work, in its bitter fruits and effects on others, it recoils on the sinner himself. So it fared with Judas the traitor, Matt. 27:3, 4, 5. It is a sport to some to do mischief to others; but ere all be done,

it may, in the just judgment of God, come as heavy on themselves as on their neighbour.

Secondly, There is a slow method the Lord takes oftentimes with sinners, Neh. 9:17. They commit their evil works; the sentence is presently passed for them: but then the execution is delayed, Psal. 50:21. And that is what is particularly noticed in our text. Concerning this method I offer these observes.

1. The sinner may get his evil work contrived and accomplished, without any let in this way from Heaven, by any execution against him. There is a God in heaven who has his eye upon him all along; but that God keeps silence, and lets the sinner take his swing, Psal. 50:21. He could cut him off from the purposes of his heart, and break his arm, that he should not accomplish his work: but he does it not.

2. The ill work being done without let, the sinner may also for a time pass unpunished, and as little notice may seem to be taken of it, as if there were not a God to judge upon the earth, Ezek. 9:9. There are times wherein holy Providence, as it were, winks at ungodly sinners, Acts 17:30. Hence God is said to awake to judgment, when that time is over, Psal. 7:6.

3. Yea, ill works may not only for a time escape unpunished, but undiscovered too, Hos. 12:7, 8; Prov. 30:20. There are many abominations that appear with open face in the world; but there are perhaps more that are not discovered, being reserved to the judgment of the great day, 1 Tim. 5:21; Rom. 2:16. An omniscient God could pull the vail off them, but in the slow method it is long a-doing.

4. Sinners finding it go thus, encourage themselves in evil, repeat their evils works, add sin to sin, and give themselves the loose in their sinful courses. This is observed in our text. None go to the highest pitch of wickedness all of a sudden, but by degrees.* Ill works at first have a terror about them, and the sinner trembles under some fearful expectation at first: but a long-suffering God strikes not, thence the sinner gathers courage, Psal. 64:5. and ventures again, and the terror wears off by degress.

5. Nay sinners may prosper in an ill course. So far may they be from execution done against them, that they may thrive in the world in it: Psal. 37:35, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree." The sun of worldly prosperity may shine light and warm on men in a course of sin, gone away from God, and God from them. Yea, objects of God's indignation may in that respect be treated as if they were the darlings of Heaven; and the objects of God's special love, as if they were the buts of his wrath: Eccl. 8:14, "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: again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." This has been sometimes puzzling to the saints, as to Jeremiah, See chap. 12:1, 2.

6. More than that, they may prosper by their ill works, they may enjoy the fruits of their sin, and thrive by their ill courses; as Ephraim did, Hos. 12:7, 8. Riches are called the mammon of unrighteousness, because ofttimes they are got together by unrighteousness. Many a fair estate, and great worldly wealth has been got together by oppression; yea the foundation of some has

been laid in blood, Hab. 2:12. A plain evidence, that men may not only prosper in, but by sin.

7. Sinners may get a long time of it, wherein they sin, and God spares still. The old world got a long day of 120 years. Job observes, that the wicked may live, and become old, and continue prosperous too, Job 21:7, and Is. 65:20. Sometimes God quickly cuts off men in a course of sin: but it is not always so; but men may grow gray-headed in the way of wickedness.

8. The Lord may seem to be in his way to execute the sentence sometimes, and yet may give another delay; his hand stretched out, he may withdraw again, Psal. 78:38. Criminals may be set on the brow of the hill, and yet be returned safe, and make a very ill use of the deliverance, turning worse on the back of it. The 120 years being out, the old world got seven days more respite, and they gave themselves the loose. See Matt. 24:38.

9. When execution is at length begun, it may be carried on very leisurely for a time: the drops may come very few and soft before the shower, Is. 9:1. God may deal very gently with impenitent sinners, even when he is risen up against them, before he come to the full execution. God's judgments coming with iron hands, may yet proceed with leaden feet in slow pace.

10. Lastly, More than all that, the execution may be entirely put off during this life. Men may live wickedly and prosperously, die peaceably, and be buried honourably; and so would wholly escape with their ill works, were it not that there is another world and an after-reckoning, and that there is no delay of execution there. This is plain from Eccl. 8:10, "I saw the wicked buried, who had come and

gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done." Luke 16:19, 22, "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. The rich man also died, and was buried." Psal. 73:4, "There are no bands in death: but their strength is firm." Sometimes God makes the world witness to the execution of the sentence against an ill work: but oft-times men get out of the world without it, in this slow method of providence.

II. We shall account for this slow method of providence. And there is much need to do it, because there is a mystery of providence in it that is not easy to unriddle, and among men there are sad blunders about it. And,

1. It is wrested by many a sinner in his own case, to his own ruin, Prov. 1:32. We naturally have such high thoughts of the world's smiles, that we are apt to imagine God thinks highly of them too, and that he expresses his special love and kindness by them. But quite the contrary: Rev. 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Hence a prosperous sinner can hardly imagine himself not to be a favourite of Heaven, at least cannot think God is so angry with his way as some would give out; and so he continues secure in his course, Psal. 50:21.

2. Being misunderstood, it is ruining to many spectators, and is in hazard of turning them atheistical, and contemners of religion: Mal. 3:14, 15, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy: yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even

delivered." There are many who have no inward principle of religion. Now, when these see that there is worldly advantage to be got by it, they embrace it, like the mixed multitude from Egypt: but when they see the way of wickedness prosperous, and sinners to keep the road for all the threatenings against them, and the godly afflicted and bowed down for all the promises to them; they are ready to think, that the threatenings and promises of the word are both but empty sounds, and that they see so.

3. There is a difficulty in it, that has puzzled many a great saint, and made him to stagger. So ready are we to walk by sense, not by faith. This was a knotty piece of the book of providence to Jeremiah, though he resolved to believe over the belly of sense, Jer. 12:1, 2; and to Habakkuk, chap. 1:2, 3, 4. It had almost carried Asaph quite off his feet, Psal. 73:2–13, 14.

4. There being a darkness on the minds of all men with respect to the methods of divine procedure, they are apt to imagine an inconsistency of this method of providence with the perfections attributed to God. And there are four divine perfections, that are apt to run a risk with poor sinners blind and rash in judging.

1st, His omniscience, whereby he seeth and noticeth all things done in the world, Prov. 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." But when men themselves are conscious of their own wickedness, and yet see that God does not proceed against them for it, they are apt to say, as Ezek. 9:9, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not." So the Psalmist represents men going on in their wickedness, secure as to any notice to be taken of it from heaven, Psal. 94:5, 6, 7, "They break

in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Therefore Job asserts it on that occasion, chap. 24:1, "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him, not see his days?

2dly, His holiness, whereby he is pure in himself, and cannot but hate all impurity and sin in his creatures. It is certain that it is so. The angels proclaim it, Is. 6:3, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." The Psalmist pointedly declares it, Psal. 5:4, 5, "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity." But when men see this method of providence with ungodly sinners, they can hardly believe it, Psal. 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." For, think they, if it were so, how could he bear with such unholiness in sinners affronting him, and trampling on his laws? Therefore the Prophet asserts it on that very occasion, but withal owns a difficulty of reconciling this method of providence with it, Hab. 1:13. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"

3dly, His justice or righteousness, whereby he so hates sin that he cannot but punish it. It is certain it is so, Gen. 18:25. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" He has demonstrated it in the death of his own Son. But when men see ungodly sinners going on in their

sin unpunished, they are apt to think, that God is not so very just in that matter, as some give him out to be; for they cannot see sin get a just recompense. Therefore Jeremiah asserts it on that occasion, Jer. 12:1. "Righteous art thou, O Lord."

4thly, His goodness to his own people, whereby being good in himself, he does good to them that are good. It is certain it is so, Psal. 34:8, 9, 10. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for their is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." The prophet got it in commission, Is. 3:10. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." But when men see this method of providence dangling ungodly sinners, and smiting the godly, they are apt to think it is not so. And therefore Asaph asserts it on that occasion, Psal. 73:1. "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart."

Now, to remove these misconstructions, and account for the slow method of providence, I offer these considerations.

First, This method is taken to bring sinners to repentance, and prevent their ruin, 2 Pet. 3:9.; and it is becoming the perfections of a merciful God, therefore to use it. By this means sinners,

1. Have time and space to repent given them, Rev. 2:21. Were they always taken away just in the heat of their unmortified lusts, we would be ready to cry out of severity, Num. 17:12. But God gives them leave to cool ordinarily, if so they will bethink themselves, and turn to the Lord, and so prevent their own ruin.

2. They are invited to repentance, and drawn towards it with the softest methods. Rom. 2:2. Every sparing preventing, bounteous mercy the impenitent meets with, calls aloud to him to repent. It says to him, "Do thyself no harm:" it upbraids him with wilfulness for his own ruin, why will ye die? with ingratitude, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? And so hereby,

1st, God has the glory of some perfections, which otherwise would not shine forth so illustriously.

(1.) He has the glory of his long-suffering and patience: 2 Pet. 3:9. "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Grave observers of the method of providence must cry out, O wonderful long-suffering of a God! The patience of the meekest man on earth, would be quite worn out with less than the half of what a God bears with.

(2.) He has the glory of his universal good-will to poor sinners of mankind, 2 Pet. 3:9. forecited. 1 Tim. 2:4. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Justice is his act, his strange act; but mercy is what he has a peculiar delight in. He is slow to anger, but ready to forgive. This is written in very legible characters in this method.

(3.) He has the glory of his overcoming goodness. To do evil for good, is devilish; to do good for good, is human: but to do good for ill is divine. Here shines forth the glory of the divine goodness, overcoming evil with good, Luke 6:35. This is goodness becoming a God!

2dly, As to the sinner, it issues always in one of two things.

(1.) His recovery, to the saving of his soul from sin, and perishing eternally. And God, who has a due value for immortal souls, sees that a great thing; and treats it as worth the waiting on, Luke 15:7. The Scripture holds out this as a noble attainment, Jam. 5:20. "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." How many are there singing Hallelujahs in heaven this day, by means of the slow method, that by the swift method had been roaring with the damned? "Had I died before threescore and sixteen, I had perished, for I knew not Christ." Turk. hist. pag. 96.

(2.) Or else his being left inexcusable, Rom. 1:20. The longer God has borne with, and the more kind he has been to impenitent sinners, the more inexcuseable they will be; and the more will God's severity against them be justified. And so this method tends to the clearing of God's justice.

Secondly, In the slow method God takes with sinners, be often has an eye to posterity; and that,

1. To posterity in general. And it is of use to them, whether the sinner so spared repent or not. If he repent, it is of noble use to encourage them that come after, to turn to God. How useful to many one has been the slow method which God took with Manasseh and Paul! 1 Tim. 1:16. If he repent not, and vengeance seize him at length in sight of the world, he becomes a warning piece to others that come after, Psal. 37:35–37. Though it do not, his memory rots; and the conscience of every one that notices his wickedness silent and at an end in the grave, judges him to have spent his life foolishly, Job

24:19, 20. Thus many who are of no use in the world to others but for mischief, God in his providence makes good use of them.

2. To the sinners' own posterity; and that,

1st, To their posterity yet unborn. There may be vessels of mercy in the loins of vessels of wrath. Many graceless parents have been fathers and mothers of gracious children. It is for the elect's sake that the world is kept up; and if the last elect were born and brought in, the world will quickly be at an end. The law spares a condemned woman, if she is with child, till she has brought it forth: and God often spares long, condemned sinners, for the elect that may be in their loins, Matth. 24:22. There was a sentence passed against the generation which came out of Egypt, which for this very reason was about thirty-eight years ere it was executed on some.

2dly, To their posterity already born; and that two ways.

(1.) As Satan gives some a surfeit of religion and sobriety in their parents; so God makes reprisals on him, by giving others a horror of sin and wickedness in theirs, Ezek. 8:14. And God spares them, that they may be a glass wherein their posterity may have a view of the hatefulness of sin. A wretched office, but it justifies the slow method of a holy God.

(2.) men are often punished in their posterity. Many a poor child has smarted upon the occasion of the parent, and many a fair and flourishing family has wickedness raised. A holy just God sometimes pursues quarrels against some evil-workers through several generations, as is threatened in the second command. The third and fourth generation are mentioned, because men may live to see

themselves punished in their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. And they may be spared in this slow method for that very end. Witness Zedekiah.

Thirdly, In the slow method God takes with sinners, he has an eye to his own people: 2 Cor. 4:15, "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God." As the world is kept up for the sake of God's people, so it is guided as it is by providence for their sakes. And it is their good that is designed by it: Rom. 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good, to to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The way that it comes to be for their good, is by means of the sharp trial they have by it. So God takes the slow method with ungodly sinners for the trial of his own children. And it is a sharp trial to them two ways.

1. They smart sore under their wickedness. Ungodly men are God's rod, as the Assyrians was God's hand against his people, Psal. 17:14. Oft-times they feel as much at their hand, as makes them smart by the rod: Hab. 1:12, "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." They always see as much of them, as occasions to them many a heavy heart, ver. 3, "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention." Wherefore since God's people need the rod, it is preserved, and not flung into the fire.

Meanwhile this tends to their good. The ungodly oblige them to pray, watch, live in the exercise of faith, more than otherwise they would do. Hence many times the most tender Christians are found among

the most notoriously profane neighbours, like Lot in Sodom, who carried not so well in the cave. For as the godly are eyesores to the wicked, so the wicked are often as whetstones and files to the godly.

2. They smart the sorer under their own afflictions: Psal. 73:10, "Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a fall cup wrung out to them." The prosperity of the wicked carries the afflictions of the godly to a pitch; and sometimes to a dangerous pitch, through the sleight of Satan improving it against them. This was the case of Asaph, Psal. 73:12–14, "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." Job's friend's acted Satan's part on that bottom, endeavouring to prove him an unsound man, because he was a man so afflicted.

But this also tends to their good. It makes them look more concernedly into their Bible, and find sweet and relief where otherwise they would find no more than others do; as we see in Asaph's case, Psal. 73:16, 17, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me: until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." And it makes them to look more narrowly into their own hearts, and to their sincerity, Job 10:7. It obliges them to live more by faith, and not by sight; to the exercise of hope, patience, &c.

Fourthly, In this slow method, God often carries on his awful yet holy work of hardening sinners. There is such a work: Rom. 9:18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will, he hardeneth." And it is a most dreadful plague and

judgment, whereby God ceasing to punish men for their sins one way, punishes them another way in a dreadful manner. This appears, if ye consider,

1. It is a spiritual stroke, lighting on the soul, and therefore, more terrible than external strokes on people's bodies or substance, Rom. 1:28. Hereby the mind is blinded, the will doubly enslaved to lust, and the conscience seared: a kind of stroke rife this day.

2. It is a stroke, whereby the disease of sin is increased, and the gospel-remedy is rendered ineffectual. The heart being hardened, the loose is given to lusts that before were under some restraint, Eph. 4:19; and the means of grace become useless, if not noxious: the hardened heart turning the food of the soul, as it were, to poison in effect, Is. 6:10; 2 Cor. 2:16.

3. It is a fearful preparative to utter destruction, Rom. 9:22. A nasty earthen vessel, that gets leave to contract more and more nastiness, and is not purged and cleansed, is designed to be broken in pieces, and thrown away: Ezek. 24:13, "In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee." So it is awful.

Yet it is a holy work in the hand of the Lord. God is holy in his hardening, as well as in his softening-work, Is. 6:3, compared with ver. 10. For,

1. God hardens no soft hearts, hardens none but those who first harden themselves, Rom. 1:28. Men first shut their own eyes to the light, and then a just God blinds their eyes: they are wilful in their

sin, and God gives them their will, Hos. 4:17. For who can say he is obliged to strive on with them still?

2. Sin is a meet punishment of sin, Rom. 1:27. And therefore it is just with God to punish sin by sin, to take off the restraint from those who cannot endure it; to let them fall into the mire, and lie in it, that will needs be in it.

Now, God in this slow method often carries on this hardening work; and that both on the sinner himself and others.

1. In this method oft-times the sinner himself is hardened judicially. God is at much pains with sinners to bring them back from their sinful courses; he trysts them with rebukes from his word, convictions, terrors, and anxieties, and adds to these sharp crosses and afflictions. But they struggle against all these, and over the belly of them pursue their sins: so God judicially hardens them, and carries on that fearful work in the slow method.

1st, Denying or withdrawing his grace, and giving them up to their own lusts, Psal 81:12. There is restraining grace given to many, who never get sanctifying grace; good motions, thoughts, and convictions are put into their hearts: these the Lord withdraws, and leaves men to the swing of their corruptions; as he did Ephraim, Hos. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." They rebel against the light, and the Lord lets it die out. They are impatient of restraint, and the Lord takes it off. They like the government of their lusts, and the Lord gives them up to them.

2dly, Giving them up to Satan to be hardened by him, as the executioner of God's just vengeance, 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. Men resisting,

grieving, and vexing the Holy Spirit of God, provoke him to depart, and to leave them in the hand of the evil spirit, who then finds easy work with them; as in Saul's case. Hereby Satan's power over them is confirmed, the opposition to his interest in them is much removed, and so his influence over them is increased.

God proceeding in the slow method with the sinner in this case, doth awfully carry on the hardening work upon him. In which we may observe,

(1.) Their impunity hardens them. They venture on sin, God in anger lets them go on unpunished, Hos. 4:14. And Satan and their own corrupt hearts improve that to the encouraging and strengthening them in their sins. Thence a wind from hell rises that fills their sails. Hence in the text, Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do'evil.

(2.) Their prosperity in the world hardens them: Psal. 73:5, 6, "They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment." The hotter the sun shines, the clay becomes the harder: and the warmer the sun of worldly prosperity shines on the sinner given up to his own lusts and the power of Satan, he, like a dunghill, becomes the harder, and sends forth the more rank savour.

(3.) In the soft dealings of Providence with them, objects, occasions, and means to do their ill works, are justly laid before them: they are tempted, flattered, and encouraged by others. And thus the warm influence of providence on them in external things, which should

lead them to repentance, is, by means of their own lusts to which they are left, turned hardening and ruining to them: Prov. 1:32, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." These are to them like a full wind to a ship without ballast, in a storm.

(4.) Proper means for checking them are in the just judgment of God rendered ineffectual, and that hardens them. Thus it was with Pharaoh: the miracle of the rod turned into a serpent, waters into blood, bringing in the frogs, seemed to Pharaoh's eye-sight done by the magicians too. And thus were they rendered ineffectual to him.

(5.) Lastly, The adversity and frowns of Providence on the serious godly, harden them, Job 12:4, 5, 6. These are improved, by the sleight of Satan, to the contempt of both the religious and religion.

2. In this method God carries on a hardening work upon ungodly spectators of it. Hence there is a woe to the world, because of offences, Matth. 18:7. The generality of men have so little sense of religion, and insight into the mysteries of Providence, that they are apt to think that that is the best way which is the most prosperous, Prov. 19:4. Hence there was a generation that would needs make that the standard of religion; Jer. 44:17, 18, "But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been

consumed by the sword, and by the famine." And so the Lord doth in his holy providence lay that method of it before worldly and carnal men, at which they, by reason of their own wilful blindness, do stumble, to their own ruin, Mal. 3:14, 15, forecited.

Fifthly, The general method of Providence in managing the world, is soft to his adversaries, and sharp to his own children in this life: 1 Cor. 15:19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Rev. 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." This is the general rule, thought it admits of exceptions, both in the case of the one and the other. God's adversaries sometimes meet with sharp things, his children with soft. But the general and ordinary course of providence is soft to the former, and sharp to the latter.

This appears particularly in two things.

1. God's children are held shorter by the head, in point of particular rebukes of Providence, than his adversaries are.

1st, God sharply noticeth many things in his own, that he will pass in others, and greater too. Hence said Job, "If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity," chap. 10:14. The common proverb holds here, One man had better steal a horse, than another look over the hedge. A child of God many times pays dearer for a vain thought, than others for a vile action; for a rash word, than others for blasphemy and contrived wickedness. How did Moses smart for an unadvised word? Psal. 106:32, 33, "They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." Compare Num. 20:10, 12, "And Moses and Aaron

gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." But see Psal. 73:9, 10. "They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them."

2dly, When both meet with rebukes for an ill thing, his own oft-times get the sharpest. Hence the lamenting church says, Lam. 1:12. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger." The controversy for unworthy communicating was pleaded with some godly Corinthians, to the sickening of their bodies, yea even to death, 1 Cor.11:30. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep.

2. A lot of adversity is in a peculiar manner the lot of God's people in this life, and the world smiles most on its own friends: John 16:33. "These things have I 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." Psal. 73:10. "Therefore his people return hither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them." In the case of the church and people of God in this life, adversity seems to be the rule and ordinary course, prosperity the exception: but in the case of the men of the world, prosperity the rule, and adversity the exception. This appears,

1st, From the Scripture, wherein we find the rod of adversity the beaten path in which the saints under the Old and New Testament have walked: the godly often groaning under the weight of their own afflictions, and the weight of prosperous wickedness in their enemies. The Cainites build cities, and have the harp and organ among them; while the church dwell still in tents: Abraham a stranger in the land of promise, while the cursed Cannanites enjoy it: Jacob's posterity in slavery in Egypt, while the Edomites were settled in their own land, having a king of their own. Perhaps among the Jews in Canaan worldly prosperity was more annexed to piety, agreeable to the dispensation they were under, wherein temporal promises bear great bulk. But consider that people in comparison with other nations, and ye will find their prosperity very short, in comparison of their neighbours, and their adversity very long: Zech. 1:11, 12. "And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?" But under the New Testament the thing is most clear. Our Saviour points out this as the stated method of Providence; Luke 6:20–26. "And Jesus lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye that when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold your reward is

great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich: for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full: for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Chap. 16:25. "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

2dly, From experience and observation. One needs but to open his eyes, and look about through the world, and he cannot miss to see the world's greatest favours bestowed on them who have least sense of God and religion; wickedness triumphant, while serious godliness is pressed down; sinners often laughing while saints weep.

Now, this method becomes the divine wisdom. For,

(1.) At this rate the evil have a taste of good, and the good a taste of evil, Luke 16:25. forecited. The former, who will at length drink deep of endless sorrow, are patiently borne with, to bring them to repentance: the latter, who shall rejoice for evermore, have now the trial of a weeping time.

(2.) As a father is more concerned for, and exact in the correcting of the faults of his own children, than of his servants; so is our Father in heaven with respect to his family. The more he loves, the more he corrects with his rod: Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your inquities." There are some who are to dwell with him for ever: there

are others who are to depart from him for ever. What wonder, that he is at more pains to purify the former than the latter!

(3.) This is most agreeable to the way he took with his own Son and his enemies. While Christ was in the world, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; the wind blew in his face continually, till he was cruelly put to death on the cross. The axe lay at the root of the Jewish church and state, his enemies; yet was it not wielded against them all the time he was among them, nor till about forty years after. This was the pattern that is copied after in this method: Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

Sixthly, Though the slow method seems strange to us short-sighted creatures, it is not at all strange being viewed, in the glass of the influite perfections of the divine nature. A thing will appear in a shallow river, that being cast into the sea will appear no more. We wonder at the slow method of providence, while we look to men; but we will cease to wonder if we look to God, and observe, that,

1. God is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, Psal. 90:2. If men do not soon pursue their quarrels, death may snatch them away, and they can have no access more to do it: but however long the Lord delays pleading his quarrel, he can lose no time, for he is eternal.

2. In God's eternal duration there are no differences of time; all is present to him. Time is for measuring created beings, but not the infinite being. So a thousand years and one day are alike unto him, whatever odds there is betwixt them to us: Psal. 90:4, "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and

as a watch in the night." This consideration the apostle suggests, 2 Pet. 3:8, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

3. He sees exactly the time appointed for execution against every impenitent sinner, and will not let it pass beyond that, one moment: Hab. 2:3, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." We see the beginning and middle of things, but cannot forsee the end. God sees all at once. Well can he bear with ungodly sinners, for he sees their day coming with speed, Psal. 37:13. What needs haste in respect of God? for he sees the sinful creature is fading, and will drop down into a grave ere long, Psal. 78:38, 39.

4. He knows what be intends to do, and none can hinder: Dan. 4:37, "All the King of heaven's works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. The prince that is afraid of the rebels, will strive to crush them ere they gather to a head; but he that knows he can crush them when he will, may let them gather all their strength together. God can carry on the designs of his glory, by bearing long with impenitent sinners: Rom. 9:17, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Thus also he can laugh at the trial of the innocent: Job 9:23, "If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent." Like a father holding his child in his hands over I a deep pool; the child cries, and the father smiles.

5. Lastly, He is infinitely blessed in himself; and nothing the creature can do against him can hurt him; nor in the least disturb his repose in himself: Job 35:6, 8, "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." If the whole creation should conspire against him, opening their mouths against the heavens, and doing to the utmost of their power against him; he might contemn their impotent malice, they would be but like men running their heads against a rock. The longest interval of time cannot make him weary: Is. 40:28, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?

Seventhly, There is a necessity for both the swift and slow methods being used by Providence in the government of the world; it is so corrupt and atheistical. And,

1. The swift method is necessary to shew, that there is a God to judge upon the earth: Psal. 58:10, 11, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." For as ordinary as the slow method is, there are never wanting instances now and then of swift process against ungodly sinners: which is necessary to bear testimony to the being of a God, and of a providence concerned in human affairs. And there are as many of these, as may give sufficient warning to all.

2. The slow method is necessary, to shew there is a judgment to come: 2 Thess. 1:4–7, "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us: when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels," &c. What the carnal world improves in behalf of Atheism, is necessary to prevent Sadduceism: for if all men's wickedness were punished in this life, it would thence be concluded, that there were no after-reckoning: but there is never a sentence passed against an evil work, that is missed to be executed now, but is a pledge of the judgment to come.

Lastly, The slowest vengeance against impenitent sinners will be sure vengeance; and the slower it is in coming, it will be the sorer when it comes: Deut. 32:35, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." The old world was spared a hundred and twenty years, but was swept away at length.

1. Let sinners be spared never so long, not one of all their ill works will, or can be forgotten. They may have forgot them themselves, but God never will. There is a book of remembrance of their ill, as well as of the saint's good words and works: Amos 8:7, "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." Psal. 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept

silence: thou though test that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

2. The longer sinners are spared, their counts will be the greater, and all will come on at once, Luke 11:50, 51; 1 Sam. 3:12. It is people's mercy, that God ceaseth not to be a reprover to them; as it is the mercy of weak people to pay their debt by littles, whereas they are broken if it get leave to run on.

3. When it comes on the impenitent sinner, God will charge both the interest and the principal sum together. They shall not only pay for their ill works, but for their mercies, and the sparing they have gotten: Rom. 2:4, 5, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." What aggravated their sin, will aggravate their condemnation and punishment.

And how long soever the execution of the sentence against ungodly sinners, evil-workers, may be delayed, and how many external favours of providence be heaped on them; all will appear but small and short, when one considers,

1st, The severity of the execution when it comes. They will at length be cut asunder, Matt. 24:51. In flaming fire he will take vengeance on them, 2 Thess. 1:8. They will fall into the hands of the living God.

2dly, The eternity of it. That is a killing aggravation in the sentence, Depart into everlasting fire. If the worm were once awakened, and

set on them, it dieth not; the fire once kindled, will not be quenched.

USE. 1. Of Information. What is said may inform us,

1. That present ease and prosperity in the world is not a sure sign of God's special favour, Eccl. 9:1, 2. Indeed men are apt to construe it so; and Satan and the deceitful heart help them to draw such a conclusion. But so far is it from being such a sign, that it may very well consist with their being in a state of wrath, under a sentence of condemnation; and is so with many.

2. That present ease, impunity, and prosperity, is no security against the time to come. Men are ready to be secure upon it, and to dream that to-morrow will be as this day: Psal. 10:6, "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity." But the mountain may be standing sure now, that ere long may be overturned. The sun shined fair on Sodom, the morning of that day in which God rained fire and brimstone on it. The rich man was full of thoughts of ease in that day, in the night whereof he was struck, Luke 12:18, 19, 20.

3. There cannot be such worth in outward prosperity, nor such evil in affliction, as we generally imagine. For a holy, wise God would never heap what is really best on the objects of his wrath, and what is really worst on the objects of his love. Were there as much real value in the world's wealth, ease, and honour, health, strength, silver, gold, &c. as we imagine; or were there as much evil in trouble, adversity, &c. as we think, would they be so dealt, as that the greatest share of the former should be given to the condemned, and of the latter to the justified? It is owing to the weakness of human sight, that so much beauty appears in some human faces, and in some victuals we feed

on. If they were looked to with a microscope, the beauty would disappear. Faith is the microscope here, Eccl. 1:2; 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

4. God is a patient and long-suffering God, not subject to passions as we are, 2 Pet. 3:9. If he were liable to the transports of passion as we are, the world would have been many times burnt to ashes ere now; considering the provocations given to the eyes of his glory. But the infinite mind enjoys the profoundest serenity and calm, beholding all the confusions of evil-workers in the world.

5. Lastly, Sad and heavy strokes may be abiding a land and generation, though long warded off. Long has the Lord borne with this apostatising generation in principle and practice; and long have wo been threatened: and through the delay, we have been brought to say, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth," Ezek. 12:22. But a reprieve is no pardon; the cloud is still hanging over our heads, and it is to be feared, that some will live to see a fearful breaking of it.

USE 2. Of Exhortation. And,

1. Let ungodly sinners be exhorted to repent of their evil works, and beware of abusing the divine patience with them. Ye have heard the slow method rationally accounted for: If hereafter ye will deceive yourselves, and turn the grace of God into wantonness, encouraging yourselves in sin from your impunity and prosperity; know, that ye are wilfully blind, that ye shall be inexcusable, and your blood will be on your heads. But,

1st, Let the sense of gratitude move you to repentance, Rom. 2:4. Think with yourselves, what case ye had been in, if God had struck you down, as he could, in the very act of your evil work; how you

might have been beyond all hope and possibility of recovery. You owe your life to the slow method of providence; his patience exercised towards you has kept your soul back from the pit. Therefore repent, and go no farther on.

2dly, Let the account ye have heard of the slow method, frighten you from abusing it. I am sure, ye cannot but see now, that there is no ground to take encouragement to sin from it. Consider what has been said, and shew yourselves men. If ye go on to abuse it so, ye make a jest of a most serious and wise dispensation of providence. Ye turn your food into poision, and stumble at noon-day. And it will be a sure presage of everlasting ruin to you: Hos. 14:9, "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."

2. Let all beware of censuring the slow method of providence with ungodly sinners, evil workers. Take heed how ye speak on that head; beware of risings of the corrupt heart upon it. For however rationally ye think ye pronounce upon the matter, sooner or later ye shall be made to recant that sentence, either in mercy, as Job did, chap. 42:3, and as Asaph did, Psal. 73:22, or in wrath, Mal. 3:14, 15, with 18. Consider,

1st, There may be a mystery in the dispensations of providence; but there can be no iniquity, error, or mistake: Deut. 32:4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Silently adore that wisdom and the deep design of providence which ye cannot see through, that certainly are in the slow method God uses with some ungodly

sinners, evil-workers. Though ye cannot see how God's glory can miss to suffer by it, believe that God will doubtless get glory by it.

2dly, The mystery of that dispensation in the case of every ungodly sinner, will be opened out before the world at length, to the satisfaction of all humble waiters; and the confusion of the impenitent evil-workers, scoffers, and murmurers: 1 Cor. 4:5, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. Be not rash, wait the end, and then ye shall be allowed to judge: Prov. 18:13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." But why should ye judge of the web of providence ere it be wrought out?

3. Fret not at, neither envy prosperous wickedness: Prov. 23:17, "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," Psal. 37:1, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." Who would envy the state of a condemned man, though he have a long reprieve, and enjoy many comforts in the iron house? Such is the case of the ungodly, whatever world's ease they have. And therefore they are just objects of pity and compassion, but not of envy. One had better be a pardoned one in the depth of worldly misery, than in a state of wrath and condemnation in the top of worldly felicity, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Matth. 16:26. Consider,

1st, Such fretting and envy proceeds from a distempered heart: Psal. 73:22, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." See Mal. 3:15. It is the produce of a mixture of ignorance, rashness and inconsideration, unbelief and worldly-mind-edness. And there needs only to cure it, to have our eyes opened, to see things in their true state; the laying aside of unruly passions; faith and due weanedness from the world: Psal. 37:1. 2, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

2dly, Every one's state is to be rated, according as it is before God. If God be one's friend, he is a happy man, though the world should never give him its word nor kind look. If God is one's enemy, he is a miserable man, though all the men and things of the world should favour him to his wish. For as is one's state with God, so is his present safety; and so will be his well or woe through eternity.

4. Let all learn to regulate their conduct by the example of God in this his government of the world, so far as it is proposed for our imitation: Eph. 5:1. "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children." And we may learn from it,

1st, To be patient and slow to anger. How ill does it become us to be so ready to fire at every provocation, against our fellow-creatures; when the highest One uses so much patience towards us? Matth. 18:23, &c. The more meekly and patiently one carries himself, he is the more like unto God, who hath set us an example.

2dly, To learn to bear with sinners, in order to the seeking of their recovery: Gal. 6:1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye

which are spiritual, restore such an one in the Spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Not that we are to suffer sin upon him, so far as it is in our power to remove it. God can bring good out of evil, but we cannot do that: therefore that part of the conduct of Providence towards the ungodly, we are not called to imitate. But let us be followers of God, in dealing still with the worst of sinners to recover them, and not give them over for hopeless.

3dly, To do good to the worthless, unthankful, and evil: Luke 6:35. "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil." It is a naughty world, that people had need of such a principle to prompt them to do good to others. If we confine our good to those that do good to us, what do we more than others? If we confine it to those worthy of it, we do it only for the creature's sake. But if we propose to follow the example of God, we will do good to all as we have access, and act from a Christian principle in it.

5. Lastly, Let us not be secure with respect to the case of the land and generation we live in. Let us not think that God has forgotten the iniquity of our fathers in their perfidy and cruelty against the godly for his cause; or that he approves of the course of apostacy from the truth and holiness of the gospel this day, whereby the present generation has entered itself heir to the apostatising, persecuting generation that went before. The sentence is not executed, yet it is but delayed; therefore we may look for it, if repentance prevent it not.

DOCTRINE III. God's delay of execution is often miserably abused by sinners, to the filling of their hearts to do evil, and sinning more and more.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall,

I. Point out the abuse of God's patience in the delay of execution, that ungodly sinners make, to the filling of their hearts to do evil.

II. Shew how it comes to pass, that sinners so abuse God's patience with them.

III. Make application of the doctrine.

I. I shall point out the abuse of God's patience in the delay of execution, that ungodly sinners make, to the filling of their hearts to do evil.

1. They abuse it to carnal security: Psal. 10:6, "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity." Finding that God does not execute his threatenings against them, they conclude they are in no hazard: and they begin to look on them as mere scarecrows, ver. 5, "His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight." And so they go on securely in their ungodly courses. Hence it is that the execution overtakes them quite unexpectedly: 1 Thess. 5:2, 3, "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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."

2. They abuse it to a sensual life, wherein their aim is not to keep a clean conscience, but to gratify their senses, as their circumstances in the world will permit; as the rich man did, Luke 12:19, "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." So the more that Providence favours them in external things, the more sensual they are, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind: Hos. 13:6, "According to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." Hence the lives of many are trifled away, and wholly spent in making provision for the flesh, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." And that is endless business: Eccl. 1:8, "All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

3. They abuse it to impudence in sin, Jer. 6:14, 15. When God strikes men in a sinful course, they are ashamed readily as pointed at by the hand of heaven, as transgressors: but when men prosper in a sinful course, they put on a brow of brass, they gather a stock of impudence in sin, as if Providence had given them a patent for wickedness: Psal. 73:5, 6, "They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment."

4. They abuse it to contempt of God, and all that is sacred: Psal. 73:9, "They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth." Agur saw the danger of this snare, and therefore prayed thus, Prov. 30:8, 9, "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be

poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Israel fell into it: Deut. 32:15, "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." The ungodly have not love to God: if they have any thing that way of such affections, it is fear of him, a slavish fear of his wrath, springing from the love of themselves: this fear they lose also, when God delays to strike. And so it issues in contempt, as is natural in the case of one we neither love nor fear. And then all that is sacred is despised.

5. They abuse it to sinning more diffusely, giving loose reins to their several lusts, Jer. 7:9, 10. One sin makes way for another, and prosperity in a sinful course gives many occasions of sin: and as the vicious stomach, the more it receives, breeds the more ill humours; so the more one prospers in a sinful course, the more vile does he grow.

6. They abuse it to sinning more eagerly; Eph. 4:19, "Being past feeling, they have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." The more that lusts are fed, the more strong they grow, and carry out the man more violently to satisfy them. So that the heart in that case is like a ship having a full gale of wind, and is eagerly set to do evil.

7. Lastly, They abuse it to incorrigibleness and obstinacy in sin, Jer. 22:21. A prosperous sinner quickly gets above reproofs, Hos. 4:4. As affliction tends to humble, prosperity puffs up an ungracious heart: and the heart swelled with pride scorns to stoop, till God by his grace or judgments do lay it.

II. How comes it to pass that sinners so abuse God's patience with them?

1. Sin reigning in the ungodly, fear of wrath is their highest motive to good, and most forcible restraint from evil: and so when that restraint is taken off by the delay of execution again and again; the heart naturally goes to its own bias, and is like the wild ass's colt snuffing up the wind at her pleasure. The love of holiness for itself, and likeness to God, would prevent it.

2. They mistake the design of providence. They misinterpret the slow method of procedure with them, Psal. 50:21. The design of it is to lead them to repentance; but that they notice not. But they construe it, as if God approved of their ways, or had such a regard for them, that he will not be so angry with them, as one would make them believe: they cannot think that he is so very angry at their sin, while they prosper in it by his providence.

3. There is a root of Atheism in the hearts of all men naturally, and it reigns in the ungodly: Psal. 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Unless God be every now and then proving his being, providence, and justice to them, by his works of judgment on themselves; they are apt to forget him, and deny him. It is the interest of men wedded to their lusts, that there were not a God; or, if there be, that he were not such as the scripture represents him. So they are ready to entertain every thing that may favour it.

4. Lastly, The Lord often in that way carries on a holy hardening work. In which case, Satan and the evil heart conspire to this abuse.

USE 1. Of Information. This lets us see,

1. That we need not be surprised to see sinners escaping with one evil work fall into another, and so on; growing still more vile, the more outward favours are heaped on them. It is but a fulfilling of this scripture. Providence often has an odd aspect in our view, till we carry the matter to the Bible; and there we see it exactly answering the word.

2. It is good for men to be under frequent rebukes of Providence. Affliction is sore, but it is the more safe lot, Psal. 119:71. In the one men are put in mind of their sins, in the other they are apt to forget both their God and themselves. It would be profitable for the afflicted to consider the wretched abuse the heart is ready to make of ease and prosperity.

3. Slow vengeance will be sore vengeance, when it comes. For the longer it is a-coming, sin goes the deeper: the more God spares impenitents, the more they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath; the counts run on, and swell the more. So whether we consider it coming on in time or in eternity, the heavier will it be.

4. Lastly, Great is the corruption of human nature. See it here as in a glass, how the mercy and goodness of God is despised by the corrupt heart, that will not be drawn by such cords of love. See how it turns our food into poison, and that which should be for our welfare into a snare and trap. See it an ungrateful nature, apt to be insensible of the ties of gratitude to our best benefactor.

USE 2. Of Exhortation. Take heed of abusing the patience of a long-suffering God, of turning his grace, goodness, and forbearance into wantonness, of your heart filling to do evil while God spares.

1. Consider the evil of it. There is in it,

1st, An over-valuing of ourselves, as if we deserved not to be worse treated, and therefore were nothing obliged to our benefactor: Hab. 1:16, "They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous." Men, who are not bettered by God's goodness, their hearts swell in pride, as patience is used towards them: Psal. 73:5, 6, "They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment."

2dly, An undervaluing of others whom providence doth not treat so softly. Hence Job said, chap. 12:5, "He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease." How lightly do many that are at ease, look on the heavy things others suffer? They are as unconcerned with them, as if they were creatures of an inferior rank. Were men sensible of God's goodness, in his patience towards them, it would make them sympathize with others, wondering that it is not worse with themselves, 2 Chron. 28:10.

3dly, A monstrous abuse of the creature, and comforts of life, Hos. 2:8. The use of the creature was given to man, for his comfort indeed; but always in subserviency to the glory of God. But abusers of divine patience turn the weapons against God, which he has armed them with for his service: Deut. 32:15, "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." They are called adulterers and adulteresses, James 4:4, because they bestow God's good gifts on

their lusts, ver. 3. Hence the creation groans under the burden of the ungodly, evil-workers, Rom. 8:22.

4thly, A denying the due tribute to our Sovereign Lord and King. All that we have we hold of him, in the way of free mercy, Lam. 3:22. The king in his palace, and the beggar in his cottage, is God's tenant: our food and raiment, coarse or fine, with conveniencies of life, are given us of God. We can pay him nothing, but the tribute of praise in our lips and lives: and that is denied. Hence,

5thly, Monstrous ingratitude, a sin of a deep dye: Deut. 32:6, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?" It is a devilish disposition of heart, that cannot be won with benefits; a base spirit, which good done them cannot engage. But abusers of mercies, the more God loads them with benefits, the more they load him with their provocations. Ah! shall men sin, because grace abounds? shall their hearts be filled in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed?

6thly, Practical blasphemy, as if men should say, they are hired to be vile, Jer. 7:9, 10. Abusers of the doctrine of the gospel, to licentiousness, make Christ the minister of sin: therefore abusers of the kind providence of God to that end, make god in his government of the world so. While Heaven smiles in outward favours on men, and they use them so, the language of that practice is blasphemous.

7thly, Much Atheism and contempt of God. It is a denial of his providence, as if he had no concern about human affairs, Ezek. 9:9. It makes a jest of his threatenings in his word, 2 Pet. 3:3, 4. It

misrepresents his holy nature, Psal. 50:21, or bids him defiance, Is. 5:19, and throws off his yoke, Psal. 12:4.

2 Consider the danger of it. If ye go on so,

1st, Ye will make your recovery aye more and more hopeless, Jer. 6:29, 30. Sin is a current, the farther it runs, the deeper it grows: and the more goodness men sin against, the more is their heart hardened, and their consciences seared. Withal it provokes God to give up with men, leave striving with them, and give them up to their lusts, and to the devil, to be hardened more.

2dly, If God have any thoughts of good towards you, it will make your recovery more difficult. Strong diseases must have strong remedies: and long abused patience will make broken bones, at best; if ye be saved, it will be so as by fire. At best ye are but laying up for bitter repentance: the more loose and licentious one is in an unconverted state, the more severe pangs and throes he will readily find in the new birth. Witness Manasseh, Paul, &c.

3dly, Be it as it will, that patience will have an end; ye shall not sin on and God spare on very long. The coupling of these two will be broken, and God will shew you that he will bear no longer with your abuse: Eccl. 7:6, "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." Ye will find God will awake to judgment, and wake you out of your dream; and ye will either be his converts, or broken to pieces by him.

4thly, The breaking up of patience with you is likely to be very sudden and surprising, 1 Thess. 5:2, 3. So was it with the rich man, Luke 12:19, 20. God bore long with the old world, but at length the

deluge came on like a thunderclap, in the midst of their carnal mirth and jollity. God does it in just recompense of long abused patience.

Lastly, Abused patience, when it breaks off, will turn to fury;* and the longer God has delayed execution, the more severe will it be when it comes on, Lev. 26:28. The more a man has had in trust, his accounts will be found the greater and the harder to clear off, when once the creditors fall on him. It is most pleasing to the flesh, to live in ease and fulness; but the abuse of these will make a more fearful reckoning, than otherwise.

DOCTRINE IV. Though the execution be never so slow, it will be sure, against impenitent sinners, evil-workers,

In handling this doctrine it is proposed to shew,

I. In what respects the execution against impenitent sinners, evil-workers, will be sure.

II. That the execution against them will be sure.

III. Apply the doctrine.

I. In what respects will the execution against impenitent sinners, evil-workers, be sure? It will be sure, in respect of,

1. The full tale of their evil works: Eccl. 12:14, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Neither the multitude of them, nor the long time they lie over unreckoned for, will cause any of them to be forgotten. But the ill works of the several periods of the sinner's life, will be charged home upon him exactly. For God keeps a register of

all their evil works, a book that will be opened at the last day, Rev. 20:12; and has sworn that none of them shall be forgotten, Amos 8:7.

2. The whole aggravations of their evil works, Jude ver. 15. A just God will remember against impenitent sinners, the manner as well as the matter of their sins; the time, place, and other circumstances of their evil works, will be remembered against them. Their abused mercies, the light they rebelled against, the warnings from the word and providence they slighted, the effects their ill example had on others, the snares others were entangled therein by their means, &c. will all be charged on them.

3. The conviction of their own consciences, Jude ver. 15. Sinners now find ways to cloak and cover their evil works, to deny or mince them: and few will now suffer themselves to be admonished or reproved, but they have a great deal to say in their own defence; but the lying lips, and tongues that speak proudly, will then be put to silence, Matt. 22:12. The light of conscience will then be like broad day-light, that is now as the darkness of the night. It will convince them clearly of what shall be laid to their charge, that they can no more deny it, John 8:9; and of the justice of God it. proceeding against them, Psal. 50:6.

4. Just punishment brought on them for their evil works, 1 Thess. 5:3. While God delays, men dream with Agag, that the bitterness of death is past: but they will find themselves deceived, as he when Samuel took the sword and hewed him in pieces before the Lord. They cannot escape the due demerit of their sin at length; but as the needle draws the thread after it, sin will draw wrath. Judgment is sin's shadow.

5. The correspondence there will be between their sin and punishment. God will write every ungodly sinner's sin in his punishment. Oft-times it is so here with them, as in the case of Adonibezek, Judg. 1:7; but always so hereafter, as in the case of the rich man, Luke 16:19, with 24. Hence the worm is said never to die; signifying the eternal remorse they shall have for their evil works. And the degrees of punishment will be suited to the degrees of their sin. They that have committed many sins, shall have many stripes.

6. Its inevitableness, when once patience is come to an end: Luke 13:24, 25, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are." The door of mercy may stand open long, but it will be shut at length. And then there is no more espcaping. For,

1st, Omniscience will find out the flier, and discover his most secret crimes, and overthrow all his defences: Heb. 4:2, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom &c we have to do." Psal. 139:7, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" There is no blending of the eye of an omniscient judge.

2dly, Divine power will bring him under, and cause him to stand and receive the just reward of his deeds: Job 9:4, "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and

hath prospered? There will be no resisting of omnipotence: the stoutest sinner will be poured out like water before an angry God.

3dly, The divine severity will proceed over the belly of all entreaties, made out of time: Luke 13:24, 25. forecited. They that slight mercy while God's time for it lasts, will get no mercy when God's time is out, and theirs is come.

7. Lastly, Its eternity. The execution once on, will never be off; once begun, will never end: Mark 9:44. In hell the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. While God is, he will pursue the quarrel. The ungodly sin on as long as they are in the world, and live on as long as they will, they will not alter their course: and God will pursue them for ever, when once he has broke off.

II. That the execution against them will be sure, appears,

1. From the inviolable regard God has to the honour of his holy law, Is. 42:21. Sinners trample on it, slight its commands, and despise its threatenings; but God highly regards it, as that wherein he has eminently expressed the holiness of his nature. If sinners then honour it not in the way of duty, it will be honoured upon them in a way of judgment. God's regard to his law may be seen clearly,

1st, In the works of providence. As soon as sin entered into the world, and the law was broken, the face of providence on the world was quite changed. And it has blown continually since in the face of the creation less or more, Rom. 8:22. Oft-times it has risen to violent storms, to avenge the quarrel of the dishonour of the holy law by sinners. Remember how, in that quarrel, Adam was driven out of Paradise, the world drowned by the flood, Sodom burnt, Jerusalem

destroyed, with the many awful strokes brought on impenitent sinners in latter times.

2dly, In the work of redemption. God chose some from eternity unto salvation: but being breakers of the law, they behoved to be redeemed, and the price paid to the full reparation of the honour of the law. Christ the Son of God was their Redeemer; but that the law's honour might be seen to, he met with no sparing: Rom. 8:32, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." So God wrote his regard to the law in the salvation of his elect, and blood of his Son.

2. The truth and veracity of God insures the execution. He has said, he will do it: Gen. 2:17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." His Son has intimated to us from heaven, that impenitent sinners shall not escape: Luke 13:3, "I tell you, Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Every leaf of the scripture almost, has something to this purpose: "and hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Num. 23:19. God's truth must either fail, or ungodly sinners be reckoned with at length.

3. The justice of God requires it: Gen. 18:25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Men may be unjust judges, but God cannot. He will give every transgression a just recompense of reward: for it is in his power to do it, and his nature requires it. He hates sin, and cannot but hate it; and therefore though he delay for a time, he will punish.

4. The constant conduct of providence hitherto confirms it. There have been multitudes of ungodly in the world; but may we not put

the question, Job 9:4, "Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Some have indeed been long spared, but did they not at length either bow or break before him? What came of the giants in the old world, of Pharaoh, of Korah, Dathau, and Abiram? These things happened for warnings to us. And if any have escaped during life, is there not sufficient evidence of execution on them in another world? as is evident from the case of the rich man, Luke 16.

5. Lastly, The peremptory appointment of the day of general judgment, puts it out of question: Acts 17:30, 31, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." The Judge is named for that effect already, the commission to him for that end has passed the seals in his resurrection; it is to be general, all must be judged by him; yea the sentence against the ungodly is conceived already, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

For USE I shall drop a word to,

1. The ungodly, evil-workers. And to you I would say,

1st, Let not your impunity for the present, make you secure for the time to come; as is the case of the wicked man, Psal. 10:6, "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity." As sure as ye think your mountain now stands, it may suddenly be overturned; yea it shall assuredly, if ye repent not. God

is giving you space to repent: do not trifle and dream it away, lest ye repent when it is too late.

2dly, Let not your observation of the prosperity of other sinners, encourage and harden you in your sinful course: as it did those, Mal. 3:15, "And now we call the proud happy: yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Ye have seen much of their sinful course, and of God's patience. But ye have not seen the end of it yet: Is. 17:11, "In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow." Many a day has begun fair, and held on long so, that has had a foul evening. And whatever ye have observed of them, their prosperity in their ill course shall be their end in bitter repentance, or in their destruction, or else the word of truth fails.

3dly, Take the alarm in time, and flee from the wrath to come: Is. 55:6, 7, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Know ye cannot prosper to the end, in your loose and licentious ways. Ye must come to Christ by faith, and leave the world lying in wickedness; must break off your sins by repentance; or else ye will perish. If ye do it not, ye will mind that ye have been fairly warned, and lament for ever your slighting it.

2. To the godly I would say,

1st, Beware of entertaining any idol of jealousy in your heart, wherewith the Lord may be provoked against you. He is impartial in

his judgments, and even his own shall not escape: Is. 42:24, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he, against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his laws." Though being in Christ ye have shut the gulf as to condemnation, ye may be severely chastised; and ye may get broken bones for your transgressions, though ye cannot lose your souls.

2dly, Be not discouraged in the Lord's way, because in it ye meet with many sore trials, while others that are far from it go at ease. The work-ox goes with the yoke on his neck, while the slaughter-ox is full fed. But the former is preserved, while the latter is slain and hewed in pieces.

3 Lastly, To all I would say,

1st, Know that God is a holy jealous God. The way of sin is dangerous, and there will be no peace in the end of it.

2dly, Let us prepare to meet our God in the way of his judgments. God's proceedings against the land are slow, but they are like to be sure and sore. He has made the earth to quake beneath us, shown his anger from the face of the heavens above us.

THE SIN, FOLLY, AND DANGER OF MEN'S CALLING CHRIST THEIR LORD, AND NOT YIELDING OBEDIENCE TO HIS LAWS; OR THE SINFULNESS AND HAZARD OF A PROFESSION OF RELIGION. WITHOUT A CORRESPONDENT PRACTICE

Several sermons preached, at Ettrick, in summer, 1728.

> And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? - LUKE 6:46.

THERE was, together with the disciples, a great multitude gathered to hear Christ, and to be healed by him, ver. 17. Many of them pretended a great regard for him; but it went no farther than good words. Our Lord tells them, that such is every man, good or bad, according as his life is, vers. 44, 45, "For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaketh." And he closely applies this to their conscience in the text. Wherein we have,

1. A concession. He grants they made a fair profession; they called him Lord, their Lord. They owned his authority and Lordship over them, as if they were his subjects and servants ready to receive and

obey his commands. They addressed themselves to him for his help, one and another crying, Lord, help me, pleading to receive benefit by him as their Lord. And this they did at times with much seeming zeal and concern, Lord, Lord.

2. A charge. He charges them with nothing like this in their practice. Though they called him their Lord, they carried not themselves at all as his subjects and servants. Though they would have him to do for them, they would do nothing for him. In his preaching and life, he laid their duty before them: but though they owned him for their Lord, they shewed no regard in their practice to what he said, no conformity to his doctrine and example.

3. An expostulation. He puts them to consider the inconsistency of these things, and the unaccountableness of yoking together a profession and a practice that destroyed one another. A lord and a subject or servant are relatives; to the one it belongs to command, to the other to obey, Mal. 1:6. Why will ye plead the relation, and yet throw off the duty of the relation? "If ye call me your Lord, why do ye not what I say or bid you? If you will not do what I say or bid you, why do ye call me your Lord?"

Two doctrines are deducible from the text thus explained.

DOCTRINE I. There are who call Christ their Lord, owning his authority over them, and looking for benefit by him, who yet make not conscience of doing the things which he as a Lord says to them, and requires of them.

DOCTRINE II. It lies on men's consciences before the Lord, to take it home to themselves, to consider and answer it, how they come to call

Christ their Lord, and yet make not conscience of doing the things which he as a Lord says to them, and requires of them.

I shall handle these doctrines in order.

DOCTRINE I. There are who call Christ their Lord, owning his authority over them, and looking for benefit by him, who yet make not conscience of doing the things which he as a Lord says to them, and requires of them.

In discoursing this doctrine I shall,

I. Consider men's calling Christ their Lord.

II. Consider their not doing the things which he says, notwithstanding of their calling him their Lord.

III. Shew how it comes to pass, that people call Christ Lord, and their Lord, and yet make not conscience of doing what he says.

IV. Apply the doctrine.

I. I will consider men's calling Christ their Lord.

Under this head, I will shew,

1. How men call Christ their Lord.

2. What they do call Christ, that call him their Lord.

3. What is the import of their calling him Lord.

First, I will shew how men call Christ their Lord. Men call him their Lord,

1. Professing Christianity. Christians is the name of Christ's disciples who owned him for their Lord and Master: Acts 11:26. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." As ye are called Christians, ye are called by his name, owning him for your Lord and Master: Matth. 23:10. "One is your Master even Christ. Some, that they may take to themselves a liberty, which others may not, will pretend they do not make a profession. Strange! Christians and yet not professors! Can there be a more holy profession, than that of Christianity, whereof Christ is the head! Heb. 3:1. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Nay, at that rate ye take the name, and throw off the thing.

2. Being baptized in his name, Matth. 28:19. They are thereby externally marked for his subjects and servants, and renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. It is a badge of subjection to Christ, which the members of the visible church have taken on, to distinguish them from the world, whereof Satan is the god; while Christ is the Lord and God of the church.

3. Praying unto him, or to God in his name, Acts. 7:59. Dan. 9:17. Every praying person, so far as he prays like a Christian, calls Christ his Lord, and begs his help; though many do little consider what that requires of them in their practice.

4. Attending the assemblies of his people to hear his word, Ezek. 23:31. The Lord Christ has appointed these assemblies for declaring his will to his people, as to what he will do for them, and what he will

have them to do: and the very coming thither in a way of outward reverence, is a calling him Lord, from whom we are to learn our duty.

Consenting personally to the covenant, Is. 44:5. Thereby they say, he is, and shall be for ever their Lord, and that they shall be his only, wholly, and for ever. And at whatever time any have given such consent, they have no power to retract it after. Whether ever they shall renew it again or not, it stands recorded before God, and they will be judged by him accordingly.

6. Lastly, Partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. The very name of that ordinance bears the partakers to call him so, 1 Cor. 11:23, 26. And it is a very solemn profession before the world, angels, and men, that he is our Lord, and we give up with all other lords. We take Heaven's seal upon it, and in a manner make oath that it is so.

Secondly, I will shew what they do call Christ, that call him their Lord.

1. They call him their Lord God; as Thomas did, John 20:28, "My Lord, and my God." They own him to be God their Creator, who made them, and preserves and sustains them, to be their Sovereign Lord, the Most High God with his Father and Spirit, unless they declare the contrary. For so the universal church of Christ on earth do understand Christ to be the Lord, Rom. 9:5, however lightly men let of his commands.

2. Their Lord Proprietor, Master, and Owner, however little regard they show to the will of his providence and precepts, Rom. 14:9. For as all things are his by creation, so the Father has by a new title made

him heir of all things, Lord of all, which is declared in the gospel, Acts 10:36. And so the head of every man is Christ.

3. Their Lord Redeemer, Exod. 20:2. however unsuitably they walk to the redemption purchased by him. For so his people understand him to be our Lord, who bought us with his precious blood, paying our ransom while we were captives of sin and Satan, giving himself for us.

4. Their Lord Husband, however refractory and disobedient they prove to him: Jer. 3:14, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." Is. 54:5, "Thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name." And so they own their obligation to be subject to him, faithful and obedient till death. For as he is Lord, he is a Lord Head and Husband, to his church.

5. Lastly, Their Lord King, however rebellious they be: Is. 33:22, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us." They own him to be King in Zion, having power and royal dominion over them, to command, reward, and punish, as they carry themselves towards him.

Thirdly, What is the import of their calling him Lord? Men calling him so, do in effect own, acknowledge, and profess,

1. His undoubted authority to command and prescribe duty to them: owning him as their Lord Husband, King, and God, they cannot deny but he has authority to bind them with laws. The husband claims authority over his spouse, the king over his subjects; and shall not God claim authority over his own creatures? All these meet together

in Christ our Lord; so, by our own confession, he has authority over us.

2. The justice and equity of his commands: Rom. 7:12, "The law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Husbands and kings among men, may require unjust things of their relatives, through their own perverseness or blindness: but he being our Lord God, is essentially just, and can command nothing but what is truly good. Will we venture to attack the boliness of God, to accuse his commands of injustice, for an excuse of our neglect of them?

3. Our absolute obligation to obey him. If he is our Lord, we owe him an illimited subjection, obedience without disputing his commands, Psal. 119:4. and a resignation to his providence without reserve, Matt. 20:15. As the clay is in the hand of the potter, so are we in his. The potsherds of the earth may strive with one another, but shall they strive with their Maker?

4. The strongest ties upon us to be for him. If he is our Proprietor and Redeemer, are we not bound by all the ties of honour and gratitude to be wholly his? Do we say, he redeemed us from death, and can we deny but we are bound to live for him? Has he redeemed us by dying for us, in our room and stead, and so saved us from dying eternally; what possible stronger incentive can there be to obedience?

5. Lastly, The expectation of happiness from him. Calling him our Lord, we expect from him and by him, the pardon of our sin, the favour of God, and a part in the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 7:21. We know that he is not only Lord of this world, but of the other world; and so we raise our expectation accordingly.

II. I will consider men's not doing the things which he says, notwithstanding all this. We may take it up in three things.

1. Christ as a Lord prescribes duty to his subjects. He has not an empty title of lordship and dominion, but is a Lawgiver: Is. 33:22, "He is our Lawgiver." And the law of the ten commands, in their spirituality and extent, is his law, binding by his authority on all that call him Lord, Exod. 20:2, 3, &c. As he is the Lord our God, he claims absolute and illimited subjection and obedience of us; as he is our Proprietor, he claims the absolute disposal of us; as he is our Redeemer, he requires our living wholly to him; as he is our Husband, he demands our being subject to him in love, faithfulness, and obedience till death, yea for ever; and as he is our King, he requires the duty of faithful subjects, and to have no commerce with his enemies.

2. He intimates his will to them as to their duty. He says what he would have them to do. We have his written laws in the Bible, which is God's word to every one into whose hand it comes. His ministers, as his messengers, do in his name proclaim his laws, and require obedience to them. Conscience within men's breasts testifies the necessity of obedience. So that none can pretend ignorance. If they be ignorant of his will, it is affected; they desire not to know it; as those do, Job 21:14, who say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

3. Yet men neglect it, and regard it not in their practice. They plead the relation to him, but make no conscience of the duty of it. He has laid down their duty in laws and commands, and has intimated it to them: but they take no heed to regulate their practice according to

them. He says what things he would have them to do, but they do them not.

1st, They have no due sense of their being absolutely bound up to his will, but fancy themselves to be at some liberty to walk according to their own, as if the government were divided betwixt Christ and themselves: Psal. 12:4, "Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own: who is lord over us? They do not feel the tie of the yoke of Christ always upon them, but are like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, skipping at ease according to their own pleasure.

2dly, They frame not their life according to his will. Their habitual walk and practice is not holy, but loose, licentious, untender, carnal, and like the world, not like the followers of Christ; like the Ephesians in their unconverted state, Eph. 2:2, who "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." They attend ordinances, and perform some religious duties: but look into the strain of their conversation, it is no wise Christ-like, but world-like; contrary to that exhortation, Rom. 12:2, "Be ye not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

3dly, They never set themselves to do all that he says; contrary to what the Psalmist did, Psal. 119:6, who "had respect unto all God's commandments." This one or other thing that he says, they do: but they were never brought to a compliance with the things he says without reserve. They pick and choose out some things, but they reject others: a clear evidence that his authority which is stamped on all his commands, has little weight with them, Jam. 2:11.

4thly, They habitually do against what he says, making their own lusts and inclinations their law; like those who said, Jer. 2:25, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." They call him their Lord; but Satan and their lusts are really their lords, to whom they yield their obedience, being captives at their pleasure.

Lastly, They do nothing purely because he says it, else they would endeavour to do all. In what they do, they have other ends than to please him: they do it to please themselves, for their own profit, pleasure, or safety.

III. The third general head is, to shew how it comes to pass, that people call Christ Lord, and their Lord, and yet make not conscience of doing what he says. The springs of this ruining practice, that so prevails, are many: as,

1. The want of a thorough change in their nature; Luke 6:43, 44, "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit: neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes." There is some change made on them, therefore they call Christ Lord; it is not carried through, therefore they do not what he says. Hence they are neither cold nor hot; they are neither professed enemies, nor cordial friends; like the Laodiceans, of whom our Lord said, Rev. 3:15, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot."

1st, Good education and religious company embalms some dead souls; but still they want the principle of the Spirit of life; like those of whom the apostle says, Jude ver. 19, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. So they continue dead in

sin still, and their course of life becomes abominable with dead works, till in end they are twice dead, ver. 12.

2dly, The gospel being new to some, makes a reel among their affections; as it did among the stony-ground hearers, Matt. 13:20, 21, "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. So that they have some liking of the gospel, and begin to look kindly towards the way of God: but it changes not their hearts, ver. 21. And the newness going away, these affections wear off, and they begin to appear in their own colours of black nature. Hence we have many, who, while they were springing up in youth, blossomed fair, and solemnly gave their names to Christ at sacraments: but being grown up, turn stark naught.

3dly, They get some new light into their heads, but no new life into their hearts. This was the case of many of John's hearers, who afterwards withered away; concerning whom Christ said, John 5:35, "He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

4thly, Many get awakening grace, that never get converting grace. Their convictions bring them to call Christ Lord; but they living strangers to the work of conversion, cannot do the things which he says.

2. Entertaining wrong notions of religion. They form to themselves such notions of religion, as leave them at liberty in the course of their walk. (1.) They think that is religion to call Christ Lord in performing

duties of worship, praying, &c. and consider not that the substance of religion lies in holy, tender walking: Tit. 2:11, 12, "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." Hence having done these duties of worship, they are at no more care to keep their hearts in the Lord's fear all the day long; but, on the contrary, can take the greater liberty to themselves in loose walking; as the whore did, Prov. 7:14, 15, "I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee." Hence publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before such persons. (2.) They think that faith will save them, though it be dead, idle, and unactive; contrary to what the apostle saith, James 2:14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ver. 26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." They do not consider, that that faith is not saving faith, which is so. Hence they can take a great deal of liberty in the way of sin, and put off repentance from time to time, even to a death-bed, upon the confidence that their faith in Christ will save them. Such have been of old, and still are, Jude ver. 4, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no true faith but what purifies the heart, Acts 15:9. and sanctifies the whole man; and the salvation by faith, is salvation from sin.

3. Reigning unbelief. Of this our Lord complained, John 5:40, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Whatever pretences

there are to believing in Christ, the unholiness of the lives of men is a convincing evidence, that unbelief is reigning at bottom with most of us: Is. 53:1, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The holiness of God, the spirituality of his law, his hatred of sin, and how severely he punisheth, are not believed. The report concerning Christ, another world, heaven and hell, sinks not deep into the hearts of many. If these things were truly believed, it is not possible that men could be so easy in a way of sin.

4, Want of consideration, Luke 15:17. People dream away their lifetime; and however deep they can enter into the consideration of other things, they have no power to consider their soul's state and case: Is. 44:20, "He feedeth of ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Self-examination is utterly neglected; so there is no due reflection made on their souls' state, and the course of life they are leading: Is. 1:3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his masters crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

5. The natural enmity of the heart prevailing against conviction; Rom. 8:7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence is rebelling against the light, keeping the truth prisoner in the head, that it may not get into the conversation to rule there, Rom. 1:18. There are notions of truth that force their own way into the mind, especially under a clear gospel-ministry: the natural enmity yoking with these, fights against them; and getting over them, runs with a stronger current than otherwise, Rom. 7:13.

6. Lastly, Unmortified lusts still keeping the rule and dominion over the soul, though Christ has the name of their Lord. Many call christ Master, who are still servants to sin, serving diverse lusts and pleasures. Hence these hurry them into sinful courses, that they must do what their impetuous lusts drive them to, and cannot do the things that Christ says.

USE 1. Of Information. Hence we may see,

1. That ungodly sinners after the dropping of the gospel, are self-condemned, and will be condemned out of their own mouths. They own Christ's authority over them, which Jews and pagans do not; and yet they regard it not in their walk, Mal. 1:6.

2. They are unreasonable and foolish in their expectation of benefit from Christ, and shall be disappointed: Matth. 7:21. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven." O how can we expect salvation from Christ, who have no regard to what he says! Ye will not do his will to honour him, but dishonour him by trampling on his commands! will not be saved from sin.

3. A profession of subjection to Christ, and bearing the external badges of it, is common to many of the devil's goats with Christ's sheep. Nobody needs value themselves upon it; for though we say well for Christ as our Lord, yet if we do not accordingly, we but deceive ourselves.

4. Lastly, No man has reason to be stumbled at religion itself, because of the unsuitable lives of some professors of it. Many such stumbling-blocks are laid down this day in the way of the blind

world; they that lay them shall bear their judgment: but why should it be improven against the truths or practice of religion itself, since our Lord plainly forewarns that it will be so?

USE 2. Of Exhortation. Ye do all call Christ your Lord, profess Christianity, have been baptized in his name, &c. Consider calmly and seriously, how your life answers your profession, whether ye do what he says or not, what regard ye shew to his commands in your practice. Consider,

1. It is expected that they who own Christ for their Lord, should carry themselves as his subjects and servants, that his will should be their law, his commands the rule of their life. To call him Lord, and yet cast his laws behind your backs, is to mock him with those, Matth. 27:29, 30. "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail King of the Jews. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head."

2. If he is your Lord, as he has power and authority to command you, so he has power to revenge your disobedience, and to reward your obedience. His obedient children may be sure their labour shall not be in vain, 1 Cor. 15 ult; and the disobedient will find the weight of his hand, that will grind them to powder, 2 Thess. 1:7. 8.

3. As he is a Lord, he is Lord and Saviour, Lord Redeemer. And what is it that he redeems from, and saves from? Is it not sin? Tit. 2:14. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Matth. 1:21. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." He gave his life for that end, Eph. 5:25, 26.

What horrid injury must it then be, to pretend he is your Lord, to save you, and yet ye will live in your sin, directly contrary to what his precious blood was shed for?

4. Lastly, Though we are not saved by our doing, but by believing; yet faith and holiness are inseparable: James 2:14. "What doth it profit though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" Where there is not holiness of heart and life, there is no true faith in Christ there. Faith if it be true, unites the soul to Christ, works by love, purifies the heart, carries the soul heavenward in its conversation. Doing in perfection what Christ says, is reached by no believers here; but doing in sincerity, is what differences them still from unbelievers.

Consider well then what regard ye show to what Christ says. And let your consciences answer these questions.

1. Can ye say before the Lord, appealing to his omniscience, that ye have renounced your own will, lusts, and inclinations, to follow whatsoever the Lord discovers to be his will for you to do; and ye sincerely endeavour to stick by that renunciation, to conform yourselves to his will? Acts 9:6. I doubt most of us have never been brought that length yet; and that many who have said it at some times have resiled from it, and follow their own will more than Christ's to this day.

2. Do ye really so far comply with whatsoever God has discovered to be your duty, that ye dare not neglect it, but must endeavour it? Psal. 119:6. Can you think ye show an upright regard to the Lord's commands, when there are some of them that you can cast behind your back? No; if you regard them not all, ye regard none of them as

ye ought. Say not, There is none can do all. It is true, none can do all perfectly; but there is no upright man, but he will put hand to all that he knows to be his duty, and do his endeavour in every one of them.

3. Do ye sincerely set yourselves to oppose and fight against every thing the Lord discovers to be sin, and are ye longing to have the victory over it? Rom. 7:24. Are there not some sins that are your bosom-idols, which ye cannot be brought to part with? Are there not such sins with many who indulge themselves in sins, of the vileuess of which none can be ignorant, that are not given up to a reprobate sense, as lying, filthiness, dishonest dealing, &c.?

4. Do ye really lie open to discoveries of sin and duty from the Lord's word? Job 34:31, 32. An upright servant desires to know his master's will; but the refractory and rebellious servant, having no mind to do it, cares not for knowing it, Job 21:14 Do ye read the Bible, or care for hearing it read, and attend to it as that from whence ye are to learn your duty? When ye do read or hear the word, do ye embrace it as the rule you are to regulate your practice by?

5. What weight has Christ's saying a thing with you, when a multitude of the world says against it? The world says there is no ill in many things, that the Bible says there is much ill in. It says, there is no harm, where the word says there is. In a word, the Bible says, the way to heaven is the way of strictness or straitness; the world says, there is no need of that strictness of life. Now, when the world's opinion carries it in your practice against Christ's decision in his word, do ye do the things which Christ says?

6. Do ye, in every part of your life and conversation, endeavour to approve yourselves to Christ as your Lord? 1 Pet. 1:15, "As he which

hath called you is holy, so are ye holy in all manner of conversation?" Do ye look on him as the party with whom ye have to do in all; not only in your religious duties, but in the common affairs of life, or worldly business? not only in your personal walk, but in the several relations wherein ye stand, as husbands, wives, children, and servants? 1 Cor. 7:24. Alas! most men shuffle out any regard to Christ's commands, out of their worldy business, and their relations, confining their religion to their religious duties of praying, &c.

7. Lastly, How do ye take any intimations of the Lord Christ's will made to you, to discover your duty or your sin in particular cases? Have they a silencing weight with your consciences, or do they but irritate your passions? Is. 11:6. So the Psalmist shewed his regard, Psal. 141:5, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." Those that cannot bear an admonition, reproof, or to be told of a fault, but presently are up in their own defence to ward off conviction, shew they have more regard to their credit, than their conscience, the authority of Christ the Lord, and any thing he says, Hos. 4:4.

DOCTRINE II. It lies on men's consciences before the Lord, to take it home to themselves, to consider and answer it, how they come to call Christ their Lord, and yet not make conscience of doing the things which he as a Lord says to them, and requires of them.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall only shew the import of the expostulation in the text, and then conclude with a word of application.

I. will shew the import of this expostulation. It imports,

1. That Christ is in earnest for our obedience. He is not indifferent what regard we shew to what he says as our Lord: Psal. 119:4, "He hath commanded us to keep his precepts diligently." He is a jealous Lord, and will not endure your baulking of any of his commands: Exod. 23:21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him." Though we are not to lay the weight of our acceptance with God on our obedience, yet there is a weight of evidence lies on it. And,

1st, The evidence of our belonging to Christ, in a saving relation, lies upon it: John 15:14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." If ye do not what he says, he will disown you as none of his, Luke 13:28, pretend what ye will. Christ sets his seal on all that belong to him, as soon as they become his; whereby they may be distinguished from the world lying in wickedness, 2 Tim. 2:19, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." If ye want that seal, he will reject you as none of his.

2dly, The evidence of your right to heaven lies on it: Rev. 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they might have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And therefore, at the great day, the works of the saints, and of the wicked, are brought out before the world in judgment; the former as evidences of their title to heaven, the latter as grounds of the sentence of damnation. If ye baulk any of the least of his commands, ye thereby baulk your evidence for heaven, and so perish: Matth. 5:19, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."

2. It is possible for us in this life to get the things that Christ says, done accptably, in all the parts thereof. If it were not so, then, by the text, no body at all would be allowed to call him Lord; which is certainly false: Matth. 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven." So there are two sorts that call him Lord; some that do, some that do not what he says; the former allowed, the other rejected. The doctrine of the imperfection of the saint's obedience, is a stone of stumbling to many a blind soul. To prevent your stumbling.

1st, Distinguish between doing the will of Christ in all its parts, and in all its degrees. The latter no man in this life can do at any rate; but in every part of his obedience he fails in some degree: James 3:2, "For in many things we offend all." But the former every true believer actually does: Psal. 119:6, he has "respect unto all God's commandments." A whole family hears so many particular pieces of work prescribed to them all by the father and master of the family. His grown children do them all exactly to his mind: the younger children, who are but learning to work, put hand to every one of them, and baulk none of the pieces; but they do none of them exactly. Refractory servants do some of them, but others of them they never notice. Just so it is with the saints in heaven, true believers on earth, and hypocrites.

Now, here lies the snare: none, say you, in this world can do all that is required of them, but they come short in many things: and so do but we. ANSWER. They come short of the degrees of every part, it is true; but if they are believers indeed, they do not come short of the parts themselves, as ye do. The whole parts of the will of God known

to them, they do, and dare not but fall in with: and this will distinguish between them and you, that baulk any part of his will made known to you, as betwixt David and Saul, Acts. 13:22. See Col. 4:12.

2dly, Distinguish between doing the will of Christ perfectly, and acceptably. No man in this life can do the former, Philip. 3:12. But every true believer does the latter, Acts 10:25. Ye that are masters know very well to make this distinction in your own work. If a child of yours, or a pliable servant, shew a real good-will to obey your orders, you accept of their work, though it is not every way as ye would have it. So does the Lord: 2 Cor. 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." But if a servant say, I cannot do it every way as he would have it done, and therefore I will let it alone altogether; how take ye that? And how will Christ take such treatment off your hand, in plain instances of duty which ye quite neglect, and of sin which ye indulge yourselves in?

Here is your share: none do the will of Christ perfectly; and I do many things, though not all. ANSWER. Ay but true believers, though they do not do it perfectly, yet they do it so as God for Christ's sake accepts of their doing it: and that ye do not, and that ye are not careful about; but can be easy, whether he accept of it or not: and since ye are not universal in your obedience, ye are not sincere, nor are accepted in any thing.

3dly, Distinguish between ability in ourselves, to do the will of Christ acceptably, and ability for it in Christ, offered to us in the gospel, and to be brought in by faith. No man, saint nor sinner, has the former: 2

Cor. 3:5, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." But all true believers do get the latter: Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." you bid a servant do such a piece of work, and he neglecting it tells you, I wanted instruments for it: How take ye that? Will ye not say, Why did ye not come in and get the instruments for it? Did not my bidding you do it, suppose I allowed wherewith to do it?

Here is your snare: We can do nothing of ourselves, say ye: and thereupon the sluggard puts his hands in his bosom; and many a poor sinner lies down in his bed of ease and sloth, laying his head on this soft pillow, and sleeps full sound till the flames of hell awaken him. But that will not excuse you from doing the will of Christ; but it will bring you under a double guilt, one of not doing what he says, another of slighting his offered grace that might have enabled you: and so ye will be condemned, not because ye could not, but because you would not do the things he said.

In the covenant of works perfect obedience only could be accepted, and there was strength for it allowed to Adam in that covenant, which he lost. In the covenant of grace sincere obedience, though imperfect, may be accepted; and there is strength allowed in this covenant for it, whereby every piece of obedience that he requires may be done, though not as it should be, yet so as it may be accepted: 2 Cor. 3:5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." Chap. 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Only this strength is lodged in Christ, and must be fetched in by believing the promises, Psal. 28:7; Jer. 17:7, 8. Now, the commands

of Christ to sinners that hear the gospel, import an allowance of sufficient grace and strength for them thus to be fetched in: 2 Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Exod. 20:2, &c., "I am the Lord thy God," &c. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The little noticing of this weakens believers in their obedience, and the total neglect of it by others ruins them.

3. Notwithstanding the things that Christ says may be got done acceptably, yet many that call him Lord will not do them: Tit. 1:16, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him," &c. He has made his yoke easy, but yet they will not let it come on their fair necks: they say, as Luke 19:14, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The devil and their lusts get leave to ride them, but they will not be led by Christ. They say, they cannot help it; but the truth is, they will not help it, for they will have none of his help for it; as the Lord complains the Israelites did, Psal. 81:11, "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me." So their ruin is lodged upon a twofold score,

1st, Obedience to sin, and disobedience to Christ, is their choice. The way of life and death are set before them, and they choose the latter: Prov. 8:36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." Ezek. 18:31, "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?" Christ calls them to a holy, serious, humble, modest, and pious life. That they cannot endure; but cost what it will, they must have a light, proud, unclean, sensual, and loose life, wherein they may think, talk,

and carry themselves at liberty from the strictness of a holy walk, and tender conscience.

2dly, They have neither heart nor use for the grace and strength that is in Christ Jesus, John 5:40; Psal. 81:11, "And therefore they can live without him, John 6:67, 68. They may have use for it, that really desire to have their lusts mortified, temptations resisted, their hearts and lives truly sanctified: but that is not their case. How then can they have a heart for it? What heart can they have for cleansing and purifying things, that love rather to be wallowing in the mire? Therefore the opened fountain of Christ's blood and Spirit is neglected. For as the Lord saith, Jer. 13:27, "I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields: woe unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?

4. Christ is highly displeased with the disobedience of those that call him Lord, who will not do what he says, Psal. 50:16–22. Men will not believe this: they think little of their neglect of what he says, and they think that he looks on it as they do. He is their Saviour; but they consider not, that he is, and will be their Judge. But to persuade you of it, consider,

1st, His infinite purity and holiness, Is. 6:3. He is the Holy One of Israel. He is of the self-same numerical essence or nature with the Father; all the attributes of God, and particularly his holiness, are in him, Exod. 23:21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him." Therefore whatever is in Scripture of the holiness of God,

belongs to him. And his willingness to receive sinners is, not to save them in their sins, but to cleanse them from them.

2dly, The dreadful strokes he has brought on such as called him Lord, for not doing the things that he says. He has in all ages of the church set up some monuments of this his displeasure. Whence came the fire that devoured Nadab and Abihu; came it not from before the Lord? Lev. 10:1, 2, and was not that the Lord Christ? Acts 7:38. Who struck Ananias and Sapphira dead for lying unto God? Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Uzzah, &c.? was it not Christ? John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.

3dly, Does he not refuse communion with such persons in holy ordinances, and thereby testify his displeasure against them? Hos. 5:15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face." What will it avail to attend, ordinances, to come to a communion table, while we continue in such a case? There can be no communion with Christ, Psal. 24:3, 4; Is. 1:15, 16. Even particular pieces of unrepented-of guilt and untenderness, may be a controversy on which he will refuse communion with those that are habitually holy: Psal. 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." What then can others expect? Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Lastly, Consider how he will treat them at the last day: Luke 19:27, "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." He is the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world; but he will be as a lion to them that will not do what he says, when he cometh in flaming fire, taking

vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. In vain will they then call him Lord, and plead their eating and drinking in his presence, Luke 13:25, 26, 27.

5. There is a great evil in calling Christ Lord, and not doing what he says; an evil that highly provokes him, as casting dishonour on him in a very special manner. There is something in it, that, so to speak, touches to the quick, beyond the dishonour done to him by others: Rev. 3:15, 16, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

1st, Their sins and looseness of life reflect a peculiar dishonour on him, as pretending a relation to him: Rom. 2:24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you." How do ye think yourselves touched and affronted with the miscarriages of your children and servants? Learn from that, how Christ takes with your sins and looseness of life. They are a blaspheming of his name and doctrine, calling him, in effect, the minister of sin, 1 Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:4, 5. It is not in the power of open enemies to reach him such a blow.

2dly, They do Satan a peculiar pleasure. If there is any of the dust that is the serpent's meat, that relishes better with him than the rest, it is the sins and miscarriages of those that call Christ Lord: that is a feast for him; he will do more for it than for other ten, Job 1:7, 8. As there is joy in heaven at a sinner's repentance, there is a joy in hell among the devil and his angels at the falls of those that call Christ

Lord. The enemy takes a peculiar pleasure and pride, in having not only his own professed servants, but others in Christ's livery following and serving him. In that, he can vie with Christ for a good master before the blind world, when he can shew them so many at his back; that sometimes gave their names to Christ.

3dly, They wound the heart of the real children of God, and make the whole family sigh more heavily, than the sins of others would do, Psal. 55:12. Where the sins of open enemies do but scratch like a pin, theirs will pierce like a sword, Cant. 1:6. It covers them with shame, fills them with sorrow and indignation, and makes them weary of their post; as it did the prophet, Jer. 9:2, "Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." What wonder then, that Christ the master of the family resent it dreadfully?

6.* Christ will disown them for his servants, that in their practice disown him for their Lord, not doing what he says. They count the duty of servants grievous to them, and therefore he will divest them of the honour and privilege of his servants. They secretly loath him and his service, however fair they carry it, calling him Lord; and he will let all the world see that his soul loaths them, Rev. 3:16. "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And this he doth two ways.

1st, Spuing them out of his mouth unto the earth; whereas before they were exalted unto heaven, in respect of hopefulness of their souls' case, and of external church-privileges. In Scripture style, the church is called heaven, professors the sons of God: the devil's

kingdom, or the world lying in wickedness, is called the earth, the children of men, Gen. 6:2; and 11:1; Rev. 12:4. The gospel is Christ's call to sinners to come out of the world lying in wickedness and be separate from them, joining themselves to the church, the family of God. Many profess to come away, and join so, and solemnly declare it by the partaking of the Lord's table: but though they so call him Lord, they do not the things that he says. And our jealous Lord being provoked with it spues them out, and in the sight of the world throws them back unto the earth they said they came from; and there they lie again amidst the world lying in wickedness.

Three things concur in this awful dispensation.

(1.) They are let fall into the mire of some gross pollution of the outward man: 2 Pet. 2:22, "It is happened unto them, according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and, The sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." Cain turns a murderer, Judas a betrayer of his master, Ananias and Sapphira liars, Demas a lover of the world, Jezebel and her children in Thyatira fall into adultery and fornication, &c. Rev. 2:20, 21, 22, 23. (2.) Their leaf of appearance in religion falls. Though they get space, they get no grace to repent and cover, Rev. 2:21; but they are from that time blasted, wither, and fade away: John 15:6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." And they turn just the hue of the rest of the world lying in wickedness; spiritual death is painted in their faces; whereof this generation affords many frightful instances: Luke 8:18, "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoerer hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he

seemeth to have." (3.) Hence they lose their new name, and get their old one back again. What credit or reputation they had for religion and seriousness, is blown up. Their name stinks in that case among the serious godly, and they look upon them as none of theirs, Is. 65:15, "And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name." This is an awful case, Zech. 11:8. "Three shepherds also I cut off in one month, and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me."

2dly, Spueing them out of his mouth into the pit, at the last day: Luke 13:27, 28. "He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." In vain will they then cry, "Lord, Lord open to us: Matth. 25:11, 12, "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." In vain will they plead their eating and drinking in his presence. They called him Lord; but they walked with the workers of iniquity, and they will be led forth with them: Psal. 125:5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity" They will see that he will count it inconsistent with his honour to own them: Mark 8:38, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this audulterous 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." They got their names enrolled in the visible church, among his servants; but he will blot them out publicly: Exod. 32:33, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." Compared with Rev. 3:5, "He that

overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot ont his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

7. Men are ruined in this way, because they do not consider it. It is want of consideration that leaves them at ease, calling Christ Lord, and yet not doing what he says: Is. 44:20, "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" They are out of their place, like a wandering bird, Prov. 27:8; and they are easy in it, because they are out of themselves, out of their wits, like the prodigal, Luke 15:17. They consider not this matter.

1st, They call Christ Lord, and so bribe and soothe their blind and sleepy consciences. If they should give up with all pretensions to Christ and religion, they could have no peace with their consciences: therefore they will attend ordinances; hear the word, though they will not do it; pray in secret or in their families, though perhaps out of the same mouth come forth blessing and cursing; they will partake of the Lord's table, though they will not give up with the table of devils. These things flatter their consciences to be easy; as was the case with Micah, Judg. 17:13, "Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest."

2dly, They do not the things that he says however, and so satisfy their unmortifled lusts. Thus they please both parties within them. Their saying fair pleases their conscience; and their not doing what Christ says, pleases their lusts. They have no more ado with Christ, but to be called by his name. For the rest, they will "eat their own bread, and wear their own apparel," and will not make their religion

burdensome to their lusts by mortification and tender walking; and so they are easy on that side.

But there are three things they do not consider.

(1.) What inconsistency is in this course: 2 Cor. 6:14, 15, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" It is made up of contradictions. Their profession condemns their practice as abominable; and their practice condemns their profession as horrid juggling and dissembling with God. Ye pray for pardon of sin as a crime, and yet return to it with delight: that God would make you holy; and yet ye will not part with your lusts, but have a horror of being bound up to a holy walk: that God would at length receive you into heaven; and yet if you were there even now in the temper ye are in, you would flee out of it as from a hell, because ye have not relish of either person or thing that is there, and for nothing but what is not there.

(2.) How heinously the Lord Christ takes it, that men should yoke Satan's service with his, 2 Cor. 6:15, forecited. He looks on it as highly dishonourable to him, and after a sort more than if they should profess themselves none of his, Rev. 3:16, forecited. That is an awful word of great indignation, Ezek. 20:39; "As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols." It bears, that their duties are but a polluting of his name. Your praying, hearing, and communicating will not cleanse the abomination of a

loose life: but looseness of conversation will defile all these, Hag. 2:12–14.

(3.) What the end of such a course will be, what it will issue in at length: Deut. 32:29, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" It cannot miss of a fearful issue: Is. 50:11, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." Psal. 125:5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." See it in the parable of the foolish builder, the foolish virgins, the tares among the wheat, the man at the marriage-supper without the wedding-garment, &c. It is pity men should not consider timely.

8. Lastly, People ought to consider it, see what account they can make of it, and how they will answer it. And,

1st, How they will answer it to their own consciences. Conscience may be asleep now, but it will certainly awaken: and the longer it be in awakening, it will be the more severe when it is roused, as in the case of Belshazzar and Felix. Ye cannot shun a reckoning with your conscience. As silent as it is, ye will find it has marked your ways in its book: Prov. 20:27, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." And if conscience condemn you as hypocritical pretenders to Christ, what will come of you? 1 John 3:20, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." And if ye die with an ill conscience, it will be a gnawing worm for ever.

2dly, How they will answer it to the Lord Christ in the judgment. There will be a day of judgment, wherein the tribunal will be set, the books opened, and men's whole lives will be called over: Eccl. 12:14, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And every one will be judged according to his works: 2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" Then men's calling Christ Lord, will be tried by their doing or not doing the things that he says. And what will men then say to the question in the text, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" and to that question, "How camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?"

II. I come now to a word of Application.

First, Let me examine into this matter, and ask and put it to every one's conscience before the Lord, Why call ye Christ Lord, and do not the things that he says? You are rational creatures; ye will not allow that you are fools, that have no reason for what you do, or not do. Therefore "produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob, Is. 41:21. What is your plea? Is it,

1. We are saved by faith, and not by good works? ANSWER. I have answered that already, that though the weight of our acceptance with God, lies not on good works, yet the weight of our evidence does. I add, that though we are not saved by, yet we are saved to, good works and obedience: Eph. 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that

we should walk in them, 1 Pet. 1:2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," &c. So if you are not brought to do what Christ says, you are not saved. But perhaps you will insist, and say, O but we will be saved after death. ANSWER. If ye be not saved while ye are in life, ye will never be saved after death. The notion of salvation begun after death, is unknown to the Bible: Eph. 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God," 2 Tim. 1:9, "Who have saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," Tit. 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

2. We have no strength in ourselves. ANSWER. That also I have answered at large. If the law came to you with its commands without the gospel, there would be something in this, though not so much but the law would overthrow it; as in the case of pagans, Rom. 2:12, "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law." But since the gospel comes with the law, telling you there is ability for it in Christ, which you may have by faith; your plea is rejected, and you are condemned, not only for not doing what Christ says, but for refusing strength to do it with.

3. We do several things, and there is no body but has failings. ANSWER. Ye may do many things, as Herod, Mark 6:20: but if ye set not yourselves to do all the parts of Christ's will known to you,

without reserve, ye do nothing: James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Sound believers fail of degrees, but not of the parts: Psal. 119:6, David said "I have respect unto all thy commandments," Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse; a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will"

4. God is merciful, and Christ is our gracious Saviour; we trust he will not be severe on us for our sins. ANSWER. That is a trust in God and Christ, not upon his word, but over the belly of his word; so that either it must fail and disappoint you, or God's truth must fail: Heb. 12:14, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Psal. 125:5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity," "But his confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors," Job 18:14. Is that the use ye have for the mercy of God? Psal. 130:4. and for the grace of Christ? See the character of such, Jude 4, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into laciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. What needs all that strictness of life in our case: we are neither ministers nor elders, to have any character of that sort to support? ANSWER. It is evident, that many take a liberty in sinful practices from this; practices which they would condemn in them, though they allow them in themselves. Ministers and elders un-tender and loose in their life and practice, shall bear their judgment, as betrayers of the cause of religion to an ungodly world. But it will be no comfort to you to go to hell with unholy ministers and elders. And therefore ye

must either take the strait way with godly and tender ministers and elders to heaven; or else, in the first place, find out in your Bible, where the strait way to heaven is only for ministers and elders, but there is a wide way to it for others. Ye must seek another Bible for it; for this mentions but one strait way to heaven, for you and them both: Matt. 7:13. 14. "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But if ye belong to Christ, ye bear a character as venerable as that of a minister: ye are priests, 1. Pet. 2:9. Rev. 1:6. Heb. 12:23. If ye say, Ye are not so much as professors: ANSWER. Are ye Christians or not? If ye be, set yourselves to answer that profession, and no more is required of you; or else why do ye profess so much?

6. Lastly, But we hope to repent, reform, and find mercy, ere we die. ANSWER. When? The young when they grow old, and the old when they come to a death-bed. And who has secured you that ye shall see another day? Not God, I am sure: Heb. 3:7. "The Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice." And if ye should be old, and get a death-bed to lie in a while, how know ye that ye will get grace to repent? Truly it is not God's ordinary way: Job. 20:11. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust."

Secondly, Let me expostulate this matter with you, how ye come to call Christ Lord, and do not the things that he says.

1. Do ye think that religion is just a matter of form and fair shew, to say prayers, and come to the kirk on the sabbath, &c. not carrying it

through the whole of your walk? If ye do, ye will shew yourselves void of it, 2. Tim. 3:5. Gal. 6:12. Is. 58:5, 6, 7.

2. Do ye not mock the Lord Christ by this, and, like Judas, betray him with a kiss, Matt. 26:49. But "be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," Gal. 6:7.

3. Have ye no regard to the honour of Christ? If he is your Lord and ye expect salvation by him, what hearts have ye that cannot be moved thereby, to live to his praise, and be useful for him in the world? They who have no use for holy walking, after salvation is secured by Christ, are surely far from salvation.

4. Is not the cause of Christ and religion much the worse of you? Rom. 2:24. "For the name of God is blasphemed through you." Do ye call him Lord, that ye may have the more access to affront and dishonour him? Do ye join yourselves to the church and kingdom of Christ, that ye may by such compliance advance the interests of Satan's kingdom?

5. Has Christ's character as a Lord no weight on your consciences? Do ye think it is a mere empty title? you will find it otherwise: Mal. 1:6. "If I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts." Luke 19:27. "But those mine enemies which would that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

6. Lastly, How will we answer it at the great day? If ye think it is long to that, it will be longer after, that it will sit in your con sciences and gnaw, that you called him Lord, and did not the things that he said:

and it may he a very short while, that it might be in your power to get things put in better case for that day.

I shall conclude with a few advices.

1. Examine yourselves, and search out your sins sincerely, as in the sight of God: Hag. 1:7. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Look into the several parts and periods of your life, and see how they have been led. Look into your public and private walk; into your relations, how ye have carried as a husband, wife, &c.; into both tables of the law, how ye have behaved towards God, and towards man; into your sins of omission and comission, your secret sins that are hid from the eyes of the world, the sin that is your particular bias. Look into your heart-sins: and trace up all to the sin of your nature.

2. Seeing yourself a sinful, ruined creature, solemnly take hold of the covenant of grace, personally entering into it by embracing Christ offered to you in the gospel, trusting in him as your Saviour, for his whole salvation from sin, and from wrath, on the ground of God's faithfulness in the promise; thus going to Christ for your sanctification, as well as justification; to purge you from the filth as well as the guilt of sin, 1 Cor. 1:30, receiving and eying him in all his offices.

3. Lastly, Lay down an honest purpose and resolution, in the faith of the grace and strength in Christ Jesus, offered and exhibited to you in the gospel, and provided in the covenant, to comply henceforth with the whole will of Christ declared to you in his word, without exception or reserve; to subject your souls wholly to the authority of his word, to comply with every duty therein made known to you, and

to fight against every sin there discovered to you. So shall you call him Lord, and he call you his servants, Acts 11:23; Psal. 119:112.

THE INSEPARABLE CONNECTION BETWEEN A SINNER'S HAVING PART WITH CHRIST, AND BEING WASHED BY HIM: OR, THE MYSTERY OF SANCTIFICATION BY CHRIST, OPENED UP

Several sermons, preached at Ettrick, in the year 1728.

N. B. The first Sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, August 18, 1728; and the others on some subsequent Lord's days.

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. - JOHN 13:8.

THESE words are Christ's answer to Peter refusing to let Christ wash his feet. No doubt it was a kind of modesty, reverence, and humility, that put Peter on this peremptory refusal of Christ's astonishing kind offer. But all is not gold that glitters. There is much of this bastard humility in the world, whereby people refuse Christ's offers, and put them away from them, with a very good grace, and great respect to the Lord Christ, as they think. Christ comes to sinners in the gospel, and offers to wash them from their pollution: But will they offer a foul defiled soul to God Almighty, the infinitely holy Saviour, to be washed by him? No; they think they know more of their own

sinfulness and unworthiness, and of Christ's greatness and holiness, than that comes to. And so they affront him, under a pretence of honouring him.

There are three characters of this false humility.

1. It condemns the generation of the righteous, who came all to Christ, at his command, to be washed by him, receiving it with admiration of his condescension. The other disciples, no doubt, were struck with amazement at Christ's coming to wash their feet: but true humility took Christ's will for law and right, and makes them silently yield themselves to the Lord. But Peter's behaviour condemns them, as rude and disrespectful, vers. 5, 6, "After that, he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

2. It keeps Christ at a distance, and so proceeds not from faith, but unbelief, ver. 6. No doubt, when Christ stretched out his hand to wash Peter's feet, he drew them in quickly to him; and shewed by his deeds, as well as his words, that he had no mind that Christ's fair hand should come on them. So folk, under a sense of sinfulness, may flee from Christ, while he follows them.

3. It argues a heart not duly humbled; and so it is but accursed pride under the vail of a shew of humility. (1.) Carnal wisdom and reason has the ascendant, and will not bow to divine revelation: vers. 7, 8, "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou I knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Let the gospel of God's grace be delivered

never so plain, they will not give over measuring divine mysteries by their carnal reason. (2.) Insensibleness and self-conceit prevails. Peter doubtless thought either that his feet needed no washing, but that they might be borne with even in Christ's presence, as they were; or, if they did, he would wash them himself. So he is peremptory in his refusal. And this lies at bottom in that false humility: either they think they are not so very polluted, but that they may be borne with; or else, that they will wash themselves clean before they come to Christ.

In the text our Lord gives Peter a word that brings him down in a moment from all his heights, and makes him not only content, but earnest to be washed all over by Christ, without pretending to wipe off one spot off himself by himself: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Ver. 9, Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This word strikes Peter to the heart, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Q. d. Peter, no washing by me, no part with me to salvation. Washing by me, and part with me, you nor no man shall ever be able to separate in your cases. Have the one, have the other; want the one, and upon heaven's truth you want the other."

I think it is an insipid question here, why so severe a threatening for refusing so small a thing? For Christ says not, if I wash not thy feet, thou shalt have no part with me; but simply, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," in the present time. Neither could it be drawn to the washing of the feet, if the questionists did not first suppose a change of the tense the Holy Ghost useth, which is not at least without necessity to be admitted. (Gr.) If I washed thee not, or, if I have not washed thee, thou hast no part with me. Q. d. Peter, if you

belong to me, I have done more for you, than to wash your feet with water; I have washed you with my blood: if you have taken that vastly costlier washing off my hand, why refuse you this? If I have not so washed you, you have no part with me; for none have part with me, but those whom I so wash."

The words then bear an inseparable connection betwixt two things in the case of sinners, standing and falling together. (1.) The washing of them by Christ, to wit, from their sins, Rev. 1:5. (2.) Their having part with him, partaking of his saving benefits, being joint heirs of heaven with him. Compare Deut. 14:27, "And the Levite that is within thy gates, thou shalt not forsake him: for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee." The Scripture knows no part sinners can have of salvation or of heaven, but with Christ: Acts 4:12, "Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." They that miss their part with Christ, there is but another side where their part will fall: Rev. 21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Now, if a sinner either be not washed at all, or be washed only with the nitre and soap of his own faithless endeavours and reformation; if he be not washed by Christ; he has no part with him, he is none of his; he is in a state of death and destruction lying ready to be cast out as an abominable thing, into the unclean place, the stinking lake.

The relation betwixt these two, is, the former is a necessary consequent of the latter; and therefore is held forth as a necessary evidence of it. All that have saving part with Christ are washed by

him: therefore, if Christ hath not washed thee, thou hast no saving part with him.

The doctrine deducible from the words is as follows.

DOCTRINE A sinner's having any saving part with Christ, and his being washed by Christ, from his sin, are simply and absolutely inseparable.

In discoursing from this doctrine shortly at the time, I shall,

I. Consider a sinner's having part with Christ.

II. His being washed by Christ.

III. The inseparableness of the two.

IV. Improve the doctrine.

I. The first thing to be spoken to, is, A sinner's having part with Christ. And this we take in two things.

1. His being of Christ's mystical body, through union with him: 1 Cor. 12:12, 13, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." There are but two general corporations of mankind on earth, heaven, and hell: the corporation of the first and fallen Adam, who has diffused all manner of pollution and defilement over those that are his, not to be washed off by human art; and of this society we are all by nature members: the

corporation of the Second Adam, Christ, who cleanses and purifies all that are his, from that pollution and defilement; for the latter is raised out of the former. See the two, 1 John 5:19, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." 2 Cor. 6:17, Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Now, if ye are not washed by Christ, ye belong not to the Second Adam's corporation; ye belong not to Christ.

2. The sinner's having communion with Christ in his saving benefits, partaking of them in fellowship with him: 1 John 1:3, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ." All salvation is in Christ; so that they who have part with him, are complete in him, Col. 2:9, 10. And salvation is in him exclusively to all other, Acts 4:12. Now, if ye are not washed by Christ, ye have no communion with him in his saving benefits, no part in his salvation, and so none in salvation at all. Christ has a righteousness fully answering the law's demands; it is so broad a white raiment, that it covers all his people, partaking with him in it, Rom. 3:22. But if he wash you not, ye have no part in it. He has taken out a new right to God, as his God, and all his people partake with him in it: Rom. 8:17, "And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." John 20:17, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." But if Christ wash you not ye have no part, he is not your God.

II. The next thing to be spoken to, is, The sinner's being washed by Christ. This is inseparable from his having part with Christ, and is

the privilege of all, and only those who have part with him. Concerning this washing I offer these particulars.

1. There is a filthiness in sin, whereby the soul is polluted and defiled before the Lord. This is supposed in the washing from it: Ezek. 36:25, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Sin does not only make the sinner guilty, but filthy and abominable. It is the abominable thing that God hates, Jer. 44:4. filth itself, Is. 4:4. This filthiness of sin lies in its contrariety to the holiness of God expressed in his law. Holiness is the glory of God, and the beauty of the soul, Exod. 15:11; sin the deformity and filthiness of it. Hence,

1st, It makes the sinner loathsome before God, that he cannot look on him, but with abhorrence; and with such abhorrence as one looks upon a thing he has a natural antipathy at, Zech. 11:8, "My soul loathed them." Hab. 1:13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Psal. 5:4, "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee."

2dly, It fills the soul with shame before God. I mean not that holy shame that proceeds from a joint view of sin's loathsomeness, and God's pardoning grace in Christ; that is a fruit of the Spirit, Ezek. 16:60, 61, "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed." But I mean a natural shame, whereby the sinner, obliged to fix his eyes on God's holiness, and seeing his own unlikeness to him, his countenance falls, he is damped, and filled with dread and horror, and therefore labours to make away out of his presence; as Adam did, Gen. 3:10, "I

heard thy voice," said he to the Lord, "in the garden: and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Now, unwashed sinners are filthy all over.

(1.) Their nature is filthy, Psal. 14:3, "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doth good, no not one." Sin has spread its defilement over all the faculties of their souls, and over all the members of their bodies: Tit. 1:15, "Unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Their very bodies, however perfumed and adorned, are filthy before God with spiritual filth cleaving to them, Heb. 10:22.

(2.) Their life and conversation is filthy, 2 Pet. 2:7. Their daily walk is a heaping new filth upon their already filthy souls. Their habitual filthiness produces still actual filthiness, as the poisoned spring sends forth poisonous streams, Psal. 14:1.

2. Christ has them all to wash who get part in him. Hence the redeemed church sings praises to him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, Rev. 1:5. They come to him in their pollution, and are washed by him; they come to him defiled all over, in the defilement of their nature, and of their life, that they may be washed; and coming to him by faith, it is done, Ezek. 16:8, 9; Rom. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:17. How can it be otherwise? for they cannot wash themselves before they come. Is it possible for people to wash, before they come to the waters? or to bathe before they come into the laver?

3. All those who take part with him by faith, he washes with his blood from their sin, Heb. 12:24; Rev. 1:5. He offered himself a sacrifice to God for sin, and the blood of the slain sacrifice is sprinkled on the

sinners in him, for their cleansing: 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The stain of sin was so deep, that nothing else could wash it out: and had he not provided the laver of his own blood, Abraham, Paul, and all the saints now in glory, since they were once filthy, would have been filthy still, with Cain, Judas, and other filthy vessels of wrath.

There are two things in his blood, that make it to wash out this stain, as deep as it is.

1st, An infinite value and dignity; for it is the blood of an infinite person, the blood of God, Acts 20:28, the Son of God, 1 John 1:7, the Father's equal, the Most High.

2dly, An infinite efficacy, power, and energy; for the Spirit is in it, the infinite Spirit of holiness, John 6:53. with 63. The blood was given for atonement, because the life of the flesh, or the animal spirits, are in the blood, Lev. 17:11. And therefore it was to be sprinkled while it was yet warm with the spirits in it. Now, Christ's blood is always warm and fresh, with the spirits of life and holiness in it, Heb. 10:20; Rev. 3:1.

4. There is a twofold washing by the blood of Christ; one that makes clean in the eye of the law, leaving not the least mark of a spot on the soul; peculiar to the saints in heaven, Heb. 12:23. Another, making clean in the eye of the gospel, though not absolutely: John 15:3, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Cant. 4:7, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." It is this last our text means only. Only observe, that they are not different kinds, but different degrees of the same washing by Christ's blood. It is the same laver of Christ's blood, that we are washed in before death to fit

us for communion with God here, and that same laver that we are washed in at death, to fit us for communion with God in heaven. Only that efficacy of Christ's blood now exerted on us in part, is put forth on us in full measure to the utter abolition of sin, Eph. 5:25, 26, 27; Rev. 7:14, 15.

5. As washing is properly the purging away of filthiness, spots, and stains from the object washed; so the washing from sin is formally and directly the sanctification of the sinner, Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5. So if Christ sanctify us not, we have no part in him. How beit, it supposes or implies more than that wherein it formally consists.

In all washing there are two things to be distinguished: the loosing of the filth sticking to the object; for if it do not stick, it cannot defile: and the removing of it being once loosed, which is the washing properly. Accordingly in washing a soul from sin, there are two things.

1st, The loosing of the filth of sin sticking to the soul. Sin sticks to our souls, as pitch or tar to a man's fingers: and there is no removing of it, till once it be loosed by an application of Christ's blood. Now, it is by guilt that it sticks to our soul, 1 Cor. 15:56. And that is done away in our justification; which must needs go before our sanctification, as the loosing of sticking filth, before the washing it away; as the Holy Ghost teacheth, Rom. 7:6, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Hence the apostle saith of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

2dly, The removing and purging away the filth of sin, being once loosed: and the same blood that looses it, purgeth it away in sanctification, as the same water that looseth the filth, carries it away off the cloth; and so the pardoned sinner is made holy: Heb. 9:14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Rev. 7:14, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And this purging away of the filth of sin off the sinner, lies in three things.

(1.) The putting away of his former loathsomeness before God. The blood of Christ having come over the soul, it is now washed, and God can look on it with complacency, Rev. 1:5, 6. He calls her beloved, that was not beloved.

(2.) Making of the soul fair and clean before the Lord: Cant. 4:7, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." The Spirit in the blood leaves his own image on the soul, and carries it all over the man, 2 Cor. 3:18; Tit. 1:14. Life, eternal life, is in that blood, and wherever it comes; and it goes over the whole man, seeds of life are left in the soul that shall never die out. The Spirit in the blood takes of the fulness of grace in Christ, and communicates to them grace for grace, John 1:16, so transforming them into his image.

(3.) Removing the legal shame out of the soul before God, and causing it, with child-like kindly blushes, to come before him, and press near him, crying, Abba, Father, with the boldness of faith in greater or lesser measure: Rom. 8:15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of

adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Ezra 9:6, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens."

6. Faith is the instrumental cause of this washing. Hence the apostle, Acts 15:9, speaks of "purifying the heart by faith." It lays hold upon, and applies the blood of Christ: Rom. 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins."

7. Lastly, Afflictions are the occasional causes of this washing: Is. 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

III. The next thing to be considered, is the inseparableness of the two. They are so,

1. In respect of their subject, which is necessarily one. He that has the one, has the other; and no man can have either of them singly. If thou hast part in Christ, thou art washed by him; if thou art washed by him, thou hast part with him.

2. In respect of time. That moment one gets part with Christ, he washes him from his sins. In order of nature indeed, part with Christ goes before washing, and justification before sanctification. But in respect of time they come together and at once. That they are so inseparable, appears,

1st, From the end and design of Christ's death, which cannot be frustrated. He died for that end, that sinners taking part with him by

faith, might be washed by him from their sins, Eph. 5:25, &c.; Tit. 2:14.

2dly, From the nature of the thing. There is a lively efficacy in Christ's blood to wash away sin: so that the soul come to Christ, and having part in him, must needs be washed; or that precious blood must be counted as dead water, that has lost its virtue, Heb. 10:20. Can a foul garment be laid in a pure running stream, and the washing of it not be begun the moment that it is laid in? And can an unholy soul be united by faith to Christ, and the washing of it not begun that moment by virtue from his blood?

USE I. Of trial. Ye may hereby know whether ye have any part with Christ or not, and consequently whether ye have a right to the Lord's table or not? Are ye washed by Christ from your sin, or not? If ye are unsanctified, unholy souls, yet living in the filth of your sins, I declare ye have no part with Christ; since where there is no true holiness, there is no true faith.

QUESTION. How may I know that I am washed by Christ?

MARK 1. If ye are washed by Christ, though ye are not washed perfectly, ye are washed universally: washed in every part, though not perfectly clean in any part: 2. Cor. 5:17. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are past away, behold all things are become new." Ye are washed from the gross pollutions of the outward man, from the reigning pollutions of the inner man: Psal. 24:3. 4, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." There is a new set in you for purity, darting to all the points of the

Christian compass, though you fall short of degrees in every point. That compass ye find, 1 John 3:3. "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

2. Ye lay the stress of your acceptance with God, not upon your inherent cleanness, the effect of your washing; but on the blood of Christ, the cause of it: Philip. 3:3. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Close hypocrites never fail to split on this rock. That, Matth. 5:3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," is set first, for it must be carried through all;" and ver. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

3. Your hearts are loosed from sin, though it cleaves to you. It lies not like mud in a pool, where there is nothing to wear it out; but like mud in a spring, where the spring-water tends to work it out. So ye will be groaning under the remains of your uncleanness, saying, with the Apostle, Rom. 7:24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You will be content to see every spot, Psal. 139:23, 24, that it may be washed off; and really desirous to be made perfectly clean; as was the Apostle, Philip. 3:13, 14, "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 which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

USE 2. Of instruction and direction to unwashed souls yet lying in their blood. Sinners, will ye be made clean?

For MOTIVE: To be left lying in the filth of sin, is formally one half of the punishment of the damned, and virtually the whole of it. See the

form of Christ's giving up with a sinner, and dropping him for ever, Rev. 22:11. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." There is the punishment of loss. And in that filth will be bred and fed the worm that never dies; out of it will arise the fire that is never quenched. And that is the punishment of sense.

Now, the DIRECTION is, If ye would be washed by Christ, get part with Christ. Say not, Will ever I get part with Christ being so unclean, not purified and meet for him? But no uncleanness of yours can hinder your getting part with Christ, if you will but take it. See the case of the Corinthians, 1. Cor. 6:11. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And ye shall rot and pine away in your filth, wash otherwise as well as ye will, if ye will not take it: Psal. 81:11, 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' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."

QUESTION. What access have I to get part with Christ? ANSWER. Christ and his salvation are a common good 1. John 4:14. "We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Jude ver. 3. this salvation is called "the common salvation." I proclaim to every one to come and take their part with Christ, assuring them of welcome: Rev. 22:17. "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."

QUESTION. How may I be possessed of part with Christ? ANSWER. By faith, crediting the promise of the gospel, and accordingly trusting on Christ as your Saviour, for his whole salvation; for salvation from sin as well as from wrath; for that holiness and purity of heart and life, which are absolutely necessary to make you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, as well as for that righteousness by which you can only be accepted in the sight of God, and by which alone you can have a sure and indefeasible title to heaven and glory.

Lastly, Let the saints consider, that the more part they have with Christ, the more they will be washed; and that faith is the only way to have part with Christ in all his saying benefits, and that it is a mean, of God's appointment, for washing and purification. Hence be exercising faith daily upon Christ, and particularly in the view of going to a communion table, in order to your being washed and sanctified; remembering, that unless Christ wash you, you can have no part with him.

THE MYSTERY OF SANCTIFICATION BY CHRIST

Several sermons preached, at Ettrick, August 25, 1728, and subsequent Lord's days.

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. - JOHN 13:8

I ENTERED on these words last Lord's day, on occasion of the sacramental solemnity which was then celebrated among us; observed a doctrine, proposed a method, which was briefly prosecuted, and I made some practical improvement of the subject. But as this text opens a large field of discourse, and contains ample matter for directing faith and practice, I shall now endeavour to prosecute the design of the words more fully, in a series of discourses. For this end I observe the following doctrine, viz.

DOCTRINE. Such an inseparable connection there is between a sinner's having part with Christ, and being washed from his sins by Christ in a work of sanctification, that if a sinner is not washed from his sins by Christ, he has no part with Christ, while he is so.

Briefly, If a sinner is not washed from his sins by Christ, he has no part with Christ.

In handling this important subject, I shall consider,

I. What it is to be washed from our sins by Christ, viz. unto a cleanness in the eye of the gospel.

II. The unwashed or unsanctified sinner's having no part with Christ.

III. Conclude with some practical inferences.

I. I shall consider what it is to be washed from our sins by Christ, viz. unto a cleanness in the eye of the gospel. And upon this head, I shall shew,

1. What this washing supposeth.

2. Wherein it consists.

3. How it is done and brought about.

First, I shall shew what our being washed from our sins by Christ supposeth.

1. It supposeth in the sinner, a conviction of the filthiness of sin, and his loathsomeness by it. Hence the church says, Is. 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." They that never saw the vileness and abominable nature of sin, are not washed from it; Prov. 30:12, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." The man cries not only, with the criminal, Guilty, guilty; but, with the leper, Unclean, unclean. Sin is not only frightful, but hateful and loathsome to him, as the vilest filth. Now, if ye have not been convinced of the filthiness of sin, ye have no part with Christ.

1st, This conviction is got by looking into the glass of the law, representing the spotless holiness of God: Rom. 7:12, 13, 14, "The law

is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." The glaring beauty of God's holiness expressed in the law, striking the sinner, he sees himself filthy and loathsome before the holy God, as most unlike him.

2dly, It fixes an impression of shame on the sinner. He is ashamed of himself, of what he is, what he has done, and what he has neglected to do; as the publican did, Luke 18:13. who "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." He is like a child, that having got a clean white frock on him, has fallen into the mire, and stands ashamed before his mother in that pickle.

2. It supposes a willingness to be made clean: Psal. 19:12, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." It is not easy to bring a sinner that length: Jer. 13:27, "Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?" Sin is so woven into our nature, and so strengthened by custom in sin, which is a second nature, that it is harder to make a sinner willing to be made clean, than to bring a swine away from the mire and dirt it loves to nestle and wallow in. But in the day of the washing of a sinner, he is made as willing to be washed as ever child ashamed of his nastying himself is. So if ye have not been made willing to be clean, ye have no part with Christ.

3. It supposes a conviction that we cannot wash ourselves clean, by any thing we can do or suffer: Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What mars the washing by Christ with many, is, that they think they can wash themselves clean enough by themselves. They see not how fast the filth of sin sticks to them, and so they think their praying, confessing, reforming, and tears, will do it. But hear what Job says, chap. 9:30, 31, "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hand never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." This every soul that is sanctified is brought to. Therefore if ye have not been convinced, that ye cannot wash yourselves clean, by any thing ye can do, ye have no part with Christ.

4. It supposes a hearty consent of the soul to be washed by Christ. Christ washes none against their will: Jer. 13:27, "Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?" They that will needs lie still in their filthiness, shall lie and rot in it for ever for him: Rev. 22:11, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." Hos. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Christ makes all his elect willing to be holy, but he forces holiness on none. Therefore if ye have not given a hearty consent of your soul to be washed, ye have no part with Christ.

5. Lastly, It supposes a presenting of our defiled souls to Christ to be washed by him. This is the work of faith, by which the soul comes to the waters: Is. 55:1, "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." The soul comes to Christ, as the leper to the priest to be cleansed: Psal. 51:7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be

whiter than snow." Compared with Lev. 14:6, "As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar-wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them, and the living bird, in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water." It eyes him as a Saviour from the filth, as well as the guilt of sin; as a sanctifier of the unclean, as well as a justifier of the ungodly. Therefore, if ye have not presented your defiled souls to Christ, to be washed by him, ye have no part with Christ.

Secondly, I shall shew wherein our being washed from our sins by Christ consists. As washing in the general consists in removing filthiness, and making clean; so does the washing of a soul by Christ, lie in removing the filth of sin from off the sinner, and making him clean in likeness to God. Now,

1. Christ washeth sinners in the inner man: Psal. 45:13, "The King's daughter is all glorious within." Pharisaical washings reach the outer man only: but Christ's washing goes to the hidden man of the heart. Adam left us in the mire of sin, with a nature corrupt and filthy, the very reverse of the nature of God; all the faculties of our souls defiled, Tit. 1:15. But Christ washes our nature and faculties. And this lies in two things.

1st, Removing and washing off that filth of sin, that either clave to them from our birth, or has been added to them since: Tit. 3:5. "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We came into the world with such corruption cleaving to our nature and faculties, as not only disabled us for all good, but made us prone to all evil, and averse to all good. This is

strengthened and increased during the time one lives unregenerate. And the corruption of nature spreads itself, and takes many roots in the soul, in diverse particular lusts, Rom. 6:12. Now, Christ washing this filth off the soul,

(1.) Purgeth our whole nature and faculties, from that corruption, so far that it does not reign there: Rom. 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The total blindness as to the receiving of the things of God, is purged out of the mind; that reiguing aversion to good, out of the will; and the reigning carnality, out of the affections. The natural corrupt bent of the heart is taken away, removed, and broken; the stony heart is taken away, and a heart of flesh is given, Ezek. 36:26.

(2.) He purgeth the soul from its old lusts, loosing them at the root: Gal. 5:24, "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." As in the deluge of waters coming over the earth, trees deeply rooted were washed away by the roots, and lay floating here and there, and so might give some disturbance to the ark: so Christ's efficacious blood coming over the soul, looses old lusts by the roots, though they are not quite taken away, but give disturbance to the believer. They are in him as a broken tooth, they hang at him as a leg out of joint.

2dly, It lies in introducing the beauty of habitual holiness into our souls, in conforming us to the image of Christ: Tit. 3:5, forecited. 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." As the vessel of brass or silver, being overlaid with nastiness, has nothing of its primitive lustre; yet

when it is washed and scoured, it recovers some-what of its former brightness: so the unwashed sinner has lost all his primitive spiritual glory: but Christ washing him in the day of grace, he recovers it somewhat; and the washing being perfected in glory, he will be brighter and more glorious than ever. Now, Christ introducing this into our soul,

(1.) Implants in us a new nature, which goes over all the faculties of the soul. It is a divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4, as coming from God, and making the soul like God, John 3:6, "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Hence the man is a new creature; all his faculties are renewed, mind, will, and conscience: 2 Cor. 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away, behold, all things are become new." This nature has a bent and propensity to good, and an aversion to evil, and cannot lose it as long as it is in being: and it will be ever, for it is an immortal nature. Hence the combat, Gal. 5:17, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

(2.) This new nature hath in it the seeds of all saving graces: 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Compared with Deut. 30:6, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." We have a swatch of them, Gal. 5:22, 23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And they are taken out of that fulness of grace that is in Christ the head, and communicated to the sinner as a member: John

1:16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." And thus they bear the image of Christ, that as he was meek, lowly, &c. so are they in a measure. And hereby they are enabled for all acts of holy obedience, as a principle of life gives power for motion.

This is the washing of the sinner in the inner man: and if ye are not so washed by Christ, ye have no part with him.

2. Christ washeth sinners in the outward man too: Psal. 45:13. "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." These two go together, the latter issuing from the former: Psal. 24:3. 4. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." James 4:8. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." As the candle within shines through the lantern, so grace in the heart appears in the outward conversation: Matth. 6:22. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." As the corruption of nature reigning, vents itself in abominable works, Psal. 14:1; so the cleansing and purifying of our nature, vents itself in good works, Tit. 2:14. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." "For as the tree is, so will the fruit be."

Now, Christ washing sinners in the outward man.

1st, Removes the filth that before clave to their life and conversation, Eph. 4:22. It is no more a vile conversation, nay, nor a vain conversation, 1 Peter 1:18; not a disorderly, but a well-ordered conversation, Psal. 50:23. They that go back to their former

conversation, whether in vanity or vileness, shew themselves but Satan's washed swine, not Christ's washed saints, 2. Pet 2:22. It reaches,

(1.) Their words, and purifies them from corrupt communication. If the heart be circumcised, so will the lips be too: James 1:26. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." If grace rule in the heart, the tongue will not be allowed to go at random. The liberty that some take with their tongues in obscenity, lying, swearing, mocking and jesting at serious religion, &c. proclaims them to be unwashed by Christ. See Psal. 15.

(2.) It reaches the course of their actions, and purifies it: Heb. 9:14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" It purifies their course from impiety against God, and injustice against man; teaching them to walk, as Tit. 2:12. "Soberly, righteously, and godly." Their hands are washed, as well as their hearts: and their feet are washed, that they go not in the way of sinners as before.

2dly, He beautifies them in their life and conversation: Cant. 7:1. "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter? the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a running workman." Compared with Eph. 6:15. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." He makes them "shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation;" and helps them to a conversation becoming the gospel. And this also reaches,

(1.) Their words. Their tongue is made their glory whereby they glorify God. Instead of corrupt communication, they produce something for the use of edifying. Being translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, they learn the language of it.

(2.) The course of their works. They not only cease to do evil but learn to do well, Is. 1:16. 17. They become "zealous of good works," Tit. 2:14. As it is but half washing that takes away only the gross filth, but makes not clean: so it is but half Christianity, where people satisfy themselves with not doing evil, but set not themselves to do good.

Thirdly, I shall shew how our being washed from our sins by Christ is done and brought about. Christ washeth sinners, making use of several things to that blessed purpose.

First, Christ washeth sinners, using some things more immediately for that purpose towards them. And,

First, Christ washeth sinners with his blood, as the most immediate cause of their cleansing. Hence the church ascribes praise to Christ, "who loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood," Rev. 1:5. The blood of Christ hath that place in washing of defiled souls, that water hath in washing defiled bodies: so it is the holy water wherewith we are washed from our sins. Therefore it is called a fountain, and that not only to drink at, but to wash at: Zech. 13:1, "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." Compared with 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son

cleanseth us from all sin." This blood being applied to the soul polluted with sin, it effectually removes the filth of sin from the soul.

For understanding this, these things are to be noted.

1. The defilement or uncleanness sin leaves on the soul, is not a bodily and visible thing, as nastiness on our bodies or clothes, which may be taken away with hands: but it is a moral and spiritual uncleaness, viz., an unlikenness or contrariety to the holiness of God expressed in his law; so that the washing of a soul from it is the rendering of that soul like unto God in his imitable perfections, expressed in the ten commandments, which express his image unto us, that appeared perfectly in the man Christ, being and walking exactly in every point according to these ten commands, in all their spirituality and extent.

2. By the blood of Christ in this matter, is not meant simply the blood that ran out of his veins in his circumcision, the sufferings of his life, and crucifixion; but Christ himself sacrificed for us; which sacrifice was begun from the moment of his incarnation, was continued all his life long, was perfected on the cross and in the grave, and received its actual purifying efficacy in his resurrection, as a sacrifice fully offered, and accepted for the ends it was offered for: Tit. 2:14, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Rom. 4:23, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Hence we owe our sanctification to the holiness of his nature, and the righteousness of

his life, as well as to his death; the former being as essentially requisite to make him an effectual sacrifice for us, as the latter; since no sacrifice could atone, but what was without natural and accidental blemish. But his blood is particularly named in the case,

1st, For that the life going away with the blood in all living creatures, and so in the man Christ, the shedding of his blood was the perfecting stroke in his sacrificing himself for us: so that we are said to be washed with his blood, as the prisoner is said to be delivered by his cautioner's paying the utmost farthing of his debt. See Rom. 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Compared with Rom. 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins."

2dly, For decency of expression, the term blood being most agreeable to the term washing, which relates to some liquid. Agreeable hereto was it, that after Christ being born holy, had lived holy, and died on the cross, his side was pierced, and there came forth blood and water fitted to wash: the Holy Ghost thereby teaching, that the washing or sanctifying of sinners was to proceed from Christ, in his holy birth, life, and death; thence was the spring of purifying virtue from sin.

3. As it is by applying water to the unclean thing, that it is washed: so it is by applying to our souls, Christ sacrificed for us, that we are sanctified and washed from sin. A man may stand at a river side bedaubed with mire and dirt, till he die; and yet be never a whit the cleaner if the water of that river, be not brought close upon him: so Christ, in the purifying virtue of his blood, may be within reach of the sinner's hand all his days, and yet he may die in his filth of sin, and

lie in it in hell for ever, if Christ and he never come close together in a spiritual union. The blood of sacrifices was first offered to God for atonement, and then it was sprinkled on persons or things for their purification: Heb. 9:19, "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people." Compared with Exod. 24:5–8, "And Moses sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." The offering of the blood of Christ to God is over, near seventeen hundred years ago: but the sprinkling or application of it is still going on: Heb. 12:22, 24, "But ye are come—to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Where it is sprinkled, they are cleansed; where not, they lie still in their filth, having no more cleansing from sin by it, than if it had never been shed.

4. It is not every water that will wash clean; but there is a cleansing virtue in some water, that is not in other water. I am not to inquire into the cause of that difference; but into the cause of the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ, whereby we are washed from sin, that is not in any other thing, though men have multiplied things for that end. If we inquire into the spring of the cleansing virtue that is in Christ sacrificed for us, and in no other things, we find these two.

1st, There is a real and proper merit of sinners' sanctification in him. By his sacrifice of himself he has merited at the hand of God the sanctification of us, and washing us from our sin: Eph. 5:25, 26, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Christ as really merited our personal holiness, and every good work we do, at the hand of God, as he merited the pardon of atheism and blasphemy to us: so absurd is the merit of our works: Tit. 2:14, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Now, there is no such merit in any thing else, that they should wash.

Hence Christ being applied to the soul, or his blood sprinkled on it, has a loosing efficacy, that the filth of sin is loosed from the soul it stuck close to before: even as the payment of the ransom applied to the captive, actually looses the bond of his captivity; so as a just judge can no more suffer him to be a captive, a prisoner. I shewed before, that it is guilt that is that bond. Wherefore, for persons to pretend part with Christ, while yet their filth of sin sticks as close to them, and they to it, as ever, is to blaspheme the justice of the Father, or the merit of the Son; as if either the one did receive the ransom, and yet not set the captive free; or else the other's merit was defective, and therefore ineffectual.

2dly, There is a fulness of the Spirit of holiness in him, or in his blood. Hence he is said, Rev. 3:1, to have "the seven Spirits of God."

Christ sacrificed for us, is the receptacle of the Spirit of sanctification, as the animal spirits are in the blood while fresh and warm, as Christ's blood always is: that is, Christ himself as sacrificed, Heb. 10:20. And that Spirit of sanctification is not in other things, not in Popish penances, not in the legal performances of prayers, tears, confessions, resolutions, &c. which many Protestants use for washing themselves. All these in this case are but dead water, congealed blood without spirits, that defile, but cannot wash.

Hence Christ being applied to, or his blood sprinkled on a soul, has a cleansing efficacy, removing the filth of sin, and cleansing and brightening the soul in likeness to God: 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus Christ speaking of that application of himself to sinners, as by eating and drinking, which are most close even to the incorporating the meat and drink with the feeder, John 6:53, 54, "Then Jesus said unto the Jews, Verily verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day;" gives this as the reason of the efficacy, ver. 63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." As filthy sores are washed and cleansed with spirituous liquors, filthy souls are washed and cleansed with the blood of Christ, full of the Spirit of holiness.

Wherefore to pretend to part with Christ, and yet still to live in your sins, without repentance, or reformation and amendment, is to blaspheme either the blood of Christ, or his Spirit; as if either there

were no Spirit of holiness in his blood, or else that that Spirit of holiness hath no efficacy to purge away the filth of sin, and make holy.

5. Washing off of filth and making clean, is according to the degree of the application of the water with its cleansing virtue. It is a very slight spot that will be quite washed off at the very first brush. There is virtue enough in the river, at once to wash clean a filthy object; but the washer applies it but by degrees, so that it may be long ere it be got perfectly clean: so there is virtue enough in Christ to wash all whom he washes at all, perfectly clean at once; but that virtue is applied but by degrees, 2 Cor. 3:18, forecited. Prov. 4:18, "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

There is a threefold washing of sinners, according to a threefold application of Christ's blood to them.

1st, A begun washing by a begun application thereof. This is done in the work of conversion. Tit. 3:5, it is called the washing of regeneration. Here the soul that before all along was lying in wickedness together with the unclean world, being taken out from among them by effectual calling, and united to Christ by faith, and so having part with him, is washed from his filthiness, by an application of the blood of Christ, that never touched him before, but now streams over him in union with Christ: Ezek. 16:8, 9, "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with

water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil."

Concerning the washing, the effect of this application, observe,

(1.) It is a washing all over; a washing of every part, though not quite clean in any part: 2 Cor. 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away, behold, all things are become new." Therefore it is called a new birth: Tit. 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." John 3:5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We do not say a child is born, when his head, or feet, or an arm are born; but when the whole child is brought forth. Some shew a head, that, with notions of the principles of religion in it, and a tongue to talk of them, seems to be washed; others shew feet, that, by going in the road of outward reformation, and some external duties, seem to be washed. But it is not the washing of regeneration; for it goes not all over them: they are new in some things, but they are just what they were in other things. Trace them to their walk in their employments and relations, to the entertainment given to the beloved lust, to the inner man, and set of their heart with respect to the purity of the holy law; and they are just the same with the world lying in wickedness. That is an evidence, that their washing is with their own nitre and soap, not with the blood of Christ.

(2.) It is a washing that puts one in a state of cleanness, bringing him out of a state of filthiness: John 13:10, "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." There is a

difference between one lying in a mire, and another that has defiled his feet; though both need washing, the latter needs but to wash his feet. Such is the case of the unregenerate and regenerate: Cant. 6:10, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" When the dawning is come, it is true it is not broad day-light; but yet it is day, not night. The moon has her spots, yet she is not filthy, but fair.

(3.) That state of cleanness can never be lost, John 13:10, forecited. Many seem to be brought to a state of cleanness, but at length they turn apostates: that says, they were never out of the state of filthiness, and the church of God was but beguiled with them, when they took them for persons in a state of cleanness. They that are once washed, will never apostatize, nor go back again to wallow in the mire: 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us."

2dly, A continued and progressive washing, by a continued progressive application of Christ's blood to the soul. This is done and carried on all along from the first conversion of a sinner, until his death. Therefore though the elders were about the throne in white, yet there was a sea of glass before it, Rev. 4:4, 6. And the fountain stands opened for the house of David, as well as for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Zech. 13:1; for saints as well as for sinners. They that, deeming themselves once washed, find no need of washing more, proclaim themselves not washed by Christ, as do they who betake themselves for it to another laver. They that are come to Christ for washing, are still coming, 1 Pet. 2:4.

Two things make this continued washing necessary.

(1.) Continued imperfection in the washing of the soul during this life, Philip. 3:12. Believers are in no moment of time perfectly clean; in their most shining moments they are still but as the moon, not without their spots. So that they never want matter of exercise, in purging that they may arrive at a perfect purity: 1 John 3:3, "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifleth himself, even as he is pure."

(2.) New defilements contracted continually. Though they never lose the state of cleanness, yet they are always needing to wash their feet: John 13:10, "He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." An allusion to the priests in the temple service. They are all priests to God, and so washed: but while they go about, such is the defiled world they walk in, the remains of defilement in them, that in every thing they contract some spot: James 3:2, "For in many things we offend all." Their heart and life have so many remaining seeds of corruption, that they never want occasion to pluck up weeds.

Now, this continued washing is by the continued application of Christ's blood, and no other way: 1. John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." For,

[1.] This is the way the saints have looked for it; as David, Psal. 51:2. "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Ver. 7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." As the lepers could, by no art of their own, be so purified as to be admitted to society, but by the priests sprinkling them; so sinners, by no art or endeavours of their

own, can be purified so as to be admitted to fellowship with God, but by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon them. Therefore the sea of glass, which is the blood of Christ, stands before the throne, that whosoever would have communion with God, may wash there, and so be fitted for it.

[2.] There is no merit of holiness, nor fulness of the Spirit in any thing else. The doings and sufferings of saints are as free of merit, as those of sinners: Luke 17:10, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Neither is there any thing of the Spirit in them, but so far as the blood of Christ is sprinkled on them, rendering them acceptable, Rev. 7:14; 2 Cor. 2:16. But in the blood of Christ there is a never-failing merit, a constant fulness of the Spirit, to which the soul may have continual recourse for washing, as to a fountain never dry.

3dly, A perfect washing, by a full application of the blood of Christ. And this takes place at death, Heb. 12:23—"To the spirits of just men, made perfect." Then believers washed in conversion, and who have been all along washed in the blood of Christ, are by the same means made quite clean and without spot: Eph. 5:25, 26, 27, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish." This lies in two things.

(1.) The doing away the remains of sin wholly. The reigning power of sin being broken by the first application, it is gradually removed by

further application, and quite carried off by the full application at death. Not the least stain, nor mark of it, will then be left on the believing soul. But the filth of sin now carried off in part from the whole man, will then be wholly carried off from every part.

(2.) The perfecting of the image of God: 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The several lineaments of it are indeed drawn now upon the believer, but mixed with corruption in every part: but then it shall be without mixture, every part getting the finishing stroke in that image, 1 Cor. 13:10. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." So shall they "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. 12:3. "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father," Matth. 13:43.

Now, it is by a full application of the blood of Christ, that is, by a full participation of Christ crucified in his purifying virtue, that this washing is made: Rev. 7:14, 15, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." The cleansing virtue going out from him to the soul in some measure now, will then go out in full measure, as when a sluice is opened, and carries all away before it: 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Compared with 1 John 3:2, forecited. The soul putting off the body, unites more closely with

Christ than ever, and so partakes of his merit, and fulness of Spirit, to a pitch of perfection: Eph. 4:13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ."

Secondly, Christ washeth sinners by his Spirit: Tit. 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." 2 Thess. 2:13, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." And the Spirit of Christ has that place in washing defiled souls, that the hand of the washer hath in washing the defiled body of another. The hand being the instrument of action with men, the Spirit of Christ is held forth under that notion, the whole work of the application of Christ's redemption to us being done by him: Acts 11:21, "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." Is. 53:1, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Matt. 12:28, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Compared with Luke 11:20, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." So Christ washeth sinners with his blood, by his Spirit: John 3:5, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." 1 John 5:8, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." This the apostle very plainly teacheth, 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." So Christ's hand has never come on that soul for washing, which is destitute of the Spirit of Christ:

Rom. 8:9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Now, of the work of the Spirit of Christ in the washing of a sinner, we may take a view in the following particulars.

1. The Spirit of Christ discovers to the sinner his pollution and defilement of soul: John 16:8, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He brightens the glass of the holy commandments of the word, and he opens the sinner's eyes, and determines him to look into that glass: and so the sinner, getting a new sight of the holiness and purity of God, Hab. 1:13, gets a new sight of himself, that he cries out, with the leper, Unclean, unclean; and says, with the church, Is. 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Then he sees that loathsomeness in sin that he saw not before; the loathsomeness of his nature, heart, and life; not excepting those sins he looked on formerly as beautyspots, glorying in them, Phil. 3:19. And he is filled with shame and confusion before the Lord; like those, Jer. 3:22, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Ver. 25, "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." And if ye have no experience of this, ye have no part with Christ.

2. He discovers to the sinner the laver wherein he may be washed from that spiritual pollution, the fountain wherein he may be purified, viz. the blood of Christ, or Christ himself as crucified and sacrificed for us: 1 Cor. 2:12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of

the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Here is the only effectual mean for purification, the only true purgatory, Jesus Christ in the purifying virtue of his blood, Heb. 1:3. And the Spirit points it out to the sinner. This is called "revealing of the Son," Gal. 1:16; in our Catechism, "enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ." Concerning which ye may note,

1st, That it is natural to men under a sense of their filthiness, to look to and run to lavers of their own for washing themselves, however ineffectual they are: Hos. 5:13, "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." Hence the first question, "What shall we do to be saved?" They have neither eyes to see, nor hearts for the blood of Christ, as the alone mean of washing from sin. The whole ceremonial law pointed the Israelites to Christ as the only remedy for soul pollution, yet they are as great strangers to it, as if they had never heard of it. Hence we have these questions, with the Lord's answer, Mic. 6:6, 7, 8, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my trangression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

2dly It is the work of the Spirit alone to discover it, so as to bring the unclean soul to it. As Hagar saw not the well though it was near her,

till the Lord opened her eyes; so the sinner sees not the opened fountain for sin and uncleanness, till the Spirit enlighten the mind: John 16:14, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." And he shews it effectually to the sinner, together with the ineffectualness of all things else for that purpose. And,

(1.) The Spirit shews the ineffectualness of all other, in the glass of the law in its spirituality and extent. There the sinner beholds all that he can do or suffer needs itself to be washed, being polluted and defiled, and so that it can defile him, but not wash him. Hence says the church, Is. 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

(2.) In the glass of the promise of the gospel, he shews the true laver, Christ Jesus: John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Spirit brings home the promise of the gospel, and demonstrates it to the sinner, 1 Cor. 2:4. And he demonstrates,

[1.] The infallible efficacy of it to cleanse from sin: 1 Thess. 1:5, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Notwithstanding all that the word saith of the efficacy of Christ's blood to wash from sin, that mystery is but folly to carnal men, till the demonstration of the Spirit come: 1 Cor. 1:23, 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." Then the soul says, as Matt. 9:21, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole."

[2.] The sinner's access to it in particular; that the fountain is not only open, but open for him, 1 Cor. 2:4, 5. If this be not, the sinner can never apply it to himself by faith. And this the Spirit doth by opening the general warrant of the word, and applying it particularly to the sinner.

3. He brings the sinner into the laver, puts him into the water as it were. We are naturally in the case of that man at the pool, who said, John 5:7, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." Though the laver of Christ's blood be near by us, we cannot put in ourselves for washing. Now, the Spirit does the sinner this good office: and he does it by uniting him to Christ, whereby the unclean soul is plunged into the fountain opened for sin: 1 Cor. 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." And the Spirit brings the sinner into the laver.

1st, Passively, entering into the dead and defiled soul whereby the soul is quickened: Ezek. 36:27, "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Rom. 8:9, "But ye are not is the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, be is none of his." Christ communicates the Spirit, which is his own Spirit dwelling in him, to the dead and defiled soul; and so the soul is passively united to Christ, and quickened. Thus Christ draws the sinner to him for washing, by the Spirit.

2dly, Actively, working faith in the sinner, whereby he comes to Christ, and unites with him: Col. 2:12, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Compared with 2 Cor. 4:13, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak." Eph. 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The soul being drawn, runs; being united to Christ, unites with him; being put into the opened fountain, dips himself over head and ears in it, Rom. 3:25. This actual believing the Spirit produces in the sinner immediately out of the spiritual life given by the communication of himself to him: Philip 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Compared with chap. 1:12, 13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Now, the unclean sinner thus brought to Christ, and united to him is in the fountain, and cannot miss to be washed from his sins with the blood of Christ: and the only hand that brings him there is the Spirit of Christ. Now, he has part with Christ, communion necessarily following upon the union.

4. Lastly, The Spirit washeth the unclean soul in the laver, applying Christ to it in the purifying virtue of his blood; as one washeth an unclean person in water, applying the water to him; 1 Pet. 1:2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through

sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." And according to the degree of that application of Christ to the sinner, in the purifying virtue of his blood, made by the Spirit, such is the degree of the sanctification or washing of the sinner. For understanding this mystery, Consider,

1st, The soul being united to Christ, is clothed with his merit, as for justification, so for sanctification also: Rev. 3:18, "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Sanctification is a great privilege and costly, bought with the Redeemer's blood: 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Tit. 2:14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And the merit or righteousness of Christ being on a man, by union with Christ, is the ground in law for his partaking of the benefit of sanctification, as a benefit purchased for him: even as the guilt of Adam's first sin on us, is the ground in law for God's denying us the sanctification of our nature in our birth, upon which the corruption of nature is conveyed to us from Adam.

2dly, Sinners united to Jesus Christ, have communion with him in his death and resurrection; i. e., they have a common interest with him therein, they are in law reckoning their death and resurrection too: Col. 2:12, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." The reason is, because Christ died and

rose again as a public person, their head, in their name: Rom. 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." And this communion with Christ in his death and resurrection, is the spring of their sanctification; it is that which sets all the wheels in motion, that concur to the washing them from their sins: Rom. 6:3–6, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death: we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

3dly, Christ dying put off from himself the whole body of all our sins, which before were upon him by imputation; and rose again without sin imputed, as he was ever without sin inherent: Rom. 6:10, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." For he by his death having fully satisfied for sins, the guilt of them whereby they clave to him, was dissolved of course, and he shook them all off as Paul did the viper into the fire, having no more power to cleave to him or hurt him. Which death and resurrection being of a public person, their head, hath, by the merit thereof, a power of conforming all his members thereto, in dying to sin, and rising to newness of life; even as there was a contrary power in Adam's sin and death: Philip. 3:10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being

made comformable unto his death." Compared with Rom. 6:5, 6, above-cited.

4thly, Sinners having communion with Christ in this his death and resurrection, are in him legally dead to sin, freed from it in point of right, and alive spiritually to God: Rom. 6:10, 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." The body of the sins of the flesh is legally put off them, and they are clean: even as the captive or prisoner to whom is legally applied the paying of the ransom or debt by the cautioner, is, in the moment of that application, legally free, and no more a captive or prisoner in point of right; though it may take some time ere he be brought freely out of the dungeon, and his prison garments be got all of them off, and his irons be all knocked off.

5thly, Upon this ground the Spirit applies Christ's death and resurrection really to them, conforming them in their own persons thereto: even as when the judge hath legally applied the payment of the ransom to the captive, by sustaining it as paid for him; a messenger applies it really by opening the prison-doors, knocking off the chains, and bringing him out: Gal. 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Philip. 3:10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Compared with 1 Pet. 1:2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." So that by the Spirit they

are changed into the image of Christ dead and risen again: 2 Cor. 3:18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," Rom. 6:5, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death; we shall he also in the likeness of his resurrection."

6thly, The Spirit applies Christ's blood, death, and resurrection, to sinners, really, by conveying from Christ the head, unto them as his members, a certain measure and degree of that all-fulness of grace that is lodged in him, which he died to purchase, and rose again to apply: Col. 1:19, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell, John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Compared with John 16:14, 15, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath, are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." All the grace that is in the saints in heaven or earth, or ever shall be, comes from the fulness of grace in the man Christ; as all the light of the world from the sun: and the Spirit communicates it to them from him. Now, all graces are in Christ, and the Spirit communicates to his members of them all, John 1:16, forecited.

7thly, Thus the blood of Christ applied by the Spirit, penetrates or seeks in to the unclean soul, to the washing it from its filthiness; Ezek. 36:25, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." For wherever that grace comes, it must needs have a twofold effect: (1.) To remove sin according to its measure, and so to carry off spiritual filthiness. Where humility comes, pride goes; where

heavenliness of mind takes place, there sensuality and worldliness are dislodged; and so of other graces. For grace and sin are two contraries; whereof as the one gains, the other must needs lose. (2.) To beautify and brighten the soul. Hence she is, like "the king's daughter, all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold," Psal. 45:13. For the more grace one has, the more he is like God. And this grace is immediately derived to us from Christ; who is the image of the invisible God, and therefore fairer than the children of men, Psal. 45:2; that we being thereby rendered like Christ, may be rendered like God, in his imitable perfections.

8thly, This communication of grace, by the Spirit, from Christ, to us being united to Christ, is the Spirit's applying Christ's blood to us; inasmuch as the blood of Christ is as it were the vehicle of his grace, as the water is of the soap, that cleansing thing, Mal. 3:2, Christ is like fuller's soap. In this view is that prayer for sanctification, Psal. 51:2, "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Wash me, namely, as a fuller doth. In vain is the soap used without the water for washing; and in vain will we look for sanctification by the grace of Christ, without the merit of his blood on us. It is in the stream of his blood going over our souls, that his grace is brought into and left in them, to the beautifying of them in holiness. By the merit of it, it hath a double effect. One relative, and immediate, to our justification. Hence the apostle, Heb. 12:24, speaks of "coming to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Another effect it has, real, and mediate, to our sanctification. Hence the apostle describes Christians as, 1 Pet. 1:2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

And this is effected through the grace of Christ that it brings down with it. It is the bruising of the bread-corn that fits it to be bread; the dying of the corn of wheat, that brings forth more wheat: so it is the crucifying of Christ, that fitted him to be a fountain of grace, whereof sinners might drink; it is the blood or death of Christ that makes Christians, i. e. men after his image, John 12:24. Thus the Spirit's conveying of grace from Christ to us, is his sprinkling us with the blood of Christ for our sanctification, 1 Pet. 1:2; to be distinguished, though not divided, from the sprinkling for our justification, Heb. 12:24.

Lastly, According to the measure of the former sprinkling or application of the blood of Christ, so is the measure of our sanctification, purification, and cleansing from sin. The other having only a relative and immediate effect, is not capable of degrees: so it is alike in all believers. But this having a real and mediate effect through the grace conveyed in it, is made in very different degrees and measures, as a spring or fountain running into a vessel. And there are three degrees of this application of Christ's blood by the Spirit, as before observed.

1st, A begun application of it, in the soul's union with Christ at first in effectual calling. That moment the sinner becomes a member of Christ, the Spirit begins the application of Christ's blood to him for his sanctification, conveying real inherent grace to him from Christ his head, 2 Thess. 2:13, compared with John 16:14, and 1:16. The sluice of grace in Christ that was quite stopt before as to the sinner, is then opened in a measure to run over him for his washing from sin. And as to this measure,

1. It is some measure of all saving grace that is then communicated to the believer from Christ, his head, by the Spirit: John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." As the wax receives every point in the seal, so the believer receives every grace in the man Christ. Hence the apostle, Eph. 1:13, speaks of believers being "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. As all saving graces are lodged in Christ without measure, John. 3:34, so a seed of them all is communicated to his members, 1 John 3:9, of faith, love, repentance, or a set of heart turning God-ward, humility, meekness, &c. And though some graces may be more apparent and topping in a believer, than others; yet he wants none of them altogether, Heb. 8:10. The effect of this is the habitual sanctification of the believer, whereby the dominion of sin is broken; the pollution and defilement by sin is begun to be removed, and the soul is made habitually holy. More particularly, hereby,

1st, The believer's nature is renewed, Eph. 4:23, 24. He is renewed in the whole man, his whole person, soul and body, 1 Thess. 5:23. There are quite new qualities derived from Christ, into his mind, will, and affections; habits of grace infused into them by the Spirit from Christ, which habits of grace are the immediate principle of gracious actings, distinct from the new vital powers that go before faith. The body is renewed in communion with the renewed soul. Hence the apostle exhorts the Romans, Rom. 6:13, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." So sanctification is quite another thing than the bare amending of our lives; and holiness quite another thing than moral virtue, which can never give us this new nature.

2dly, He becomes a new creature, 2 Cor. 5:17; not only a spiritually living creature, as in the quickening of the dead soul, John 5:25, before faith in effectual calling, called the first regeneration, John 1:12, 13, answering to the conception in natural generation; but a new creature in all its parts, by the work of sanctification; a second regeneration, following after faith, and answering to the forming of the conception into the distinct members in the womb, however small, Tit. 3:5; Eph. 2:10; 1:13. Hence there is not only a new head, feet, or life, in the case; but a new man, where all saving graces concur, as all the several members in a human body.

3dly, He is made over again in the image of God, bearing his image as a child of the father, Col. 3:10. And this comes to pass, in that the new creature being entirely sprung of Christ, being made by receiving from him grace for grace in him, must needs be his image, Gal. 4:19. And he is the image of God; therefore it must be the image of God too. Thus Eve was made after God's image, but mediately, being made after Adam's image, who was made immediately after God's, Gen. 2:18, margin, compared with 1 Cor. 11:7, 8.

4thly, He becomes one spirit with Christ, which is the oneness with Christ that is the result of our uniting with him, 1 Cor. 6:17, "He that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit." The Spirit is the principal cause, faith the instrumental cause, joining or uniting us to Christ; but this is it whereby Christ and the believer formally coalesce or go together into one, viz. one spirit, i. e. one spiritual nature, Heb. 2:11: even as Eve was one flesh with Adam, being made of him, of his flesh and bones; to which the Apostle alludes, Eph. 5:30. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Suppose a tree had a virtue of changing the graft into its own nature, as Christ has;

the gardener ingrafts, the graff by his art unites close with the stock: then the stock conveys of its juice into the graff, whereby the nature of the graff is changed; here is the oneness arising from the uniting, they are one tree, of one nature. So the Spirit puts the soul to Christ, by faith it unites close with him: then Christ by his Spirit conveys of his graces to the soul, which change its nature into his own, and so they go into one, viz. one spiritual or divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4, partaking of it with him, and that from him. So they are his seed, Is. 53:10.

Lastly, He is put in a near capacity for all acts of holy obedience, whether in doing or suffering, Deut. 30:6; Heb. 8:10; the seed of the several saving graces derived from Christ, and implanted in him, tending of their own nature to spring according to their several kinds. If the seed of any grace were wanting in him, then he would be in no near capacity for acting that grace wanting. Like as a dead man, who is not only quickened by a miracle, but is risen and come out of the grave, is in an immediate disposition for the common actions of life; so in this case of sanctification, the soul is not only quickened, as it is in effectual calling, but is in the nearest capacity to walk what way the Lord calls: Rom. 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In effectual calling, Christ says to the sinner, Arise; in sanctification he says, Loose him, and let him go.

2. But it is not a full measure of any grace that is then communicated from Christ by his Spirit to the believer: "For we know but in part," says the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 13:9. And says the same apostle, Rom. 7:23, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of

my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." The believer has derived to him from Christ, the graces of faith, love, &c. but none of them in perfection: even as when the child is perfectly formed in the womb, there is head, eyes, hands, feet, &c. but all of them very small, none of them come to perfection. Now, so far as they go, they do remove sin with its pollution off the soul: but they cannot fill up the room in any part; therefore there are remains of corruption in every part, mind, will, and affections, and the body in communion with the corrupt part, Rom. 7:14.

Now, the consequent of this is an imperfection of sanctification: the believer is sanctified, but not perfectly sanctified. More particularly, hence,

1st, There two contrary principles in believers; the flesh and spirit, the new and old man, the new nature derived to them from the second Adam, the old unrenewed nature from the first Adam: the one the old inhabitant, the other the new incomer upon it; like the house of Saul, and the house of David, in Israel. Hence believers are a mystery to the world, yea to themselves: Can. 6:13, "Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may look upon thee: what will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies." Rom. 7:16, 17, "If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

2dly, There is a continual combat in them, between these two contrary principles, being together side for side, as it were, in every part: Gal. 5:17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit

against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Thus the believer is like Rebekah, Gen. 25:22, 23, who had the children struggling together within her; and who was told by the Lord, upon her inquiring into the affair, that two nations were in her womb, and two manner of people should be separated from her bowels. The two armies war in the Shulamite, Cant. 6:13. So that the believer's heart by that means is often like a field of battle, where there is much confusion and struggle. There is something like this found sometimes in the unregenerate; but in them the struggle is between the flesh in one part lusting, and the flesh in another part fearing, 2 Pet. 2:15, compared with Numb. 22:18. In the saints it is between the flesh and the spirit in one and the same part, receiving and refusing the same spiritual truth or falsehood, willing and nilling the same good or evil, of its own proper motion, Rom. 7:15, 16, forecited.

3dly, Neither their good nor ill actions are carried to perfection, Gal. 5:17, forecited. For the two contrary principles being thus yoked, neither of them gets its full swing. When grace prevails to carry the good point, yet corruption clogs it in some measure: and when corruption prevails, grace clogs it in some measure; Cant 4:2, "Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing: whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them." Saints in heaven in good, and unregenerate men in evil, are like strong men travelling in a calm day; saints on earth, in good or ill, are like men travelling with a strong wind blowing in their face, that cannot make the way that otherwise they would.

3. Howbeit, it is a predominant measure of grace that is then conveyed by the Spirit from Christ to the soul: Rom. 6:14, "For sin

shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Grace is put in the heart to rule, though in midst of its enemies, which makes it difficult to maintain its superiority. Not that it is predominant in every particular event and encounter; experience testifies the contrary. Hence, says the apostle, Rom. 7:23, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." But it is fundamentally and habitually predominant; that is, it is more firmly rooted as an immortal seed against a mortal one, and generally speaking it prevails. Hence,

1st, The dominion and reigning power of sin is broken, Rom. 6:14, forecited. It is turned off the throne it had before, and is put under the check of a superior principle. Hence the apostle saith, 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and lie cannot sin, because he is born of God." Thus Christ delivers the soul from that enemy, to serve him. Hence is that of the prophet, Is. 9:4, "Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." Indwelling it may be for a time, and, as a troublesome guest, breed much disturbance in the house: but it is no more master of the house. This was typified by the remains of the Canaanites in the land, which Israel could not drive out, but yet brought them under tribute, Jud. 1:19, &c.

2dly, It shall be quite expelled at length: Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Whatever particular battles it wons, the wars shall end in its ruin: 1 John 5:4, "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world." When the true Israelite comes to the Red Sea of death, these Egyptians shall be

swallowed up there, and he shall see them all dead on the shore. Sin is crucified by the incoming of grace, and though the thief being on the cross may rage and blaspheme, yet shall he never come down till he breath out his last.

2dly, There is a continued application of the blood of Christ made to the believer by the Spirit, during his after continuing in the world. For the soul once united to Christ, his Spirit dwells in it ever after, never quits his dwelling. Hence Christ said to his disciples, John 14:16, 17, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And the Spirit continues that application to it from time to time till death, conveying fresh supplies of grace to it from Christ the head. Hence the grace of Christ conveyed to believers is held forth under the notion of a spring-well; John 4:14, "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 into everlasting life;" which is still affording new water. The fulness of grace in Christ is the spring-head, Col. 2:19. The receivers into which it runs, are believers, his members, that receive supplies of grace from him, as the branches supplies of juice from the stock: John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." And the conveyer of these supplies from the head to the members, Philip 1:18, with ver. 11, is the Spirit. For clearing this purpose, consider,

1. Though one is renewed, and has the seed of all grace planted in him, in the begun application issuing in habitual sanctification; yet he is not able of himself to exercise one grace, to wash off one remaining spot, or add to himself one stroke of purity: but thereto is necessary a new supply by the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3:4, 5. Even of our gracious selves we can do nothing; can bring forth no fruit of grace, John 15:5, even when furnished with gracious qualities. This is not so very strange, if we consider, that though we have the power of natural motion, yet we cannot move a finger without a common providential influence of the Spirit, Acts 17:28, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." Though fresh seed be cast into the earth, if the influence of the sun and rain is withheld, it springs not.

2. Hence every gracious act of ours is a fruit of the Spirit produced by him in us, through these supplies of grace; as the springing of the seed is by the warmth and moisture it gets from the heavens, Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 5:8. Hence the Spirit is said to lust against the flesh, Gal. 5:17, as producing these lustings in us; even as he is said to groan, Rom. 8:26. So every act of mortification is by the Spirit, Rom. 8:13, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." And so also is every act of obedience, Phil. 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." So that take away the Spirit, and ye take away all true holiness.

3. These supplies of grace are given in such a measure only, in the continued application, as in the begun application. There is some measure of every grace supplied, Col. 2:19. Hence, (Eph. 5:9.), "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." But there is not a full measure of any grace: 1 Cor. 13:9, "For we

know but in part." Yet there is a predominant measure, 2 Cor. 12:9. Hence the imperfection of actual sanctification; there are still some spots to wash off while here. Washing of foul clothes will take time; there is much work for the hands there. But the washing of foul souls ordinarily takes more than the longest work of that kind. The Spirit could wash us perfectly clean in an instant, by a full application of the blood; but it is otherwise ordered. The thief on the cross was washed clean in a moment: but ordinarily the washing is gradual.

4. Lastly, These continued supplies of grace continue the washing of the soul; inasmuch as thereby,

1st, Inherent grace is preserved, that it die not out, amidst so many snares and temptations. It is but a created quality, and of itself would wither away and die out, and so leave the soul overwhelmed anew with the filth of sin, if it were not fed. Hence the Lord says, Is. 27:3, "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." John 15:5, 6, "I 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. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. But the continued supplies from Christ by the Spirit, render it an abiding immortal seed, 1 Cor. 1:8, 9, compared with John 14:19; Jude ver. 1.

2dly, Inherent grace is excited, that it lie not idle, Cant. 5:4. Sometimes it lies like fire under the ashes; new supplies coming in by the Spirit, it is stirred up, and casts abroad its light in the soul. Hence the Spirit is compared to the wind, Cant. 4:16. Being excited to

action, it removes sin; as the stopt spring loosed, works out the mud. And,

3dly, It is increased and strengthened, that it may act more vigorously towards the expulsion of its enemy, Col. 1:10; Eph. 3:16; Is. 40:29. As an addition of soap makes the washing go on more thoroughly, so the fresh supplies of grace from Christ by the Spirit carry on the washing of the soul, causing the stream run higher to the carrying off more of the filth of sin, and beautifying the soul more.

3dly, There is a full application of the blood of Christ to the soul made by the Spirit at death. That moment the soul and body are separated, the Spirit brings in a full stream of grace from Christ into the soul, Eph. 3:19. with 1 Cor. 13:8, 9, 10. The communication of grace which was before but in part, is then made perfect. For clearing of this purpose, note, that,

1. The perfection of grace taking place in the souls of believers at death, comes from the same spring as at conversion, and after, till death. It is all communicated to them from Christ their head, with this difference only, that the stream of it that ran small and scanty before, is then made to run full, as when a sluice is fully opened. As, out of his fulness, they got grace for grace in Christ, in some measure, before; so then, out of the same fulness, they get a fulness of grace for grace in him. For they grow to their perfection in him, as members of him, and therefore by communication from him, Eph. 4:13. The new creature is both formed and perfected the same way.

2. It is the same Spirit who conveys the perfection of grace from Christ to believers at death, that conveyed the first grace, and the supplies thereof: the same Spirit who forms, and nourishes the new

creature, in the time of this life, brings it to its perfection and full growth at death, Philip. 1:6; Psal. 138:8. And as to the measure he then communicates.

1st, It is a full measure, such as wholly renews them in every part, perfecting the image of Christ, and so of God, on them, and utterly abolishes all remains of sin in them, 2 Cor. 4:16, with Heb. 12:23; Rev. 7:14, 15. Thus they are washed perfectly clean, no spot is left in them, all being carried off by the full flood of grace conveyed then from Christ to them. And thus they are enabled to serve the Lord in perfection for ever, Rev. 22:3, with 1 Cor. 13:10.

2dly, Yet is it not such a measure, as that they never need more: no, but they will always be kept full, by the Spirit's communicating eternally to them full supplies of grace from Christ their head: Rev. 7:17, "For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Compared with John 16:14, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." There will be nothing any more to stop or retard the flowing of grace from Christ into them; but the fountain will empty of its fulness into them without interruption. That there shall be such an eternal communication to them from Christ by the Spirit, is evident, in that they continue for ever members of Christ; and members cannot act but by continued communications of influences from their head: John 14:16, 17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 15:4, 5, "Abide in

me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I 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."

From what is said on this head, we draw these inferences.

1. They are not washed from their filthiness, that have never had a discovery of the filth of sin made to them by the Spirit. Men may get a sight of the guilt of sin, that will fill them with fear and terror; that yet get no kindly sight of the filth of sin, filling them with shame and self-loathing before the Lord. But without this last, there is no sanctification: Ezek. 36:31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." Therefore never think ye have seen sin aright, till ye see it in the monstrous filthiness of it, as opposite to the holiness of God: it is that only will turn one's stomach on it, and cause them to vomit it up by true repentance.

2. The filthiness of the soul by sin, is never duly seen, till it appear so ingrained as nothing but the blood of Christ can wash it off. They evidence but slight thoughts of the filth of sin, that think it can be carried off by prayers, confessions, tears, and outward reformation: therefore the Spirit carries the elect beyond all these to the laver of Christ's blood. Hence David prayed, Psal. 51:2, "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." There only is there merit and efficacy sufficient to wash out the pollution.

3. Whosoever truly come to Christ by faith, they come to him for sanctification, as well as justification; that they may be washed from

the filth of sin by him, as well as freed from the guilt of sin through him. Hence faith is a coming to the waters, Is. 55:1, and that to be washed in them, Zech. 13:1. It is but false faith that looks to Christ for freedom from guilt and the wrath of God, and not for conformity to God in holiness

4. For to stand off from Christ, and uniting with him by believing on him, till one has made himself clean and fit for Christ, is the work of a false heart, marring the soul's washing; not the work of the Spirit, carrying on the washing of the soul. For it is the work of the Spirit to put the unclean soul in the laver, uniting it to Christ, that it may be made clean. Therefore let no pollution of sin whatsoever keep you back from Christ; but let the consideration of your pollution drive you forward to him; and the greater it is, ye have the more need to make speed, and unite the more closely with Christ.

5. Whosoever are united to Christ by the Spirit, are sanctified persons, truly regenerate, new creatures: 2 Cor. 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." In vain do men pretend to be members of Christ, while they remain unsanctified in their nature and life. Can one be united to Christ in whom the fulness of grace is lodged, and yet there be no communication of grace from him to them? or can there be such a communication, and yet they not be renewed after his image? and if a new nature, must there not be a new life?

6. Lastly, True Christianity is in its own nature a progressive thing, going towards perfection. Hence says the apostle, Philip 3:12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am

apprehended of Christ Jesus." It is a most dismal sign, where a person having, as he thinks, embraced Christ for salvation, and so secured himself for eternity, is no further careful to advance in practical religion, but continues easy, being at a stand; seeing "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. 4:18. It is true, a real believer may not only be at a stand for a while, but may be going back: but it is of the nature of grace, as of a seed, or the morning light, to go forward and increase till it come to perfection, John 4:14; Eph. 4:13. This is the result of the continued application of the blood of Christ to the believer by the Spirit. Therefore observe whether ye grow or not.

Thirdly, Christ washeth sinners through faith. Hence the apostle, Acts 15:9, speaks of "purifying the heart by faith;" and 26:18, of being sent to open men's eyes, "and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ." And faith has that place in the washing of defiled souls, that the hand of the party washed hath in the washing of himself, under the management of the principal washer. For faith is the hand of the soul, John 1:12. And in the spiritual washing it is active. The soul being first passively washed by the Spirit, washeth itself by faith; being put into the laver by the Spirit, it applies the water by faith, 2 Cor. 7:1. Yet Christ by his Spirit is still the principal cause of the washing; forasmuch as he both works faith in the soul, and then by new influences puts it in exercise: Philip. 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And so faith is the instrumental cause of our washing from sin, Acts 15:9, forecited.

Now, the efficacy of faith in the washing of the soul lies in these following things, under these two heads.

1. It is the eye of the soul in that matter, and so it is an impulsive cause moving the sinner to wash away his sin, Gal. 2:16; and is supposed in such calls, as that Is. 1:16, "Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well." Now, by the eye of faith,

1st, The man discerns his pollution, that he is all over defiled, and unlike God: Is. 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." He looks into the glass of the word, which is a representation of God's holiness, and so represents the sinner as vile and loathsome. The man believes the representation to be true, and so cries out, as Job 40:4, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." This glass is held to the eyes of others; but, notwithstanding being unbelievers, they see not their universal pollution. But thus the believer sees the need of washing.

2dly, He discerns the depth of the stain, that it can be washed out by no human art. Faith brings, from the testimony of the word, that report into the soul, Jer. 2:22, "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God." Unbelievers are ruined in their pollution for want of this; they see not how deep their defilement lies; so they think their own nitre and soap will do their business, that Abana and Pharpar may cleanse the leper, as well as any other water, Hos. 5:13.

But faith sees them all physicians of no value: and so the believer sees the need of another laver even the blood of Christ.

3dly, He discerns the ill of his pollution on the one hand, and the good of the washing on the other. By faith the man is persuaded of the destructive nature of sin, and its contrariety to God's nature and will: and he is persuaded too of the beauty and excellency of holiness, or purification from sin. The one he sees in the glass of the law, its threatenings and commands; the other in the glass of the gospel, in the face of Jesus. And these are a spur to incite him to seek to be washed, Luke 15:17, 18.

4thly, He discerns the laver, Christ crucified, Is. 45:22. By the help of the glass of the gospel, he takes up the sea of Christ's blood, as the only laver for unclean souls, Matth. 9:20, 21. And by faith the unclean soul discerns Christ the laver,

(1.) As an efficacious laver in all cases, 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The man believes that Christ is able to wash out the deepest stain, to make the filthiest soul clean, according to the word, Is. 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This is necessary, as appears in the case of the blind men, Matth. 9:28, 29, "Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? they said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you."

(2.) As an open laver in its own case, Zech. 13:1, "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." Compared

with Heb. 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This is believing the gospel, one's warrant to come to Christ, without which none can come. For if one should look on the fountain as open to all the world, but only sealed to him, this will effectually mar his access to it, Jer. 2:25, "Thou saidst, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." But faith says, Psal. 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away."

2. Faith is the hand of the soul in that matter, and so it is an instrumental cause of washing away sin. And by the hand of faith,

1st, The soul embraceth Christ, and unites with him: John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Compared with Eph. 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The soul, at its first union with Christ, being plunged into the laver by the Spirit, doth by faith spread out itself therein; as one who haying jumped into the water to swim, doth immediately spread out his body in it, and embrace the water as it were. Christ having apprehended the unclean soul by his Spirit, and united it passively to himself; the soul again apprehends him by faith, and actively unites with him. And hereby faith brings in the first application of his blood, the effect of which is habitual sanctification.

2dly, The soul cleaveth to Christ, and abideth in him, all along till death: Heb. 10:39, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul." It is never extinguished again in the soul; though its gripe may be

sometime slacked, yet it never lets it quite go: Luke 22:32, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Hereby it brings in the continued application, for progressive sanctification, John 15:5. And the stronger its gripes are at any time, the more plentiful application is there of the blood of Christ to the soul; as the stronger the child sucks, he draws out the more milk, Is. 66:11. Hence he that has the strongest faith, hath the holiest heart and life.

3dly, The soul cleaveth to Christ in death. When the body is falling down, the man still cleaves to and abides in Christ, and so dying in faith, dies in the Lord, Heb. 11:13; Rev. 14:13. Faith keeps the gripe of Christ, while the soul is losing gripe of the body; and as the body drops off, it brings in a full application of Christ's blood, which perfects sanctification. So the soul drops the remains of sin together with the body.

Now, the instrumental efficacy of faith for the washing of the soul, lies in trust: and as it trusts, it purifies; for therein lies its nature, and therefore its efficacy comes that way, Psal. 31:19; Psal. 37:40. And the object of that trust is twofold.

(1.) The object of this trust is real, viz. the word. Faith trusts or believes the word as firm and infallible truth. Hence the apostle, 2 Thess. 2:13, speaks of the belief of the truth. Faith trusts or believes particularly the word of the promise of the gospel, holding out to sinners the benefit of sanctification as well as other benefits, 2 Cor. 7:1; such as that promise, Ezek. 36:25, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." This trust of the word of the gospel is our original obedience to the truth, 1 Pet. 1:22, wherein the soul

subjects itself wholly to the truth of God in his word, believing it over the belly of all objections in this point, saying, as Mic. 7:19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

(2.) The object of this trust is personal, viz. Christ himself. The soul trusts on Christ for the washing of it. Hence is that invitation, Is. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." And hence is the language of faith, Psal. 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." It is the very nature of faith to renounce all confidence in other things, and to trust in him alone for the washing of the soul. Hence Paul saith, Philip 3:3, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." In the word of promise he is held forth as "the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world," as made sanctification to us: and faith is a trust or reliance on him as such to us, John 1:12. But more particularly,

Faith's trust on Christ is on him as crucified. Hence the apostle saith, 1 Cor. 2:2, "I determined not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." While we look on him simply as God, we see his justice flaming against sin, and barring all sanctifying influences: Heb. 12:29, "For our God is a consuming fire." But looking on him as God-man, by his obedience and death making satisfaction for sin, we have a fit object of trust for our sanctification; for there we see a fulness of merit for purging away sin, Rom. 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should hot serve sin."

Hence faith has a particular eye to the blood of Christ, in the point of sanctification, as well as justification. Hence the apostle saith, Rom. 3:25, "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." And again, Heb. 9:14, "The blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, shall purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God: that being the immediate cause of our washing, as the blood of his sacrifice offered to God for atonement, and sprinkled on us for our purification, Heb. 12:24.

Now, this trust for washing, placed oh Christ crucified held forth to us in the word of promise, which is that wherein the efficacy of faith for sanctifying us instrumentally lies, may be taken up in these four things.

[1.] The soul's turning its eye of expectation of purification, from off all things else, and fixing it on Christ crucified. Hence is the gospel invitation, Is. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." (Heb.) Face unto me. Secure sinners, being indifferent about holiness, look no where for it; they desire it not. Awakened sinners look for it to physicians of no value, such as their own endeavours, resolutions, &c. But faith looks off from all creatures, means, &c., unto Christ alone, for it, as the woman with the bloody issue did, Mark 5:25–28, that virtue may come from him for purifying.

[2.] Applying the promise of spiritual washing to itself: 2 Cor. 7:1, "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The word

holds forth the promise of cleansing from sin, to sinners indefinitely, saying, as Ezek. 36:25, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Faith catches hold of it, and brings it home, saying, as Psal. 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Mic. 7:19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." It pleads the promise, and hangs by it. Particularly, it appropriates the privilege of legal freedom, Rom. 6:10, 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:" so that thereby the soul looks on itself as dead in point of right and privilege to sin, Rom. 6:2, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

[3.] Relying on the merit of Christ for the out-making of the promise of sanctification, saying, as Psal. 51:7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Compared with 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The soul sees it is a great privilege as well as a duty, and believes that God will make it holy, for Christ's sake, forasmuch as he died for that very end, Tit. 2:14. For true faith has the same reliance on Christ for sanctification as for justification, knowing that the one is the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, even as the other.

[4.] Lastly, Acquiescing in the faithfulness of God in his word, for that effect. Faith receives the word of promise for sanctification; and says, with Mary, Luke 1:38, "Be it unto me according to thy word." The purification of the soul from sin has so many difficulties about it,

that the sinner truly sensible accounts it impossible in respect of all created power: but since God has said, that he will do it, the soul acquiesces in his word, judging him faithful who hath promised, Rom. 4:24; Heb. 11:11.

This faith or trust purifies from sin, according to the scripture, and the experience of the saints: Acts 15:9, "Purifying their hearts by faith." Hereto agrees the Psalmist's experience, Psal. 28:7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him." And so does that of those to whom Peter wrote, and of whom he says, 1 Pet. 1:22, "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Yea, by this trust, joy is brought into the soul, as vers. 8, 9, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Rom. 15:13, "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." And that pre-supposeth the purging of the soul from sin, Is. 33:24, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

QUESTION. How has that trust that efficacy? ANSWER. By the appointment of God. How had the looking to the brazen serpent such efficacy as to cure the stung Israelites, but by God's appointment? So is the case here: John 3:14, 15, 16, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting

life." The nature and efficacy of saving faith may be learned in part from that of the faith of miracles, they agreeing in one general kind. Matth. 9:28, 29, 30, "Jesus saith unto the blind men, Believe ye that I am able to do this? they said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you. And their eyes were opened." God has made choice of faith or trust for that end, and given it a word of appointment, Mark 16:16, "He that believeth shall be saved." And the appointment is, that on the soul's so trusting in Christ, the soul shall be sanctified by the Spirit with the blood, Gal. 3:2. And there is a fitness in the appointment of this as a mean for,

(1.) Faith trusts the word of God, and the faithfulness of God requires that it be accomplished to them that trust it. So it is secured, Rom. 9:33, "Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed." If you would have a benefit from an honest man, you cannot take a more effectual way to obtain it, than, having got his word for it, to trust it, plead it, and hold him to it.

(2.) Christ himself with all his benefits, comes to us in the word. Hence the apostle saith, Rom. 10:6, 7, 8, "The righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead): but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach." Trusting the word is the only effectual way of receiving it farther than into the ears, at least as it is a promise. So receiving the word by faith, we receive Christ, and consequently the purifying virtue of his blood that is in it, with himself. Hence the apostle saith of the

Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 2:13, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." And then,

(3.) There is nothing so adapted to the end of glorifying free grace, as this trust of faith is; and that is the great end of the gospel: Rom. 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."

I shall shut up this branch with a few inferences.

INFERENCE 1. That is not true faith that leaves the soul still unholy, lying in the filth of sin. Unwashed sinners are unbelievers certainly: Tit. 1:15, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." In vain will ye please yourselves with a conceit of your believing in Christ, while your pretended faith brings in no sanctifying influences into your souls: James 2:14, "What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" True faith, according to the scripture, hath a double effect.

1st, Within, faith purifies the heart, Acts 15:9, and makes it evangelically clean, Psal. 24:3, 4. It breaks the reigning power of lusts within, maintains a combat against their broken forces, sets the soul to approve itself to God in the inner man, where no eye sees, and longs for and presseth toward perfection.

2dly, Without, faith works by love, in all duties of piety towards God, and justice and mercy towards our neighbour: Gal. 5:6, "For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." It is a principle within, that casts abroad its cleansing efficacy into the life, purifying men's words and actions.

INFERENCE 2. Then whosoever are really washed from their sins, as they will be sure to use all means of holiness, yet they will be carried beyond them all to Christ for it. They will be conscientious in the practice of holy duties, and so go beyond the profane and careless; and yet they will not rest in them, but quit them all in point of confidence when they have done, and so go beyond hypocrites: "For," saith the apostle, Phil. 3:3, "we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." This is the little further that the spouse went, Cant. 3:4. and so found her beloved.

INFERENCE 3. Lastly, The only true way to be holy, is to believe in Christ. This is the way that all the members of Christ are sanctified; they are sanctified in him, 1 Cor. 1:2, through faith, Acts 26:18. And there is no true holiness in subjects capable of faith, without it: for saith Christ, John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing." So if the soul be brought to faith in Christ, it will undoubtedly be made holy: if it be not, all other means of washing of a person will be but washing a blackmoor, that will never become white for them all.

Thus far of those things which Christ useth more immediately for washing sinners.

Secondly, There are other means which Christ useth for that purpose, more mediately: of which briefly.

First, Christ washeth sinners by the word, Eph. 5:26. Hence Christ saith of his disciples, John 15:3, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." And hence he prays to his Father, John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The word written, read, and preached, is the great external mean of washing sinners; and is effectual for that end by the energy of the Spirit, being received by faith. The use of the word to the washing of the sinner lies in these things following.

1. It is the glass wherein the filthy sinner discerns his spots and filthiness. The word of the law particularly is that glass: Rom. 3:20, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." It represents to men the sinfulness of their nature, hearts, and lives: and when Christ comes to wash a sinner, he holds that glass to his eyes to convince him of sin, by the Spirit. Therefore the Psalmist recommends it to young men, Psal. 119:9, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." And they that look not into the word for this end, care not for washing.

2. It is a spur to washing, an external impulsive cause, by the strong motives whereby it presseth the sinner to wash. Here the law presseth him by its threatenings and curses against the unclean; the gospel presseth with the possibility, excellency, and unspeakable advantage of washing.

3. It is the key that sets open the fountain for washing in, Zech. 13:1, "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." It

is opened by the preaching of the gospel; which shews sinners, that whatever be their pollution, they are welcome to it. The voice of Christ in the gospel is, "Behold me," Is. 65:1, i. e. "Here I am." Thereby our Lord unlocks his treasures, laying them open to the view of sinners.

4. It is the vehicle of the blood and Spirit of Christ, whereby sinners may be washed, receiving the word by faith, Rom. 10:6, 7, 8, forecited. John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." The gospel is therefore called "the ministration of the Spirit, and righteousness," 2 Cor. 3 inasmuch as thereby Christ communicates his Spirit to sinners, and brings righteousness to them. Hence receiving the word by faith, the soul is cast into the mould of it, Rom. 6:17; for it is able to save the soul, Jam. 1:21, and works effectually in it, 1 Thess. 2:13. to the cleansing of the soul, John 15:3, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

I shall shut up this branch also with a few inferences.

INFERENCE 1. Saints and sinners need the word; forasmuch as they are both defiled, and need washing; the one washing to be begun on them, and the other to be carried on. And they that can live contented without it, are content to lie still in their filthiness; and will need no more to ruin them, but to get their will.

INFERENCE 2. They have an enmity at the word, appearing in their aversion to dip into it, and neglect of it, are neither washed, nor desire to be washed: Job 21:14, "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The reason of

their enmity against it is, their love to their lusts, to which it is an enemy: as, on the contrary, they whose hearts are turned against sin, are turned towards the word, as a mean for purging it away: John 3:20, 21, "For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

INFERENCE 3. Their soul's case is very hopeless, who get no good of the word: and these are all such who get no conviction by it, or are not stirred up by it to seek to be purged from their filthiness, who are not pointed to Christ as the only laver, and never partake of his blood and Spirit, by it. These are they on whom the great mean of washing from sin is ineffectual; of whom the Lord may justly say, as Ezek. 24:13, "In thy filthiness is lewedness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee."

INFERENCE 4. Lastly, They do not believe the word, who are not cleansed in heart and life thereby; for (as the apostle saith of the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 2:13,) "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." If the word were received by faith, it could not miss to be sanctifying: but beholding the unholiness of men, we may cry out, as Is. 53:1, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The word preached is not truly believed, therefore it brings not forth fruit.

Secondly, Christ washeth sinners by the sacraments, Eph. 5:26. Hence baptism is said to save us, 1 Pet. 3:21. The sacraments are external means of spiritual washing, and are made effectual by the Spirit, being received by faith; but no otherwise in subjects capable of believing; for God hath not communicated the virtue of sanctifying to the elements as to natural causes which work necessarily, 1 Pet. 3:21.

The use of the sacraments to the washing of sinners lies here.

1. The sacraments point out to us the laver wherein we may be washed, as being representing signs of Christ with his sanctifying blood. Hence the apostle saith, 1 Cor. 10:16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" They set the laver as it were before our eyes, and call us to think of it, and our need thereof. Therein Christ is as it were crucified before our eye, his blood springing forth for our washing.

2. The sacraments confirm our right in it, and our welcome to it, as seals. Hence the apostle saith concerning Abraham, Rom. 4:11, "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." The blood of Christ is most precious; but there is a grant of it made to us in the word, which is our charter, and the sacraments se al it. The word says, John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life:" the sacraments seal it, that so we may be excited

and encouraged to come boldly, and make use of it for our sanctification.

3. The sacraments present, exhibit, and apply it to us who believe, 1 Cor. 11:24. As by earth and stone delivered to a man upon a legal right, he is infefted and possessed of the house or land: so, by the sacraments received by faith, Christ and all his benefits are applied to us, for our cleansing.

An inference shall shut up this branch.

INFERENCE. Hence we may try, whether the sacraments be effectual to us, or not; whether we have believingly received them or not. While people are never the more holy, for all the sacraments they receive, the more the worse, their disease is the more confirmed their filthiness is the more fixed on them. But when they stir up the soul to an usemaking of Christ for sanctification, and men get a cubit added to their spiritual stature, it is a good sign.

Thirdly, and Lastly, Christ washeth sinners by afflictions. Hence the prophet saith, Is. 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." They also are but external means, in the hand of the Spirit, and cannot of themselves purify. But the Spirit makes use of them for cleansing sinners. There are two ways of purging filthiness, by water, and by fire; as we learn from Is. 4:4, "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning." Afflictions are God's fire for that end. Their use in the washing is sixfold.

1. Afflictions are memorials of ours in, and so puts us in mind to look back on our defilements; as they were to Joseph's brethren, when they said, as Gen. 42:21, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." The prosperous sinner wallows at ease in his filthiness; but when God lays his afflicting hand on him, the sharper it is, conscience is readily the more awakened out of its sleep. And it will readily read the sin, out of the punishment.

2. Afflictions are a glass, wherein one sees the loathsomeness of sin in the sight of God. While the sinner prospers in his course, he cannot think that God is sore displeased at it; as the Lord himself saith unto the sinner, Psal. 50:21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." But affliction is such a token of God's displeasure against sin, that when it comes, the sinner alters his thoughts; sees its loathsomeness before God, and therefore loathsome in itself; which makes him anxious to be washed.

3. Afflictions are a fire that melt off the paint, and deface the beauty of the defiling objects in the world. Hence saith the Lord unto Israel, Jer. 2:36, 37, "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them." Where was the excellency of the thirty pieces when God's hand was lifted up against Judas for them? The beauty of former lusts melts away, when a man is laid on a sick-bed: and the bewitching creature then loses all its charms.

4. Afflictions are a bridle whereby men are restrained from defiling themselves more, and are brought to a stand in a defiling course. Hence the Lord saith unto Israel, Hos. 2:6, "Behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." They serve to take off the edge of corrupt affections, and make them to languish; whereby the sinner becomes more considerate, and pliable to counsel from the word.

5. Afflictions are occasional causes of sinners thinking of and going to the fountain to wash. Hence the Lord saith of Israel, Hos. 5:15, "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." How many are there to whom afflictions have been the blessed means and occasions of their turning serious? Such a rod they met with, or they had gone on like the wild ass upon the mountains, snuffing up the wind.

6. Lastly, Afflictions are a sharp wind to blow up the fire of grace where it is, and particularly to excite faith, whereby the soul is washed. Hence the spouse prayeth, Cant. 4:16, "Awake, O north-wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." In prosperity people can fetch in their comfort by sense; but in afflictions, when created streams are dried up, they must fetch it in by faith, or else want it.

Two inferences shall conclude this branch.

INFERENCE 1. Let this cause us to take afflictions kindly; since they are means by which Christ washeth us. Though the water be cold and piercing, yet we endure it, that we may get our hands made clean. Though medicines sicken us, we blame not the physician, because

they are for our health. Why should we be angry at our God afflicting us, since the fruit designed is to purge away sin?

INFERENCE 2. Let us, in all our afflictions, seek purification from our sin, and know they are not effectual unless they have a sanctifying efficacy on us. They are indeed of the nature of fire, first causing the scum to come above, but next throwing it off. They do discover much of the corruption of the heart, that otherwise would be latent: but then if they humble the soul under a sense of sinfulness, and send it anew to Christ for purging of the nature, they are not in vain.

I shall now proceed to the second general head proposed, namely,

II. To consider the unwashed or unsanctified sinner's having no part with Christ.

In discussing this head, I shall shew,

1. What the unwashed sinner's having no part with Christ supposeth; and,

2. Wherein it lies.

First, We shall shew what the unwashed sinner's having no part with Christ supposeth. It supposeth,

1. That Christ himself is happy. He is not only happy as he is God, Rom. 9:5, who is therefore styled "God blessed for ever;" but as he is Mediator, the head of the body, the church. Hence it is said of him, Psal. 72:17, "Men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed." All mankind were brought to misery and ruin by Adam's

fall: but the man Christ was an exception from that rule. He was happy from the moment of the incarnation, all along, notwithstanding what he suffered: and from his resurrection and ascension his happiness was completed: Phil. 2:9, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Heb. 10:13, "From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." There are two things wherein Christ is completely happy.

1st, In having fully done the work he undertook to do. Hence he says to his Father, John 17:4, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He had a great work to do, for the glory of his Father, and the salvation of sinners. It was the hardest work that ever was taken in hand. All hardships from heaven, earth, and hell, met together upon him; and his work was to go through them all in a course of perfect obedience. And now it is done; he was born holy, lived righteous, satisfied completely by his death: now he is got to the joy set before him: Rom. 6:9, "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

2dly, In having received the reward of his work. Our Lord, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," Heb. 12:2. Never was there such a reward of work, as Christ has received; it bears proportion to the work, which was of infinite value. All the promises of the covenant, whether respecting himself, or his people, are now in his hand. They are won by him, and he is put in

possession of the things promised, which make an inexhaustible treasure. Hence the apostle, (Eph. 3:8.) speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

2. There is enough in him to make others happy too: Col. 1:19, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." There is a fulness of a fountain in him, whereby others may be supplied from him, may have part with him, and yet he have no lack. The first Adam was a spring of ruin to all his posterity: but the gospel points out Christ the second Adam as a spring of happiness for wretched sinners.

3. Sinners may have part with Christ in his fulness; it is lodged in him to be communicated. Hence our Lord himself says, Matth. 11:27, 28, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is the bowl on the top of the candlestick, (Zech. 4:2.) the immediate receptacle of the oil, from whence it is conveyed to the seven lamps. Joseph was sent to Egypt, and exalted there, to provide for Jacob's family in the dearth: so Christ is great Steward of heaven, for the behoof of poor sinners; that he having all in his hand, they may be happy in having part with him.

4. All that are sanctified are happy in having part with Christ: Col. 2:9, 10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." They have part in his work, by imputation; even as they had part with Adam in his sin: Rom. 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by

the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." They have part in his reward, by a real communication thereof to them; even as they had part with Adam in the corruption of his nature: John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." 1 Cor. 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." This, it is true, is but imperfect as yet; but it is so begun that it will undoubtedly be perfected. But such as it is, their sanctification is not the cause of it, but it is the cause of their sanctification. This appears from 1 John 1:3, 7, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

5. Lastly, Unholy sinners are miserable in the want of part with Christ. They are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. 2:12. Therefore this struck Peter, when he saw how deep it drew: for he said, Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." It is true, all that hear the gospel are externally called to the fellowship of his Son: but most men love the fellowship of the world lying in wickedness, and will not take part with Christ. So they are without it, though it lies open to them: and to each one of them may be said what Peter said to Simon Magus, Acts 8:21, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." Meanwhile their unholiness is not the thing that bars

them from having part with Christ; but their want of part with Christ is that whereby they keep themselves unholy.

Secondly, I shall show wherein the unwashed sinner's having no part with Christ does lie or consist. This will appear, with the misery of the case, in taking a view, 1. Of Christ's work; and, 2. Of his reward; in neither of which the unholy have part with him.

First, Christ is happy, in that he has done out the work he undertook for the salvation of sinners: and all that are his have part with him therein; it is imputed to them, as if they had done it, Gal. 2:20. And,

1. He has been born holy, and answered the demand of the law for holiness of nature, by his bringing a holy human nature into the world with him, as a public person. Hence in Luke 1:35, he is called "that holy thing born." Heb. 7:26, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners." So that demand of the law for salvation for all that are his, is answered; for in Col. 2:10, 11, they are said to be complete in him; and to be circumsised in him. The law cannot stop their salvation for want of a perfectly holy nature; for they have part with him, in the holiness of his nature, and that holy nature is communicated to them.*

But unholy sinners have no part with Christ in this matter: the holiness of Christ's nature is not imputed to them, or reckoned theirs. There is a holy birth of the second Adam, to take away the guilt of sin that we are born in: but such as are not washed by Christ from their sin, have no share in it.

The evidence of this is, that whosoever have part in the holiness of Christ's birth by imputation, are really born again in their own

persons: because Christ's holy birth is the efficient meritorious cause of the new birth of his members. Hence the apostle saith, 2 Cor. 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." Col. 2:11, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." Now, the unholy are not born again; therefore they have no part with Christ in his holy birth: and so they have nothing to answer the law's demand for holiness of nature.

2. Christ has lived a righteous life, in perfect obedience to the law's commands: Philip. 2:8, "He became obedient unto death." He did it as a public person: and all his have part with him in it; they obeyed in Christ, as they sinned in Adam, Rom. 8:3, 4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Hence are these epithets of the church, undefiled, without spot, complete in him. So the law's demand of obedience, as the condition of life, is answered as to them: their part in Christ's obedience answers it fully.

But the unholy have no part with Christ in the obedience of his life. For Christ's obedience being meritorious of our sanctification, the want of the latter is a plain evidence of no part in the former; and that upon the ground of justice, which requires the delivering of the thing purchased, upon the application of the price, Rom. 8:1–4. If ye have obeyed legally in Christ, ye obey really in your own persons; for Christ's obedience hath a conforming virtue in those to whom it is imputed, Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did

predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." 1 John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Inherent righteousness necessarily follows imputed righteousness. An unholy life argues no part in the holiness of Christ's life: therefore there is a bar between heaven and the unholy.

3. He has suffered, to the full satisfaction of the law in its threatening and curse for sin, Philip. 2:8, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Gal. 3:13, "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." And Christ suffering as a public person, all that are his suffered in him, having part with him in his sufferings. They were legally crucified with him, Gal. 2:20, died with him, Rom. 6:10, 11, and were buried with him, Col. 2:12. So the law's demand of satisfaction is answered for them, since they have part with Christ.*

But the unholy have no part with Christ in his sufferings. An undeniable evidence whereof is their not being conformed to him in his death, Philip. 3:10. The death of Christ will infallibly prove the death of sin, when one has part with Christ in it; Rom. 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Gal. 5:24, "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." As sure as Christ died for the sins of the elect, they will die to sin that have communion with him in it: for as death made its way from the members to the head, till it laid him in the grave; so the merit of his death will make its way from the head to them to their sanctification. So that demand of the law lies on their heads unanswered.

4. He has brought in everlasting righteousness. In what he was, did, and suffered, he fully satisfied what the law had to demand, coming up, as a public person, to an exact conformity thereto. This is the righteousness he has wrought, sufficient to cover every sinner in the sight of God, and to render him accepted as righteous. All that are his have part with him in it, Psal. 45:13; Cant. 6:10; Rev. 3:18. So they that have a righteousness that is law-biding.

But the unholy have no part with him in it. For wherever righteousness imputed is on any man, inherent holiness is in him. By the former satisfying the law, the strength of sin is taken away: so that the man cannot be living in sin as formerly. Hence the, apostle saith, Rom. 6:2, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Secondly, Christ has received the reward of his work; and so he as an inexhaustible treasure; and all that are his have part with him is it.

Christ is risen again from the dead. By the authority of the Father he is discharged from the grave; death is never to seize him more: Acts 2:24, "God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." And all his have part with him in his ressurrection: Eph. 2:6, "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: forasmuch as he rose as a public person. But the unholy have no part with him in his resurrection. For,

1st, They are still dead in their sins, while they live in them. Where is there part then in Christ's resurrection? They that have part with him are risen with him, risen by virtue of his resurrection; the power of the resurrection of the head raising the members from death in sin,

Col. 2:12; and 3:1. Alas! the grave-clothes of the sins of the flesh, which ye are not putting off, but keeping on, and the ties whereof are still as fast upon you as ever, speak you destitute of any part with Christ in this matter.

2dly, They are still members of the congregation of the dead, Eph. 2:1, 2, 3. When our Lord rose, he left the congregation of the dead in their graves; yea, he conversed not with the world thereafter, as before his death. And so, whenever a soul gets part with Christ, it leaves the world lying in wickedness, comes out from among them, and walks no more according to the course of this world. Hence the apostle saith, Rom. 6:4, 5, "We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death; we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." What shadow of ground have they then to pretend to a part with him, that are not walking in newness of life, but just according to the course of the world.

2. Christ is now ascended up into glory, where he sits at the Father's right hand, Mark 16:19. He ascended into it, as a public person, to take possession of it for us, Heb. 6:20. And all his have part with him in it, as the members of the glory of the head: Eph. 2:6, "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

But the unholy have no part with him in it. For,

1st, They are yet lying in the filth of their natural state, through original and actual sin, Psal. 14:3; all over defiled, Tit. 1:15. They may have worldly glory, outside glory, such as ariseth from bravery,

wealth, and honour; yea they may glory in wickedness, that is really their shame. But there is no heavenly glory or any, but by sanctifying grace, 2 Cor. 3:18; that only makes a glorious inside, Psal. 45:13; in so far as thereby the purity of the divine image is on the soul.

2dly, Neither is their heart there, nor are they making forward to it. Our Lord tells us, Matth. 6:21, that "where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." And therefore the apostle urges, Col. 3:1, 2, to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth." What part then have they with Christ in his glory, whose affections are not on things above, but on the earth, Phil. 3:19, "who mind earthly things?" They carry themselves as natives of the world, not as pilgrims in it. Their great aim is, to compass designs of worldly profits and pleasures, but not to be fitted for glory, 1 John 3:3.

3. Christ has the Spirit of life and holiness dwelling in him, as tho head of his body mystical. So the Spirit of life is in him, to be communicated; and it is the purchase of his death, Rev. 3:1, "He hath the seven Spirits; seven Spirits answerable to the seven golden candlesticks; enough to quicken and actuate them all. Hence he is said to quicken, John 5:21, 26. And all his have part with him therein, Philip. 2:1. The same Spirit that is in the head, is in the members too, in so much that "the Spirit of God dwells in them; and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

But the unholy have no part with him in his Spirit For,

1st, He is the holy Spirit, "the Spirit of holiness," Rom. 1:4; so called not only from the work of sanctification ascribed peculiarly to him, but from the holiness of his nature, in opposition to the unclean

spirit, Mark 3:29, 30, to attest all the works of God without himself, whereof he is the immediate worker, to be holy. So that in whomsoever he dwells, and actuates, they must needs be made holy: Rom. 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death." Since then the unholy are under the law of sin as the subjects thereof, and under the law of spiritual death, they have no part with Christ.

2dly, They have the spirit of the world in them, conforming them to the world, in their frame of heart, way, and walk, 1 John 4:4. It is an unclean, unholy spirit, whereby they cannot relish nor favour the holy things of God: but things that are fleshy, sensual, carnal, and earthly, Jude ver. 19; not without a secret enmity at true holiness, Rom. 8:7, and cannot hold on in the way of God, as Caleb did, Num. 14:24.

3dly, They live in the state wherein Adam left them, without a saving change. 1 Cor. 15:45, Adam was made "a living soul," but Christ "a quickening spirit." What men derive from Adam, they have; a natural life, a life of reason, gifts of knowledge, &c. But what men derive from Christ, they have not; they are not quickened by him with the Spirit of life unto God. But if they had part with Christ, they would be spiritually quickened souls; as sure as having part with Adam, they are living souls.

4. There is a fulness of grace in the man Christ: Col. 1:19, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." John 1:14, "The Word was full of grace and truth." Grace is given him without measure, John 3:4; and all that are his partake with him in it, it

being in him as in the storehouse; it is so poured on him as the head, that it runs down to the skirts of his garment, John 1:16.

But the unholy have no part with him in his grace. For,

1st, They are not partakers of the divine nature, that new nature which is derived from Christ, by the communication of grace from him by the Spirit into his mystical members, whereby they escape the corruption of the world, 2 Pet. 1:4. Instead of that, the old nature reigns in them, which is enmity against God, and serious religion. The old man with his deeds is still in his vigour, has not yet got his deadly wound.

2dly, Whatever good or grace may seem to be in them, it is but in some one or few particulars. There are still several black buts in their religion; they never make thorough work of it, Psal. 119:6, They have not respect unto all God's commandments. For they are never made new creatures; though some things, yet never are all things become new with them: An evidence that they have no part in the grace of Christ; for then should they have grace for grace.

3dly, Hence they do not bear Christ's image: they are not like him, in the set of their spirit, and tenor of their walk: 1 John 2:6, "For he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." They look like the old Adam, sinful, sensual, and averse from God. But O how unlike the holy crucified Jesus, and how quite unconcerned to be like him, their own consciences bear witness. But the having part with Christ makes a person like him.

5 Lastly, Christ is anointed of the Father with the Spirit to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of his church. Hence he says himself, Is.

61:1. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." And the apostle Peter saith, Acts 10:38, that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him." This is the honour put on him, to bear these offices, signified by his names Messias and Christ, i. e. anointed. And as he is Christ, all that are his are Christians, anointed with the same Spirit, Psal. 45:7, having part with him in his offices.

1st, Christ is a prophet: and all that are his, have part with him in his prophetical office, are prophets too, Psal. 105:15. They are let into the knowledge of the things of God by the Spirit. Hence the apostle saith, 1 John 2:20, 27, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you: and ye need not that any man teach you: But, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie: and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." They are on the secret of heaven: For (Psal. 25:14,) "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant," Matt. 11:25. And they teach them to others too, though they cannot make them effectual. Hence David saith, Psal. 51:13, "I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Not only ministers, but every true Christian has this office; the former in a public, the latter in a private captivity, Philip. 2:15, 16.

But the unholy have no part with him in his prophetical office.

(1.) They are not illuminated by the Spirit of holiness, savingly to know the things of God, 1 Cor. 2:12, 14. They may be taught by men, but are not taught of God: they may know the literal sense of the words of the gospel; but the things thereof in their suitableness to the divine perfections and sinner's case, are are hid from them, Matt. 11:25. They never get into the secret of religion.

(2.) Neither do they by the Spirit of holiness enlighten the world. Being dark themselves, they darken the world by their ungodly, profane, or formal lives. Most of them see no tie on them to be their brother's keeper. Such as teach others the things of God, do it by a gift, for their own glory; not by the Spirit, out of love to Christ and his glory. So they have no part with him in his prophetical office.

2dly, He is a Priest: and all his have part with him in that venerable office. They are priests too, 1 Pet. 2:9, a royal priesthood: Rev. 1:6, priests unto God. They are consecrated to God to serve him in his spiritual temple, in their robes of Christ's imputed righteousness and inherent holiness. They offer sacrifices of thanksgiving unto God, which are accepted of God through Christ, their only altar. They offer to him themselves, Rom. 12:1, their service to him in acts of worship and duty, Heb. 13:15; Acts 10:4, and in suffering or bearing the cross, Philip. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6.

But the unholy have no part with Christ in his priestly office.

(1.) They are not of the line, not descended from our great High Priest, as born of his Spirit. They were never truly consecrated, or made holy persons; they are destitute of imputed and implanted righteousness: they are wholly polluted and defiled, as being of the

world lying in wickedness: so if they pretend to the spiritual priesthood, they will be, as polluted, put from it.

(2.) They do not, nor cannot offer acceptable sacrifices to God. They never offer themselves to God as a sacrifice, but to the world and their lusts. If they offer prayers or other services to him, they never offer them on the right altar, Christ. Hence they, and all they do, even their best things, are an abomination, Prov. 28:9.

Lastly, Christ is a King: and all his have part with him in that honourable office. They are kings too, Rev. 1:6, "Kings unto God." They have the right of dominion over their spiritual enemies, the rule of their own spirits governing themselves by the laws of Christ, and the lordship of the world, Rom. 4:13; and they are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. They do not yet peaceably possess their kingdom; the rebels and their open enemies are making constant wars against them; but they do overcome, and are "more than conquerors, through him that loved them," 1 John 4:4; Rom. 8:37.

But the unholy have no part with Christ in his kingly office.

They are servants and slaves to sin and Satan, Rom. 6:16. They are under the power of Satan, Acts 26:18; led captive at his will, 2 Tim. 2:26. They have no gracious management of their own spirits, Prov. 25:28. They are the servants of corruption; they can neither think nor do any service acceptable to God.

THE APPLICATION

I shut up all with some practical inferences.

INFERENCE 1. Holiness is absolutely necessary to happiness: for (Heb. 12:14,) "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Ye may be either poor or rich, sick or whole, and yet be happy. But if ye be not holy, ye are miserable; for ye have no part with Christ, And, Acts 4:12, "There is no salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." It is astonishing to think, how easy many that hear the gospel are about holiness; they are in no concern whether they be holy or not. They would not have people to take them for saints; nay, holy people are a jest with them. There is no accounting for this any other way but that holiness is rare in the world, and they have no mind to be singular, nor to distinguish themselves from "the world lying in wickedness."

But consider these four things.

1. God is holy. The God that made you is holy by necessity of nature; he is so holy that he cannot be but holy. If God is necessarily holy, he cannot but hate unholiness; because be cannot but love his own image, and hate what is contrary to his nature: therefore he cannot but hate your unholiness, and for it hate you who are unholy. And what we hate as contrary to our nature, we seek to destroy. Now, consider the misery of being objects of God's hatred and aversion, and what makes you so; and ye will see the necessity of your being holy, 1 Pet. 1:16, "Be ye holy," saith the Lord, "for I am holy."

2. Christ our Saviour is holy. As he is God, he is "the holy One of Israel;" as he is man, he is "that holy thing," Luke 1:35. Jesus is called "the holy One;" the very devils owned him to be so, Mark 1:24. The very end of his being Jesus, was to make men holy, Matth. 1:21, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from

their sins." He came to destroy the works of the devil, he died to redeem sinners from their sins, Tit. 2:14. What part then can ye possibly imagine yourselves to have in him, while ye continue unholy?

3. The body of Christ is holy; they that belong to him, the company of the saved, Eph. 5:25, 26. The devil is the god of this world; his subjects are the world lying in wickedness. Out of them Christ raises his kingdom, and his subjects are all holy, Gal. 4:4; Rev. 19:14. It is their distinguishing badge from those that belong to Satan, that agrees to them all, and to them only, 2 Tim. 2:19. So that if ye are not holy, ye belong not to Christ, but to Satan.

4. Heaven is holy; it is a holy state, a holy place, where no unholy thing can enter, Rev. 21:27. As to the dogs and swine, their place will be without, Rev. 21:15, that is, the unholy, who "go with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow that was washed to the wallowing in the mire," shall be cast out from the supper of the saints in glory into outer darkness, Matth. 8:12.

INFERENCE 2. There is no true holiness, but in communion with Christ. Men may have a shew and semblance of holiness, without union and communion with Christ. But real holiness acceptable to God, no man attains but in Christ, being sanctified only with his blood, by his Spirit, through faith; made new creatures after his image, by participation of the all-fulness of grace in him, as at large declared, 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:2; Acts 26:18.

And therefore holiness is quite another thing, than,

1. Common civility. A man may be civil, not rude, but courteous, discreet, and obliging in his conversation; and yet be a stranger to holiness. This was the case of the young man, of whom, "when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," Mark 12:34. There are some rude persons that bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, who behave themselves neither according to the rules of grace nor good manners: some professors that affect and pride themselves in rudeness, regarding no body, nor their offence, but only to please themselves. Such would do well to consider, whether that be consistent with real holiness or not. The reason of the doubt, is the second great command of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Howbeit, civility is not holiness, though a part of the matter of it.

2. Morality, whether we understand by it common honesty in dealings in the world; or a conformity to the letter of the law, which makes a blameless outward conversation, and goes under the name of moral virtue, but has no relation to Christ and his Spirit. Men may have all this, and not be holy; as had the Pharisee, Luke 18:11, who "stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." This was also the case of Paul, Phil. 3:6, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." These fruits are in many like the apples of Sodom, which are fair to look at, but when handled fall to ashes.

3. A form of godliness, 2 Tim. 3:5. There may be the going the round of the external duties of religion, where there is no holiness: for these may be done by them that are without Christ, Luke 18:12; Matt. 5:20;

Is. 58:2, 3; though many place all their religion in these things, as if they pray, communicate, &c. to be concerned no more to be holy.

All these differ from true holiness,

1st, In the original and spring of them. True holiness springs from union with Christ, the Spirit applying the blood of Christ to the soul, received by faith, improving the word, sacraments, and afflictions. The Spirit is the efficient cause, the blood the meritorious cause, and faith the instrumental cause of true sanctification. But these others have a far lower rise. They are the effect of good education and breeding; of unsanctified consideration of their own circumstances and worldly interest, that oblige many to take up themselves, and live regularly; of fear and hope; of respect to credit and reputation; and in some, of legal convictions.

2dly, In the subject of them. Holiness diffuseth itself through the whole man, inward and outward, 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:23. These are mere plasterings of the outward man, while enmity against God, raucour against serious godliness, and reigning power of lusts in the heart, do remain in their native force, and the old man bears full sway within; as appears in the Pharisees. They make a new life, but they leave the old nature unhealed, unrenewed.

3dly, In the extent of them. True holiness extends to all the Lord commands and forbids, Psal. 119:6; for the whole law is written in the heart, Heb. 8:10; and so they are holy in all manner of conversation. These never take in more than some shreds of the law; such men never set themselves to conform to it in its spirituality. They quite neglect many of the duties thereof; they consider them

not, or they contemn them: for they have no mind to take more of them, than makes for their purpose.

Lastly, In the nature and kind of them. True holiness is a cluster of the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22, "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." They are acts of moral discipline, which have self-love in an unrenewed heart, not the love of God in a renewed heart, for their principle. The reason of them is not the will of God; for reasons of their own they do so, but not because God commands it. They do not their works in faith of the promise of assistance from heaven, nor of acceptance for Christ's sake; but out of their own stock, little valuing whether they be accepted or no; or if they do, looking for acceptance on their intriusic worth. Their end is not the glory of God, and to express their gratitude; but as they come from self, so they are swallowed up in self.

INFERENCE 3. Vain are the pretences of the unholy to part with Christ; for no unwashed sinner has part with the holy Jesus. They do but deceive themselves in their pretending thereto; and the deceit will out on them to their eternal confusion, if they see it not timely. Here consider,

1. Who are unwashed sinners; and,

2. The state of unwashed sinners, as having no part with Christ.

1. Consider who are unwashed sinners. In the general,

1st, Those who have not yet escaped the pollutions of the world in the outward man, but in the course of their lives are conform to the

world lying in wickedness, Psal. 24:3, 4; Gal. 5:19–21. How can they pretend to be washed, on whom the gross filth of sin is still lying visible in their outward life and conversation? Men may escape that, and yet not be truly washed; escape and yet be intangled again by apostacy. Let none such pretend to have part in Christ, 2 Pet. 2:20, 21, for Christ will disown them.

2dly, They that have no apparent beauty of holiness on them, 1 Thess. 5:5. Men deceive themselves in despising the appearance of holiness, scorning to appear holy. That is but a peace of fashionable contempt of religion, poured on it in compliance to an ungodly world, and a naughty heart: for wherever grace is in the heart, it will shine forth in the life, Matth. 6:22; Philip. 2:15, 16. And though men may appear holy, who are not so; yet no man can be holy that has no appearance of it. If there is any religion at at all in the world, it must be among them that have an appearance of it, and not among those that have not.

More particularly, they are yet unwashed by Christ,

1st, Who have never yet had the glass of the law held to their face, in a work of conviction of the sinfulness of their nature, heart, and life, John 16:8. Christ washes none till he has discovered to them their pollution. For till then they will never see their need of washing. He washeth by the word, as by its light it convinceth of defilement, points out the cleanness to be aimed at, and sets the soul astir anxiously to seek it.

2dly, Who have not yet got a view of the filthiness, loathsomeness, and abominable nature of sin, Ezek. 36:31. Men's consciences may be fired with a sense of the guilt of sin; so as they may be brought to cast

it out as a coal that would burn them; that yet are blind to the filth of sin, and see not how it defiles them. This appears, in that if they could be but safe from wrath, they would never part with sin.

3dly, Who have not yet been made willing to be made clean. None are washed against their will, Jer. 13:27. And there is need of a day of power to make willing, Psal. 110:3. Men naturally love to be still in the pollution of their sin, as the sow to wallow in the mire. They are as loath to be brought away, as fishes to come out of the water. Nay, there is in every unregenerate man, a heart enmity against holiness, Rom. 8:7. The heart spits its venom against it. They are not only not fond of it, but they hate it: A certain indication, that they are void of it.

4thly, Who have never yet felt an absolute need of Christ, his blood and Spirit, for their sanctification; and so have not yet come to Christ by faith for it, Hos. 5:13; Psal. 51:2; and 65:3. There is no washing but by Christ, and in union with him: therefore they who have not come to Christ for sanctification, whatever pains they have been at to wash themselves, are yet unwashed.

2. Consider the state of unwashed sinners as having no part with Christ. Having no part with Christ,

1st, They have no part in the favour of God, Eph. 2:12. They are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." They are yet in a state of enmity with God; for he only is our peace, and the only way to the Father. All their sins, original and actual, in the guilt of them, do yet lie upon them: there is not one item blotted out of their account. For God

gives no pardons, but to sinners in Christ: they must meet him there who would be pardoned or reconciled, 2 Cor. 5:19.

2dly, They are loathsome in God's sight; his soul abhors them as abominable, Tit. 1:15. No sinner can be savoury in God's sight, but by the sweet-smelling savour of Christ's sacrifice upon them. The smell of Jacob was sweet to Isaac, in the goodly raiment of his elder brother: and sinners are savoury to God, only in Christ, 2 Cor. 2:15. While the sinner has no part with Christ, the filth of all his sin, original and actual, lies on him; and there is nothing on him to master the filthy savour arising therefrom.

3dly, They have no part with the family of God, but with "the world lying in wickedness, 1 John 1:3, and 5:19, "They are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," being without Christ, Eph. 2:12. They have no right to the privileges of God's children; for none can have that but in the right of Christ as his head. What is the state of the world lying in wickedness, is their state. They are under God's wrath, and the curse of the law.

Lastly, They shall have no part with the saints in light, but their part will be with sinners in outer darkness, Col. 1:12, 13; Rev. 22:15. One who has no part with Christ here, will have no part in heaven hereafter for none can come there, but in and through him. They will have their part in "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. 21:8.

INFERENCE 4, Lastly, The way to be washed from sin, and made holy, is to get part with Christ by faith.

1. Think not that ye must first be holy, before ye can have part with Christ: but ye must first have that part with Christ, ere ye can be holy, as appears from what is said. The former is as absurd as to say, the sick must be cured ere he come to the physician, and the filthy washed ere he come to the waters. Hence, (1.) Your unholiness cannot bar you from getting part with Christ. (2.) The first step to holiness is to believe.

2. This is a sure way to holiness; it cannot misgive. For hereby the sick are put in the hand of the physician, the filthy in the laver. The sinner united to Christ, most needs partake of his blood and Spirit: as through our relation to Adam we are defiled, so by our relation to Christ we come to be sanctified.

3. Lastly, This is the only way, as being of God's appointment. The sanctification of a sinner is above the power of nature, not to be reached by natural endeavours; they have not that word of appointment.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE; OR, THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

Several Sermono, preached at ETTRICK, in the year 1723,

Fight the good fight of faith. - 1 TIMOTHY 6:12

THE Apostle having given Timothy an exhortation to several particular duties, here gives him an exhortation to the Christian life in general. Wherein we have two things.

1. A description of the Christian life. It is not an easy, idle, inactive life; but, (1.) A fight, a combat, a wrestling: for there are many enemies set to keep us out of the promised land. (2.) A good fight. There are many ill fights in the world. The men of the world have many fights and squabbles about this world, the honours, advantages, and pleasures of it, not worth the fighting for. But it is a good fight, a noble and worthy fight, wherein true valour and magnanimity appears. (3.) A fight of faith. Some understand this of the doctrine of faith, as that which is to be fought for. I understand it rather of the grace of faith, by which the fight is to be managed. This comprehends the former; and is more agreeable to the practical directions, ver. 11, and the "laying hold on eternal life," which is done by the grace of faith. So it is a fight to be managed in the way of believing.

2. The word of command given: "Fight the good fight of faith:" Agonize, like a combatant, wrestler, puting forth your utmost vigour. Timothy was engaged already in the fight; but still he was in the field

of battle, and the enemy not yet off the field: therefore it is said to him, Fight. Paul was going off the field, and he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," 2 Tim. 4:7. Timothy was come on the field, and to him it was said, Fight.

The doctrine natively arising from the words, is this.

DOCTRINE. The Christian life is the good fight of faith, that must be fought by all that would see heaven.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall shew,

I. In what respects the Christian life is the fight of faith.

II. In what respects it is a good fight.

III. Why the Christian life in the disposal of holy providence, is made a fight.

IV. Why a fight of faith.

V. Touch at some particular fights of faith the Christian may have in his course heavenward.

I. We shall shew in what respects the Christian life is the fight of faith. I take up this in these seven things.

1. There are enemies of our salvation, and there must be faith in the soul to set against them. Where there are not two parties, there can be no fight. There is no fighting in heaven, for there are no enemies there, Rev. 21:25. There is none of this fighting in the unbelieving world neither; for the enemies have all there alone, and there is no

faith to set against them, Luke 11:21. Unbelief carries the man quite over to the enemy's side; it is the evil spy, that says, It is needless to think on the fight. This fight is only found where faith and its opposites meet; and that is in the Christian's heart and life: Cant. 6 ult. "What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies." So the combatant is only the man that has given up his name to Christ, and listed with him.

2. The enemy will not be quiet; he will make an attack on the believer setting heavenward. Hence is that exhortation, 1. Pet. 5:8, "Be sober, be viligant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Satan may rock his own children, and labour to keep all quiet: the more secure they lie, they are in the less hazard to break away from him. But God's children must not look for such treatment; their faces are away-ward from his kingdom; and therefore the enemy's face will be set against them, as a prize.

3. God's people must resist: 1 Pet. 5:9, "Whom [Satan] resist stedfast in the faith." They must set themselves to stand their ground against all opposition, and grapple with the difficulties in their way to heaven, Luke 13:24. They must be denied to their ease, content to quit their soft beds of ease, and take the field for it, and endure hardness, 2 Tim 2:3.

4. They must resist by faith, 1 Pet. 5:9. above-cited. Faith is the mouth of the soul, that must give the shout in this battle, the hands the men of might must find in it, the weapon they must wield in it, both in the offensive and defensive part of it: Eph. 6:16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the

fiery darts of the wicked." So one must not only have the grace of faith, but he must have it in exercise.

5. They must continue in that resistance, and hold on in it: Eph. 6:13, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." The Christian life is a fight, and that denotes a continuance. Many think they should have no more ado, but whenever an enemy starts up, to lay at him with a stroke, and strike him down; and so be easy again: and so they perplex themselves with doubts, fears, and jealousies of the love of God, because it is otherwise with them, the enemy being still fresh and vigorous, Is. 26:18. But alas! Sirs, ye should consider, that that may be striking indeed, but not a fight, being of no continuance.

6. They must lay their account with ups and downs, getting as well as giving wounds in the encounter. Hence says David, Psal. 30:7, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Prevailing Jacob halted in his thigh, after his struggle of faith with the angel. To be absolute masters over the enemy, would not be the fight of faith, but the triumph of faith, which is reserved for heaven. ln the fight of faith, the Christian may be set to his knees, but must not give over: yea, though the enemy should lay him on his back, he must say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me," Mic. 7:8, and so bend to his feet again.

7. Lastly, Faith has the chief interest in this fight. In it there will be use for all the graces, the doing and suffering graces: yet the fight has

its name from faith, as that which has the chief hand in it. For,

1st, It is faith's possession that the plea is about. Life and salvation in Christ Jesus is held forth, offered, and exhibited in the gospel to the sinner; and the sinner believing in Christ, appropriates and takes possession of it by faith: Cant. 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." John 20:28, "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." 1 John 5:11, 12, "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." There is the ground of the quarrel the enemy has. If the man will quit his plea for life and salvation by Christ, the fight is at an end; the enemy has his design. but if not, the alarm is sounded, and the fight begins to force him from it.

2dly, It is faith that holds fast the possession which the enemy would force from the man. For it is the bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul, and it is that which is the hold of Christ and eternal life: Heb. 10:35, 38, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. Now the just shall live by faith." Therefore, believing, we are said to cleave to the Lord, to hold fast what we have, &c. The securities and rights to the heavenly inheritance are the promises; faith gripes them, and so keeps possession.

3dly, It is faith that, of all the graces, is the main actor in this fight. Those worthies in Heb. 11 exercised and had need of all the graces of the Spirit. There was much love, humility, meekness, patience, &c. in their doing and suffering so great things: but all is ascribed to faith. For faith is the captain of all the graces; it leads them out, puts an

edge upon them for the fight, and makes them active. And therefore, in this fight, the word that is given from heaven, is, "Be not afraid, only believe," Mark 5:36, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," Eph. 6:16.

QUESTION. How comes it that faith has the preference among all the rest of the graces in this fight? ANSWER. On these accounts,

(1.) It is the grace that is first on the field of battle, and all the rest follow it. It is the first link of the chain of the graces of the Spirit, that draws all the rest after it, 1 Tim. 1:5. It is the mother-grace, out of whose womb they all come forth; because it is the uniting grace that knits the soul to Christ, the fountain of fulness. So the way to get love, repentance, patience, &c. is to believe, thus it furnishes the field of battle, with fighters on Christ's side.

(2.) It strengthens them all, according to its measure; for that is the rule of the dispensation of grace, "According to thy faith, be it unto thee." According as it is weak or strong, so are they: for it is not only the mother-grace but the nursing grace. Faith lies as it were nearest the fountain, and is the channel of conveyance of supply: so as it gets in, they get out for their nourishment.

(3.) It brings the healing they get to their wounds. Many a time the Christian's love is foundered in this fight, and is like to bleed to death, by an arrow of jealousy of God shot into their breast. Faith gives the combatant a sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus; and so pulls out the arrow, John 2:4. Their patience is wounded, that it can no longer stand; faith brings the promise, Heb. 2:3, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and

not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," and it sets patience to its feet again. It brings the leaves of the tree of life, applies them to the wounds, and heals them; so the fight is renewed.

(4.) It carries on the fight, and obtains the victory: 1 Pet. 5:9, "Whom resist, stedfast in the faith." 1 John 5:4, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is by faith the enemy is put to flight, that partial victories are obtained during this life, and that the total victory is obtained at death, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. Thus by faith the martyrs swimmed through a sea of blood to the other side. And hence,

4thly, The great design of the enemy is to weaken faith, and to wrest it away out of the combatants hand. It was by unbelief of the threatening of the first covenant, that Satan ruined the world at first: and now his great business is, to keep men from believing the promise of the second covenant. He knows full well their strength lies there; and take away that, they shall be as other men, that he may do with them what he will.

Lastly, The great design of a holy God, in that fight is the trial of faith. Hence says the apostle, 1 Pet. 1:6, 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 Jesus Christ." Faith acts in trusting an unseen God, believing his word, living upon the credit of the promise. Thus the Lord will have his people to go through the wilderness of this world,

"walking by faith, not by sight." When they come to heaven the trial of faith is over: so there is no more fight.

II. The second thing is, to shew in what respects it is a good fight.

1. The cause is good. Many fight to carry their ill cause by force, and their fightings proceed from an eager desire to satisfy their lusts, James 4:1, 2. But here is a good fight for a good cause, cleaving to the Lord over the belly of all difficulties; laying hold, and keeping hold, of eternal life. It is the cause of God, the cause of Christ, the cause of the sinner's eternal salvation, which cannot be but a good cause, to endeavour the maintenance of against all opposers.

2. It is an honourable fight, worthy of a man of true valour and magnanimity, 1 Cor. 9:25–27; Prov. 16:32. The men of the world boast themselves of their strength in making their part good against weak worms like themselves. In the mean time they are slaves to the devil and their lusts, and have neither heart nor hand to resist them, but are captive at pleasure. But the believer in his fight encounters more formidable enemies: Eph. 6:12, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

3. There is a good captain in this fight, the Lord Jesus Christ, under whose standard the believer fights, Heb. 2:10. He went on the head of all the fighting company and overcame; and he calls his people to make their way through an army which he has already broken: Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in

his throne." He is ever at their hand, and the cause is his; it must therefore needs be a good fight.

4. In regard of the good that is got even of the partial victories; the believers being helped to stand shocks, and get over them, though the war be not ended. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 5:3, 4, 5, "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed." The sharp trials of faith are hard in the time: but a review of bypast dangers, of the Lord's working for the soul in the time of the combat, gives an exquisite pleasure: so that the man comes to say, It is good that I was afflicted.

5. Lastly, In regard the final and complete victory in the end, is sure. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Many a battle the believer may lose in the course of the war; he may be shamefully foiled: but though the enemy prevail so far, yet the believer shall always be the conqueror at the end. The men of Ai got an advantage against Joshua's men: but it did not last; they got a complete victory at length over the men of Ai.

III. Why is the Christian life, in the disposal of holy providence, made a fight? No doubt the Lord could have given his people a constant sunshine as well on this side as the other side of death, and cleared the way of those armed adversaries that are ready to attack them.

1. That the members may be conformed to their head in their passage through the world. The life that our Lord Jesus had in the world, was a fighting life all along, till he left the world, and entered into his glory. It is very agreeable then, that his followers should find it so,

and so be conformed to their head in suffering as well as in reigning: Rom. 8:17, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 2 Tim. 2:12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,"

2. That the nothingness, and utter unworthiness of the creature, which is to wear the crown of glory for ever, may convincingly appear; so as they themselves and all others may see it is owing purely to free grace, not to them, Deut. 8:2. We find the Lord usually laid those very low whom he minded to raise up on high; as in the case of Joseph, Moses, and David: and this to stain the pride of all glory, that they might see their own unworthiness, and that it was wholly of free grace, and owing to no merit of theirs. The Lord accordingly minding to bring a select company into heaven at length, in the first place brings them into the wilderness. There they are stung with serpents, scorched with thirst, &c. whereby much corruption and weakness appeared in them, &c. and afterwards they are brought unto a wealthy place.

3. For the greater confusion of the grand adversary, who, attacked him in person in the world, and whom he causeth poor weak creatures to triumph over after they have maintained a fight with him, Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Our Lord Jesus overcame and baffled Satan's temptations in the wilderness. He triumphed over him on the cross, where the heat of the battle was: Col. 2:15, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Satan renews the battle againt his members on earth: and what is the issue? The strippling, with his sling and stone, lays Goliath on the green. The weak believer through

faith confounds the united wit and force of men and devils, Luke 10:19, which tends to the greater confusion of the enemy.

4. For the greater glory of the captain of their salvation, the more full display of the freedom of grace, and the efficucy of his blood and Spirit. (1.) Every wound the believer gets in this fight, puts a new jewel in Christ's crown. For every new wound requires a new plaister from Christ. That is a new item for the believer in the debt-book of free grace, and so puts him more in free grace's debt. (2.) Every wound the believer gives in this fight, considering his weakness and fecklessness, and the strength and subtility of the enemy, does the same.

5. For that they may have a greater variety of experiences: Rom. 5:4, "Patience worketh experience; and experience, hope." The exercised Christian is the man of most experience. There is a great variety of promises in the covenant, for the various cases the children of God may be in: and that his people may have experience of the relish of these promises, he brings them into the cases to which these promises are adapted. Who finds the sap of that promise, Is. 33:16, "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure," like those that are put to a fight of faith for their daily bread; or of that, Deut. 32:36, "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, like" those whose case is brought to an extremity in point of hopelessness?

6. Lastly, That heaven may be the more sweet to them, when they come to it. It is in this respect that heaven is called a place of comfort, Luke 16:25, wiping away of tears, rest from labours. None

will find rest so sweet as the wearied man. A child of God come to his journey's end, after many falls and risings, after many ups and downs; set ashore after a dangerous voyage, will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb in a higher strain, than if he had never been in danger from his first setting out.

IV. The fourth thing is, to shew why their fight is called a fight of faith. The reason is, because by that means all the glory of the victories obtained redounds to free grace, not to the sinner himself: Rom. 4:16, "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." The Lord is jealous of his own glory, and sinful man is very apt to ascribe something to himself; therefore faith is pitched upon; for its activity lies in these two.

1. In carrying the sinner quite out of himself, and from off his own bottom. Hence believers are said to have no confidence in the flesh, Philip. 3:3. The unbeliever's great strength lies in summoning together all the power of his natural abilities, and in confidence thereof trying the battle. But faith makes a man to be denied to all his own abilities, and not to lean to himself, his light, strength, &c. And therefore as the fire burns keenest in the sharp frost, so faith acts most vigorously, when sentence of death is passed on all probable means, as Abraham's faith.

2. In leaning upon the Lord for all. Hence believers are also said to rejoice in Christ Jesus, Philip. 3:3. Faith goes out to the battle in the name of the Lord, holding by his promise, trusting that he will make it out: and so it is the mouth of the soul that sucks the sap of the promise, by a fiducial application of it, and trusting in it.

V. I will touch at some particular fights of faith, the Christian may have in his course heavenward, such as,

1. In a call to some more than ordinary work or duty.

2. In desertion.

3. In temptations from Satan.

4. In afflictions.

5. With this present evil world.

6. With sin.

7. With death.

First, There is a fight of faith, in a call to some more than ordinary work or duty. Sometimes the Lord takes trial of his people by calling them to some extraordinary piece of duty. Thus Abraham was called out to this field, Gen. 22:1; Moses to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, Exod. 3; and Jonah, to preach to the Ninevites.

Here the believer gets his hands full, as much as he is able to wrestle with; yea, and sometimes as much as lays him by, his faith failing. Thus Jonah was so put to it in this fight, that he goes to fly towards Tarshish, to shift the duty.

Now, what makes the difficulty here, are, (1.) The hardness of the work in itself, as in Abraham's case. (2.) A deep sense of our inability for it, as in the case of Moses, when commanded to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, Exod. 4:10. For sometimes it is that

which the Christian seems of all things to be most unfit for. (3.) The great danger there may be in it, so that the Christian must run a risk in setting about it. Sometimes he must risk his reputation, as in Jonah's case; sometimes he must risk even his safety or life. Here there is a particular fight of faith to be fought. And therein faith is to be exerted,

1. In complying with God's call in the faith of the promise of strength for it. Hence says the apostle, Philip. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." God never calls his people to any duty, but what they have ground to expect furniture for from himself in the way of believing: "No man goeth a warfare on his own charges." God's call implies a promise of furniture: "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." And God suits the back to the burden. It is much alike then whether it be little work and little strength, or g reat work and strength conform.

2. In following the duty, in the faith of divine protection, as far as he sees good. Faith trusts God with one's safety in the way of duty, according to th e promise, Psal. 91:11, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." As long as one is found in the way where God bids him go, he may be sure God will set a hedge about him, and make all work together for his good.

Secondly, There is a fight of faith in desertion. Here the believer is on the dark mountains in a special manner, the Lord in the depth of soverign wisdom withdr awing from him. And in this case there may be several things very heavy.

1. Darkness covering the believer's spirit, Is. 50:10, where! he goes mourning without the sun. Their former light is tak away, and clouds

and mists arise, so they cannot know their wa

2. Indisposition for duty, proceeding sometimes from a list Lastless to communion with God, Cant. 5:2, sometimes from the extremity of trouble, Psal, 77:4. So that the soul is not more unfit for duty, than when there is most need.

3. An army of doubts and fears attacking them, doubting of their love to God, and God's love to them, Psal. 77:7, downwards.

4. The terrors of God set in battle-array against them, Job. 6:4. They "remember God, and are troubled," Psal. 77:3, The man is carried captive from Sion to Sinai; the discharge is lost, and the law bends up a process against him. God appears an enemy, Psal. 88:15.

Now faith's part here in this fight is,

1st, To justify God in the dispensation, Psal. 22:3, and to submit to sovereignty, Job 2:9, 10, believing he doth all things well. The man has to do with him whose will is the supreme law, and so must not adventure to call him to an account.

2dly, To cleave to God in Christ by a faith of adherence; saying with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, Job 13:15. He must resolutely adhere, over the belly of discouragements.

3dly, To believe an outgate in due time; saying with the church, Mic. 7:8, "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Hence is that exhortation, Is. 50:10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his

servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

4thly, To hold the conclusion of our interest, notwithstanding the arguments drawn from the divine dispensation to prove us naught. Hence says Job chap. 27:5, 6, "Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

5thly, Continuing in the way of duty notwithstanding; as Job did, chap. 1:20, 21, who, notwithstanding all the catamites that befel him, blessed God.

Thirdly, There is a fight of faith in temptations from Satan. He is the declared enemy of God and mankind. Natural men he tempts to sin, to get them kept the surer in his gripes; the godly, that he may mar their communion with God, their comfort and growth, and may make their lives bitter, if he cannot get them back entirely to his service; both that he may get God dishonoured by them. The temptations of Satan are too many to be reckoned up particularly; but I shall take notice of these eight things following, in which ye would set yourselves to fight the fight of faith.

1. Temptations to sin, after some seeming or real enjoyment of God in ordinances or providences. Nothing is more ordinary than a subtile or furions attack of the devil on a person brought into a better case than ordinary, Cant. 5:1, 2. Thus after solemn ordinances. So after Christ's baptism, Matth. 4:1; and the disciples after the first communion. Satan is a proud, envious Spirit. The better it is with a soul, the more likely is the honour of God to be advanced, and their

own salvation. And neither of these can that malicious spirit endure. In this case faith is to manage a fight, by,

1st, Believing the Scripture warnings and instances of this: Luke 22:31, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." 2 Cor. 12:7. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Hereby the soul will be set to watch before the temptation come, and so be in better case to resist it; and when it is come, will see that it is no more than what God's people have met with.

2dly, Resisting, not in confidence of vows, purposes, and resolutions, the present frame of the heart, or grace already received; but in confidence of the grace that is in Christ, and the new supplies of it: 2 Cor. 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Tim. 2:1, "Thou there fore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." It is confidence in what we have in ourselves that mars all.

2. Temptations to the sin that one is most easily laid aside unto: Heb. 12:1, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Satan will be sure to attack you on the weak side, where he is most likely to prevail. He knows what is the sin of one's constitution, age, calling, and the like, and there to set on where the wall is weakest. But he that minds for heaven, must resist, and fight against him, and that in faith.

1st, Believing the necessity of overcoming, even in that particular: Matth. 5:29, 30, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it

from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell, And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Men would do well to remember that there the one thing lacking, which ruins all, may lie, Mark 10:21. And if the devil can get the man kept under the dominion of any one lust, it will serve his purpose for that man's eternal ruin, though he have otherwise many good things about him.

2dly, Believing, that such temptations may be overcome and got mastered: Luke 17:6, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustardseed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." These temptations men do so naturally incline to comply with, that they are ready to think, it is in vain to offer to resist them, for it will not do, Jer. 2:25, "Thou saidst, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." This is the language of unbelief, which faith must contradict, if one would stand.

3dly, Believing, that, in the use of appointed means, he shall overcome, through grace and strength from the Lord: Mark 11:24, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." This faith makes the soul in this case like a giant refreshed with wine, opposing Christ's promised strength to its own weakness, and the force of the temptation; and so brings it off victorious, Is. 40 ult. and 45:24.

3. Temptations to the grossest sins. Nobody is out of hazard of these, while in this world, 1 Cor. 10:12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth,

take heed lest he fall." Satan makes great hellish gain by these; he wastes and defiles the conscience, gets God greatly dishonoured, and religion exposed to reproach by them. He gets the mask pulled off many hypocrites by them; and gets sincere Christians sometimes made to go halting to the grave by them, Prov. 7:26. They that would see heaven must resist, and resist in faith,

1st, Believing that they are snares for soul-ruin, according to the word, Prov. 6:27, 28, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" and chap. 1:17, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." It is the work of faith to discern, by the glass of the word, Satan's devices, and arts of destruction; that the soul, seeing them so, may conceive a horror of them. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 12:9, "Abhor that which is evil."

2dly, Believing that it is not the temptation, but the yielding to it, that will provoke God against you. I own, that such temptations are often sent as a punishment for other sins, as Judas' covetousness was punished with a temptation to betray Christ for money: and by such means God often shakes himself loose of hypocrites, as in Judas' case, and spues them out of his mouth, leaving them to yield to them, Rev. 3:16. And it is often the thought of serious souls, that temptations to sins so very gross are a sign of the Lord's hatred against them: yet that is a plain mistake; for what sin is there so gross but a child of God may be tempted to it? Asaph was tempted to deny a providence, Psal. 73:13. Agur saw himself in hazard of atheistical contempt of God, Prov. 30:9. Job was tempted to blaspheme and curse God, Job 1:11, 12. to self-murder, chap. 7:15. Christ himself was tempted to distrust, self-murder, and worshipping

of the devil, Matth. 4. The faith of these things will be strengthening under such horrid temptations.

3dly, Believing the word condemning and forbidding these sins, and so opposing Heaven's word of command and threatening unto the temptation. Thus our Lord resisted all his temptations in faith, Matth. 4. This is faith's wielding the sword of the Spirit against the tempter, which is fitted to awe the heart with the authority of God, and fill it with abhorrence of the temptation. Whenever the temptation is given, there should presently be some apt Scripture to oppose to it in faith; and as oft as the temptation is repeated, do ye repeat the word in faith, and Satan will fly at length. So in such cases ye should have such Scriptures as these ready, Deut. 28:58, 59; Psal. 14:1; 1 John 3:15; Eph. 5:5, 6.

4thly, Believing the promises suited to the case. There is no temptation any can be in, but there is a promise suited for it in the word, which is the armour faith must wield in order to overcome: 1 Cor. 10:13, God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." James 4:7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And in the faith of the promise make resistance, not doubting but it shall be accomplished in your case: and according to your faith of the promise in the use of means, so shall it be; as with Peter on the water, and the army against Amalek with Moses' hands lift up.

4. Temptations artfully suited to one's circumstances. Satan has a hellish art of framing his temptations upon his observation of people's circumstances, wherein they are most likely to take with

them. Thus Christ being an hungered, the devil tempted him to distrust, Matth. 4:3. Job was tempted to blaspheme and despair under his afflictions. Achan was tempted to steal, a fair opportunity offering. Thus he has his temptations suited to the age and the young, the poor and the rich, the jovial and those of a sorrowful heart. He knows, that in such a case he rows with the stream, and is most likely to prevail. But resist ye in faith,

1st, Believing, according to the word, that Satan watcheth all opportunities against you, 1 Pet. 5:8. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." This will make you to watch against him, when the enemy has such an advantage against you that he will not let slip. They had not need to sleep who are within the enemy's gunshot.

2dly, Believing that God's eye is on you, and the Lord has you upon your trials in that particular, to which ye are so tempted. Hence says Joseph, Gen. 39:9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Men's corrupt hearts are apt to think, when a fair occasion of sinning lies before them, that now is the time to gratify the lust; but happy were they could they think, now, here is a trial for me, and God is looking on to see how I will behave.

3dly, Believing that as the devil suits his temptations, so Christ suits his help and assistance, to the circumstances of poor sinners: so that resolving to resist, you may say, There are more with us than against us, 1 Cor. 10:13, forecited. Whatever way the stream runs for your compliance with the temptation, stretch out your withered hands to

swim against it, in faith of your throughbearing upon the ground of God's faithfulness, Is. 40:28–30.

5. Temptations from one sin to another. Satan knows, that one sin makes way for another; and that to get in his finger once, is the way to get in his whole hand after. So Eve's lustful look to the forbidden fruit, made way for her taking, taking for eating, that for giving to her husband and his eating: and so the whole world's ruin was completed, Gen. 3:6. Thus it is usual for Satan to prevail with those that have yielded to him in one temptation, to lie for covering it again. And some sins natively lead to others; as in the well known story of the three sins one was tempted to. Thus drunkenness makes men an easy prey to uncleanness, Prov. 23:33. And some when once the devil has got them to be harlots, the temptation from that, and from their credit, has made them murderers: some murdering their children after they are born, some before they are born, going about to destroy their conceptions; the latter as well as the former murderers, and guilty of innocent blood in a degree beyond Onan, Gen. 38:9, whom the Lord himself slew as a murderer. But ye must resist, and that in faith. Happy they Who resist the beginnings of sin, who crush the viper in the bud: but when ye are fallen into the snare, fight against the temptation to add sin to sin, or to cover one sin with another.

1st, Believing, that there is mercy for penitents, but none for those Who harden themselves in their wickedness: Prov. 28:13, "He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." Nay, there is not a more ready way under heaven to expose sinners to the arrows of God's wrath, than to be hardened in wickedness, Deut 29:19, 20.

2dly, Believing, that the design of the temptation to one sin from another, is plainly the ruin of the soul, that the devil may get the person so deep into the mire, that he may never win out again. Thus he drove Judas from the betraying of Christ, into an attack against his own life. For thus the one sin becomes a need-nail to the other, shutting up the soul under the guilt of it, not to be removed but by a miracle of mercy.

3dly, Believing, that all the shame, and pain, and misery that can follow in the world, upon one sin, is not to be laid in the balance with the wrath of God, that is kindled against the sinner by running into another sin because he has been guilty of one, Matth. 16:26. This all such as so do will find, either in this world, or in hell, when God shall make all their sins together lie on their own heads. For sooner or later sin will find out the guilty, Numb. 32:23.

4thly, Believing the promise of pardon through the Redeemer's blood, however atrocious and heinous the sin is: 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Some are led on from one sin to another, because they have no sense of the ill and danger of it to their souls: the faith of God's testimony of their sin would cure this, and make them cry out, Undone. Others have a secret despair of finding mercy, and so they proceed from, evil to worse: but the faith of the promise of pardon would cure that: Is. 1:18, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

5thly, Believing the promise of renewed strength even to those that have slighted it before, Jer. 3:14. They who have been foiled by one

temptation, may get victory over another. They may have taken a large step on the devil's ground, who yet looking to Christ by faith, may stop and go no further, Psal. 65:3.

6. Temptations suddenly and surprisingly cast in, and resolutely continued, 2 Cor. 12:8. These are Satan's fiery darts, Eph. 6:16. This is a furious assault of the devil, which he often makes use of in blasphemous or other diabolical injections into the minds of poor sinners; where the soul is in no better case than one, who descending a thatched house, no sooner gets one fire-ball quenched, but another is thrown in on him. If at any time this be your case, set to vigorous resistance, in faith,

1st, Believing, that these are your affliction and trial, but no further your sin than you yield or consent to them. This is clear from the horrible Satanical suggestions made to our Saviour, Matt. 4. while yet there was no sin in him. Satan does with these as harlots laying their brats at the door of honest matrons, so confounding, perplexing, and hurrying the poor tempted sinner, that he is apt to take the voice of Satan for his own voice. But unless ye yield to them, and embrace them, Satan, and only he, shall be accountable for them.

2dly, Adhering resolutely by faith to the Lord Jesus, in that hour and power of darkness, as your Lord and Saviour did. Thus our Lord gave us an example, John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." If ever that resolute adherence is necessary, it is necessary at such a time: Is. 50:10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and

hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." The great end and design of the tempter by these furious attacks, is, to drive the poor tossed tempted creature from his hold of Christ: but we should be like the traveller in the windy day, that holds his cloak the faster the harder it blows.

3dly, Believing, that there is no safety in parleying with the tempter, but ever and anon the temptation is to be rejected with abhorrence. It was Eve's parley with the tempter, that laid the foundation of the ruin of the world by the first sin, Gen. 3. Setting on the Second Adam, he got his answer a refusal, with abhorrence of his proposal, immediately, Matth. 4. These suggestions are not so far to be listened to, as that one should think with himself whether he should comply with them or not. "The Lord rebuke thee," is the short and safe answer.

4thly, Believingly opposing the Lord's word to them, which condemns and forbids the things tempted to. In those temptations our Saviour met with, which were shocking even to the light of nature, it is remarkable he still opposes scripture to them, Matth. 4:7, 10. For that is a divine ordinance for repelling of temptation, to be reiterated in faith as often as Satan repeats his temptation.

5thly, Believing, that there is grace in Christ Jesus sufficient for repelling these most violent temptations, and that it is sufficient for you in your case in particular, Hence says our Lord, 2 Cor. 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." If Satan prevail so far as to cause the tempted to think, that the violence of the temptation is so great that it is not possible for them to stand against it; this is such a weakening of faith, that the

breach can hardly miss to be made there, as a breaking forth of an high wall in an instant. And Satan cannot obtain it of the tempted but by turning his eyes away from Christ into himself; Therefore, in that hour of darkness, let the tempted keep his eye on the fulness of strength in Christ for him: 2. Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

6thly, Believing the promise of victory to the poor struggler with temptation: Jam. 4:7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The faith of the victory is necessary to animate the tempted to continue the struggle, and will make him in the temptation to be like a giant refreshed with wine, and will undoubtedly bring him off victorious at length. For there is the decision, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee."

7. Temptations striking at the very foundations of faith and religion, such as against the being of God, and the divine authority of the scriptures, Psal. 14:1. and 73:13. These are most dangerous, but they are what the devil himself cannot prevail with himself to believe; though he fain would, yet he cannot be an atheist, nor an infidel as to the scriptures, Jam. 2:19. But he sometimes would palm these foul atheistical principles on poor sinners, even saints of God, who want not an atheistical principle in them to work upon. If at any time Satan attack you with such temptations, ye must resist them,

1st, Believing, that they are the spawn of the old serpent in the corrupt heart, the hissing of the crooked serpent: Psal. 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Hence it is said of the beast in Rev. 13:6 that "he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in

heaven." This is the reception they should get immediately, faith discerning the devil's cloven foot in them at their very first appearance. Whether they come immediately from the devil, or from the corrupt heart itself moved by Satan, it is all a case in this point; believe them to be hellish, devilish, most abominable, and to be treated with the utmost abhorrence. And the sooner ye give them that entertainment, the victory will be the more easy and speedy.

2dly, Resolutely believing the foundation-principles which the temptation strikes against, over the belly of the Satanical objections mustered up against them before you, though ye be not able to answer those objections or loose the difficulties: Heb. 11:6, "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." 2 Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." And hence is that exhortation of the apostle, Eph. 6:16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

There is not wanting store of reasons to support the great foundation-principles of religion; and nothing but sophistry can be brought against them, which reason sufficiently enlightened may discover. There are convincing arguments for the being of a God, and the authority of the scriptures, to be used against atheists. But when ye are assaulted with these temptations, I dare not advise you to the way of disputing with the tempter, but to the way of believing; not to the bringing reasons for these principles against him, and answering his hellish objections against them, but to a resolute holding of the conclusion over the belly of all his objections; because,

(1.) They are first principles, and ye are not obliged to dispute them with any, unless it were to keep an opposer from ruin, as in the case of atheists. But this has no place in a combat with the devil, of whom there is no hope.

(2.) Because the devil is an intercommuned spirit, with whom we are not to commune and enter into reasoning without a special call. Our Lord himself, though he could have reasoned the devil out of it, yet he took not that method, but just opposed to his temptations the testimony of scripture. And it is certainly the safest way for us, whatever we have to say in temptation, to say it to God, rather than to the devil.

(3.) Because the devil is a disputant too subtle for us, and in the way of wit and reason may quickly over-reach us. I make no question, but the devil is a philosopher and divine far beyond any of our greatest scholars: and men may expect from him most subtle turns of wit to elude their arguments, and to start objections which it will not be easy to answer. And therefore it is not safe to engage in dispute with him.

But do ye resolutely believe the principles you have received on divine authority, which ye have no reason to quit on the devil's contrary testimony, though he pretend reason for it, since he is known to be a liar and murderer. This the apostle prescribes, Eph. 6:16. forecited. And this method of holding by the conclusion resolutely, while the sinner is not capable to answer the objections, is recommended to us by the practice of the saints, Jer. 12:1; Matt. 15:25. Therefore, while Satan casts in these temptations, or raises them in your heart, enter your protestation against them, (crying out

of violence and wrong), that you allow them not, you do believe, and will through his grace believe these foundations, and will not quit them.

3dly, Believing and applying the promise of saving illumination, and teaching of the Spirit. It is light from the Lord himself, that must dispel the mists that Satan raises in the corrupt heart, wherein these horrible temptations do take place. Hence says our Lord to Peter, Matth. 16:17, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." 1 Cor. 2:12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." And this light is brought in, by faith's applying the promises suited to the case. Of these are many, such as Heb. 8:11; John 17, and 14:21. And the tempted should lift his eyes unto the Lord, that he may so shine in his word, into his soul, as that his light may dispel the darkness, according to his promise.

4thly, Believing the scripture accounts of these things, of those mysteries of providence from whence Satan raiseth these temptations. Satan sometimes observes the spirits even of saints fretted and rankled with long and sore afflictions, their prayers not heard and answered, the wicked prospering, and they in great distress: and here he plants his cannon, to beat down from these, even the foundations of all religion. Thus he dealt with Asaph, Psal. 73:12, 13, 14. And he resists him by believing the scripture account of those mysteries of providence, vers. 16–18. This is the way to undermine Satan's battery, to rase the foundations on which he builds.

What will that malicious spirit make of the long and sore distresses of God's people, and the prosperity of the wicked, against the being or nature of God, and the certainty of his word? The sun may hide his head long in a stormy winter; but will any say therefore, there is no sun, or that the ordinances of the heavens fail and misgive? Is not one day with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day? Doth not the scripture shew, that the wicked are raised on high, that they may fall more grievously? Is there not a judgment to come, and a long eternity enough to shew God's good pleasure in the vessels of his mercy, and his wrath against the vessels of wrath, though neither the godly have two summers, nor the wicked two winters, in one year? Have not prayers lain long over, that yet have got a gracious answer at length? Zech. 7:3; James 5:11.

Thus believing is the method of resisting in these temptations. Howbeit, when ye are out of the shock of temptation in these matters, it would be of good use to fortify and confirm your faith of the foundation principles of religion, with all the reasons and arguments ye can draw together for them.

8. Lastly, Temptations of delusion. This is a kind of temptation most hard to resist, Satan therein transforming himself into an angel of light, and pressing to sin under the notion of duty, 2 Cor. 11:14. It is a great trial of faith, Matth. 24:24; a great and fearful plague where it takes, Is. 66:4; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12, and has always a lamentable upshot, according to the nature thereof, Is. 1. ult. But ye must resist in faith,

1st, believing your own weakness and darkness in yourselves, together with the diligence of Satan the great seducer, according to the scripture, 2 Cor. 3:5, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think

any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God. 1 Pet. 5:8, "Be sober, be viligant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour." It is self-conceit, a high opinion of our own great attainments, that most readily betrays men into the snare of delusion; for these are in little fear of Satan's wiles, and so are the more easily caught in his snare.

2dly, Believing the holy scriptures to be the only rule of faith and manners, and a full and perfect rule; and to improve it so: Is. 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." There is an itch in the nature of man, to be wise above what is written; and sometimes Satan has made his gain thereof by visions, voices, dreams, impressions, and impulses. But in all such cases take head to yourselves, that Satan delude you not: but bring the matter to the word written, and thereby examine it. What is of God will abide the trial by that touch-stone; and the more closely it is brought to the word, it will appear the more clear: what is not so, will lose its lustre there, as ill wares brought out to the light of the sun. And therefore those under delusion are mighty loathe to examine by the word: 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Pet. 1:18, 19, "And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take head, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." The holy scripture is the stated way of communication betwixt heaven and us: it is from the Holy Spirit, and it is not possible that he should contradict himself, Is. 59. ult. Therefore "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach

any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. 1:8.

Lastly, Believing the promise of guidance into all truth, John 16:13, "Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." Psal. 25:2, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." The soul thus emptied of itself, and leaning to the Lord Christ for his teaching, will not want teaching in the use of means. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 28:7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped." Our Lord Jesus is the appointed leader and guide of his people, Is. 55:4. He is given of God for a light of the people. He has set us our ways-marks in this as in all other cases. Divine manifestations are always sanctifying and humbling; delusions puff up, and leave the soul always as unholy as they found it. Divine manifestations have ever an immediate tendency to holiness; delusions have always a tendency to unholiness. And even when duty is pressed in delusion, it will readily be found either out of season, or not the duty of one's station, or to have some such flaw in it or other.

Fourthly, There is a fight of faith in afflictions: Heb. 10:32, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." One may as well think to travel without the flies annoying him in a hot summer day, as to go through the world without meeting with afflictions. They are common to good and bad. In the Lord's way one cannot miss them: Acts 14:22, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." In the way of sin one will meet them too: Eccl.

10:8, "He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." Sovereignty distributes them, to some more, to others less; but to all, some. The native effect of afflictions on the guilty creature, is to drive it away from God, (however they are oft turned to good); even as the lash of a whip natively drives away him that is lashed, from him that lasheth. So that it is owing to something else that they do good to sinners. And that,

1. To a word of divine appointment. Afflictions are an ordinance of God for good to poor sinners: Is. 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." And a divine appointment will alter the nature and operation of a thing. The savour of burnt flesh is very unpleasant, but the divine ordinance of sacrificing made it a sweet savour, Gen. 8:21. Clay laid on one's eyes is a mean natively to make one blind: yet, by virtue of a divine ordinance, it cured blindness, John 9:6, 7. So afflictions natively, or of themselves, drive away the soul from God, but, by virtue of a divine ordinance, lead it to him.

2. To a receiving of them in faith: 2 Cor. 4:17, 18, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." See Heb. 11:35–39. Whoever would profit by a divine ordinance, must receive it in faith, Heb. 4:2. For to every divine ordinance there is a promise annexed to be believed: and the promise being believed, the ordinance has its effect. So that we see

afflictions do good to some, to others no good, but ill: Why? It is faith and unbelief that make the difference.

Wherefore ye must fight in faith against the native tendency of afflictions in themselves. And if ye ask, What is that tendency in afflictions on the guilty creature, which he must fight against? and, How must one fight in faith against it? I answer in the six following particulars. It is,

1. To impress the person with the apprehension that God is his enemy, and that he is seeking his ruin: 2 Kings 6. ult. Even Job himself was carried away with this hard thought of God, Job 33:10, 11, "Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths." Guilt lying on the conscience, makes it full of hard thoughts of God, and terrible forebodings. Whenever the guilty soul hears from heaven by affliction, it is ready to strike in his mind, Now this is for my sin, and God is proclaiming war against me to ruin me. Hence affliction is several times the means of awakening the secure sinner; though he can never come to God till he believe.

Now, ye must fight against this in faith,

1st, Believing, that though all your afflictions are infallible signs of God's hatred of your sin, and his seeking the ruin of it; yet no affliction on you in this world can be such a sign of God's hatred of your persons, and his seeking your ruin, Eccl. 9:1, 2. No, no; God's dearest children may have as heavy afflictions on their backs, as any other persons in the world, Psal. 73:12, 14. And no wonder, since God's only begotten Son had the heaviest burden of afflictions that ever was on the back of a man.

2dly, Believing, that afflictions are God's ordinance for good to the afflicted, even as really as is the preaching of the word to them: Prov. 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom." They are the discipline of God's house, as the word is the doctrine of it: Heb. 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." So the design of the rod is your good, as the design of physic is the health of the patient; though, in the meantime, one, by misguiding under it, may indeed kill himself; even as one, by not complying with the design of the affliction may wound his own soul. It is certain, that afflictions have a word of divine appointment for good; there is a blessing annexed to them by promise: but how can ye share of it, if ye do not believe them to be an ordinance of God for good?

3dly, Believing, that God by these means is seeking your good, as using towards you the very same means that he does towards the dearest of his children: 2 Pet. 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, (as some men count slackness,) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Rev. 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent." Should a physician give you the very same remedy that he gives to his own child, sick of your disease; what but unreasonable jealousy should make you think he designs ill to you? And what but unbelief then can it be that makes you think, that God seeks your ruin by affliction, with which he works the cure of his own?

4thly, Believing the promise annexed to that ordinance, with application to yourselves, that your affliction, through his grace, shall do you good: Is. 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be

purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." Zeph. 3:12, 13, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies: neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." This is the way to partake of the efficacy of the ordinance of affliction; and it is the faith of it that makes the saints welcome the rod, to be patient under it, and to comply with the design of it, Micah 7:8, 9; while those that expect no good of them, get as little many times.

2. To take all heart and hand from him in his approaches to God. Hence says the Psal mist, Psal. 77:3, "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. The guilty conscience takes up the affliction, and just knocks him down with it, fells him with it before the Lord. He is filled with consternation before an angry God, and his heart fails, and can look for no good at the Lord's hand, 1 John 3:20, 21. The affliction lies so heavy upon the poor sinner, that he cannot think there is any hope of God's hearing his prayers, or making him welcome to the throne of grace. Hence says Job chap. 9:16, 17, "If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause." But ye must fight against this in faith,

1st, Believing, that there are bowels of compassion in God, while nothing but frowns appear (Psal. 130:1, 7.) in his countenance. And it is faith's work, to take up these bowels of mercy in as afflicting God. QUESTION. What way shall one perceive them? ANSWER. While ye behold his anger in his providences, ye must look to his word by

faith, and there ye will see these bowels of mercy: Is. 49:14–17, "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. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee." Chap. 63:9, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them, all the days of old. And ye may be helped hereto, by considering the heart of a father smiting his own child; where, in a sense, the heart goes not along with the hand. Thus the church prays, but in faith: Is. 63:15, 16, "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer, thy name is from everlasting." And this the church doth, and that on good grounds, Lam. 3:33, "For he doth not afflict willingly [Heb. from his heart] nor grieve the children of men."

2dly, Believing the testimony of God's word, as to instances of persons that have had God's heart towards them, while his hand has been lying heavy on them. Thus it was with Gideon, Judg. 6:12, 13. Thus it was with Job: he was most dear to God, yet he was given up unto the power of Satan to afflict him. And thus it was with a cloud of witnesses. These things are written for your learning; that ye, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

3dly, Believing the promise of hearing the prayers of the afflicted, with application to yourselves: Psal. 50:15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Oppose this promise in faith, to the disheartening operation of the affliction upon you before the Lord: take this cordial by the mouth of faith, when ye begin to faint in your approaches to God. So shall ye "lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." Is there a secret whisper, that you are so afflicted that you need not pray? It is the surmise of unbelief. Say ye, Since I am so afflicted, I am called to pray, James 5:13, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray:" and there is a particular encouragement in my case, Psal. 102:17, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

3. To frighten the sinner away from God. Thus our first parents saw they were naked, and presently fled to hide themselves from the Lord. When the conscience is fired with guilt under affliction, its natural motion is to run away from God: 1 Sam. 6:20, 21, "And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? and to whom shall he go up from us? And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord; come ye down, and fetch it up to you." Hence the sorrow of the world is said to work death, because the more deep one is drenched in it, the farther he goes from God. Satan knows this very well, and therefore is he so eager to have sinners afflicted, and to make their lives bitter with it; though he is sometimes outshot in his own bow, as in Job's case. But ye must fight against this in faith,

1st, Believing, that God sends on afflictions, not to frighten the sinner from him, but to bring the sinner to him: Hos. 4. ult, "The wind hath

bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices," Chap. 5:1, "Hear ye this, O priests, and hearken, ye house of Israel, and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor." It is indeed God's ordinary method to bring home runaways and backsliders: Hos. 2:6, 7, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy ways with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And 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 was it better with me than now." Satan's design is one thing in them, and God's design another: and though Satan row with the stream, a touch from the hand of God on the sinner's heart will carry his purpose.

2dly, Believing, that none can better their case by running away from the Lord: however hard their case may seem with him, they can never mend themselves at another hand. Hence said Samuel unto the people, 1 Sam. 12:21, "Turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." And hence we find, that Peter said to christ, John 6:68, "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." The sinner under affliction is often like Hagar, "flying from the face of her mistress Sarai, Gen. 16:8: and that is the best course which the angel of the Lord directed Hagar unto, ver. 9 namely, to return to her mistress, and submit herself under her hands. Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord, and shunning the journey to Nineveh, cast himself into a whale's belly. And those that take course in their affliction, will not speed better.

3dly, Believing your welcome unto, and certain reconciliation with an offended God through christ, 2 cor. 5:19, 20, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." God was never so angry with any of Adam's children, but he was ready to lay by his anger for the sake of Christ, apprehended by faith. The whole tenor of the gospel holds out this truth: and the law is suffered to lash the sinner, and afflictions are laid on him, to the very end that he may improve it for his reconciliation with God.

4. To bring the sinner to cast off religion, and to lay aside the duties of it. Hence says Christ of the stony ground hearers, Matth. 13:21, "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." Thus we find a profane generation arguing the vanity of religion, and the duties of it, from their afflicted and low circumstances, Mal. 3:14, 15, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy: yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." No less a man than Asaph was near to have turned atheist on this very score, under a strong temptation, Psal. 73:12, 13, 14, "Behold," says he, "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." And so it has fared with many, who in their prosperity have kept up a form of religion, that their spirits have been quite

soured as to religion in their adversity, and they have visibly given up with it; like the mixed multitude in the wilderness.

Here is great need to fight the fight of faith,

1st, Believing that prosperity is not tied to religion, nor yet to irreligion: but which of the ways soever one takes, affliction will meet him in the world, Eccl. 9:2, "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked," &c. If men take up religion for worldly prosperity, no wonder they be baulked of their expectation, and lay it aside again upon the disappointment. But their laying it aside will not secure them from affliction. Therefore men should look so to religion itself, as to be wedded to it for its instrinict value. But in the way of religion men may find a good conscience under affliction, while they find an ill conscience in the way of casting it off.

2dly, Believing that the great advantage of religion is to be reaped after the time of trial in this life is over. Hence says our Lord, Rev. 2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Chap. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Now is our seed-time; and the sowing must be in tears, where the reaping time of joy is to follow. The harvest of glory in heaven comes most full after a wet seed-time.

3dly, Believing that there is a notable advantage in religion for bearing of afflictions. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. 1:12, "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, and more abundantly to

you-wards." There are promises in the covenant, which applied by faith, are full of comfort to the afflicted. The Lord's word is full of light as to the nature, uses, and ends of them; so that the Bible is the best company for those in affliction. This well is deep and faith must draw.

4thly, Believing that the promises with respect to affliction, both as to the blessed issue of them in another world, and as to support under them in this world, shall be made out to you. Thus Asaph in his affliction fastened his feet, Psal. 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," says he, "and afterward receive me to glory." It is the faith of the upper Canaan, and of provision in the wilderness-world, that fits for the wilderness-life.

5. To provoke the sinner against God, to cause him to murmur against him, quarrel with him, and arraign and condemn in his heart, at least, the conduct of holy providence in the ordering of his lot: 1 Cor. 10:10, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." Prov. 19:3, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord." Hard affliction laid on a man in whom dwelleth a corrupt heart, is apt to raise the black band of impatience, complaining, fretting, murmuring, and practical blashemy against God; like a stick stirring up a muddy pool, or an ant's nest. It made even a Job and Jeremiah to curse the day of their birth. Job was much overcome with his affliction, when he expressed himself so indecently, chap. 30:21, "Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me." Fight against this tendency of affliction in faith,

1st, Believing, that God is a righteous God, and your Sovereign Lord, having all power over you. There may be mysteries of providence in his dealing with us, which we cannot account for: but there can be no unjust step in his procedure with us: Deut. 32:4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Therefore that conclusion must be stuck to by faith, Jer. 12:1, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee." We are his own by creation, and have forfeited our mercies by sin: let faith view him in the throne of sovereignty, and silence us: Matth. 20:15, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

2dly, Believing, that you are debtors to mercy for that it is not worse with you than it is; saying, with the church, Lam. 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." However hard any one's affliction is in this world, it is certain they deserve worse, and God could lay on worse. Hence is that acknowledgment of Ezra's, chap. 9:13, "Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve;" and that, Psal. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." This will make one to give thanks for what is kept off, rather than murmur for what is laid on.

3dly, Believing, that there is certainly need for all you meet. with: 1 Pet. 1:6, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season [if need be] ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." A holy wise God lays no needless afflictions on any: Lam. 3:33, "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Nay he gives all by weight and measure, and will not put in one grain beyond what the case requires. What though ye cannot see it? ye have yet ground to

believe it from the word, and may see it in the glass of God's infinite wisdom, the contrivance of which your lot is, Deut. 32:4. So that whatsoever he doth to you, is not only well done, but best done in your circumstances, Eccl. 3:14.

4thly, Believing, that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus, all you meet with shall work for your good: Rom. 8:28, "We know," says the apostle, "that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." God can carry on the good of a person, by that which he is apt to think is for his ruin; as was the case with Jacob, when he said unto his sons, Gen. 42:36, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." And though the good of them may be long ere it appear, yet where it is believed and hoped for, it will come at length, Jam. 5:7. Now this and all other promises is held forth to you in Christ to be believed, and applied to yourselves.

6. Lastly, To cause the sinner harden himself in sorrow. So we render that expression of Job's, chap. 6:10, "I would harden myself in sorrow;" But it is not the sense of that place. Affliction had this bad effect on good Jacob, Gen. 37:35. who, when all his sons, and all his daughters, rose up to comfort him concerning the loss of his son Joseph, "refused to be comforted; and said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning." It had also this bad effect on Asaph, Psal. 77:2, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord," says he; "my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted." Under affliction the heart is apt to sink; and the case sometimes appears so hopeless, that the afflicted looks not after comfort, but staves it off when offered. They bid a solemn farewell as

it were to joy and comfort, and draw the sable curtains of sorrow about themselves: they have no comfortable prospect, they look for none, and resolve to hold there. This is dangerous. Fight against it in faith,

1st, Believing the promise of a comfortable outgate at length, with application to your own case. This hardening one's self in sorrow, whatever be the probabilities it is founded on, is the proper fruit of unbelief, and casts discredit on the promises of God, Psal. 103:9, "He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever." Lam. 3:32, "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." It is faith's work to believe the accomplishment of them, though one cannot see how.

2dly, Believing the promise of a comfortable mixture in the affliction while it lasts. God has given a promise of moderating the trials of believers: Psal. 37:24, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Is. 37:8, "In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." And they have had experience of the outmaking thereof, 2. Cor. 4:8, 9, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed, (says the apostle); we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." God has given a promise of strengthening believers to bear their trials, Deut. 33:27, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Is. 40:28, 29, 30, 31, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have 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 be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." The Psalmist experienced the accomplishment of this promise, Psal. 138:3, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, (says he): and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." God has given a promise of cordials now and then to support them, sweet blinks now and then to refresh them: Hos. 2:14, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Micah 7:8, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

3dly, Believing, that your patient suffering of affliction is as acceptable to God through Christ, as your doing for God: 2 Tim. 2:12, "It is a faithful saying, If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." God has several pieces of work that he puts into the hands of his people: some he calls to do great things, others to suffer great things, Heb. 11. Whatever it is the Lord carves out to you, ply that; it is what God will accept at thy hand through the Mediator. Suffering is as really service to God, as doing is.

Thus we have seen the evil tendency of afflictions in themselves, and how we are to fight against it by faith. But there are three special cases wherein that force of affliction is greater than ordinary, and requires a strong faith to stand the shock.

1. When a stroke from the hand of the Lord comes upon a man in the way of his duty, which he is doing in obedience to the call and command of God. This is apt to make a stagger, especially when it is

a duty others have an ill eye on: for by it God seems to give sentence against the man and his work. When people are going on in an ill way, it is no wonder Heaven works against them; but when the Lord meets a man as an enemy in the way of duty, that is a great trial, Psal. 71:11. It is apt to make one leave duty.

Here is great need to fight in faith,

1st, Believing, that that is no sign that the way you are in, being warranted by the word, is displeasing to God. It has been the trial of the Lord's people, when they have been called to the plainest duty, and have been upon signal pieces of service to God. We are to observe providences, but not to make a Bible of them; but bring them to the word, and that will open the mysteries of providence. Jonah seemed to be favoured by providence when he set his face to go to Tarshish, Jon. 1:3, yet he was wrong. Jacob had God's call to return to his own country, and a promise of the Lord's being with him, Gen. 31:3. Laban looked on it with an ill eye. But what a train of troubles met he with in his way thither? such as his meeting with Esau, his thigh put out of joint in wrestling with the angel, his domestic trials, &c. And you may read the trials Moses met with in his going down to Egypt, upon God's command to redeem the Israelites, Exod. 4:24, &c.

2dly, Believing, that God has holy designs in the matter, becomeing his own infinite wisdom, which ye may afterwards come to see, if ye see them not in the time; though in the meantime he is pleased with your way. Hence said our Lord to Peter, John 13:7, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Sometimes he designs to correct for some mismanagement in the sotting about the

duty, as in Moses' case for not circumcising his son, Exod. 4:24, 25; sometimes to hide pride from men's eyes, as in the apostle's case, 2 Cor. 12:7, and as in the case of the children of Israel their being foiled by the children of Benjamin, Judg. 20:18–26. And this he doth always for the trial of his people, their faith, regard to duty, &c. So Satan may be permitted to act against them for their trial; and sure he will be the more eager, the more important the duty is, 1 Cor. 16:9; 1 Thess. 2:18.

3dly, Believing, that there is no safety in one's leaving the road of duty, meet with what they will in it. Hence says the wise man, Prov. 10:9, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known." A rebuke in the way of duty is sweeter than a warm sunshine in the way of sin: "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, Heb. 11:26. There is communion with God to be had in such providences, and they furnish men with useful experiences for their after life.

2. When the affliction is extraordinary, and unusual, so that it draws the eyes of beholders to notice it particularly. When people's afflictions are no more than what is very ordinary and usual, they are the more easily borne; but when God seems to point out one to others, by some unordinary stroke, how hard is that to bear, how hard to keep off concluding that God has a particular hatred against us? There is need to fight in faith here,

1st, Believing, that it has been often the lot of God's children, and particularly of his darling children whom he loved most to meet with such kind of trials as would seem to have imported a particular

hatred of them. Hence says the apostle, Heb. 10:33, "Ye were made a gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions." And again, 1 Cor. 4:9, "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." This was the lot of Christ himself, Psal. 22:6, "I am a worm, and no man," says he; "a reproach of men, and despised of the people." How was Job's heart pierced with that question, Job 5:1, "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? It is very rare, I suppose, that any of God's children have something more than ordinary about them to the advantage, but they get something more than ordinary to try them. Of all the patriarchs there was not one that had more divine manifestations or so many as Jacob, nor so many and great afflictions neither. Of all the sons of Jacob, there was none so high raised and useful as Joseph, and none so afflicted. Heman was a man of a more than ordinary reach, 1 Kings 4:31, and so of afflictions, Psal. 88:15, "I am afflicted" says he "and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." Moses was the meekest man in the earth, and never mere man had more ado with it; Job was the mirror of patience, and none suffered more.

2dly, Believing the illimited power of sovereignty, which requires absolute resignation: Matt. 20:15, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" It is a silencing query, Rom. 9:20, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Sovereignty takes one piece of clay, and sets it on a throne; another of the same, and sets it on a dunghill in rags and sores; reaches to some the ordinary meal of affliction, but makes another's mess five

times as much. And who will set bounds to the disposals of sovereignty?

3dly, Believing, that these different aspects of providence upon men, are but for a time, for the time of trial: and they will soon be at an end: Job 21:23–26, "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." It is no great matter whether one be the king or the fool on the stage; for in a little they get behind the curtains, and each one appears as really he is. Ordinary and unordinary afflictions will shortly have an end; and they that bear their own part right, happy will they be.

3. When the affliction is of long continuance. Some afflictions are like a summer-shower, heavy in their time, but soon over, and it grows fair again: but the most trying are the continuing afflictions, that are like a stormy winter, that blows hard day after day. Many times deliverance is looked for, but it comes not. Any promising signs that appear at any time do misgive: and the storm is renewed, and grows ever the longer the more hopeless. Here is a sore shock to abide, which requires to fight in faith,

1st, Believing that this is a part of the discipline of God's house, whereby he exercises his own children. Hence says the prophet, Jer. 8:20, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." David complains, Psal. 69:3. of his being weary of his crying, of his throat's being dried; of his eyes failing while he waited for his God. The church was so long continued in affliction, that she forgot

prosperity, Lam. 3:17. Many of the Lord's people have been kept so long under the hatches, that they have hung up their harps on the willows, so as to have no more use for them; and yet have been delivered.

2dly, Believing that the longest and blackest night will have a morning; and that though the affliction continue long, it will not continue always. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 103:9, "The Lord will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever." If the question be, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" Is. 21:11 the answer is, ver. 12, "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come." The sky that has long lowred, may clear ere night: the wound may be looked on as incurable, that yet will be fairly healed, Jer. 15:18, 20. And if it should not be removed in time, yet the faith of a blessed eternity may keep up the heart, when "God shall wipe away all tears from the 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," Rev. 21:4.

3dly, Believing that God knows the fittest season for removing the affliction, and not we. Hence said our Lord to his brethren, in another case, John 7:6, "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready." He keeps times and seasons in his own hand, and at the fit time he will remove it, Hab. 2:3. but not before, if it is to be removed in mercy. Men's hearts must abide much hewing, and God may have much ado with an affliction that is not soon done. The affliction is too soon over, that is removed ere the design of it be answered, Psal. 10:17. None blames the husbandman, that he sows not his seed, before the ground be fit to receive it.

Lastly, Believing that the more we are resigned to the Lord as to the time and method of deliverance, the nearer we are to it, the fairer we lie for it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 10:17, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Man's extremity is God's opportunity, Deut. 32:36. Witness Abraham on the mount, the disciples at sea, the Israelites at the Red sea. Happy should they be, who leaving the deliverance on the Lord, should make it their main care to answer the calls of providence by the affliction while it is continued.

Fifthly, There is a fight of faith with this present evil world." Hence says the apostle, 1 John 5:4, 5, "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overoometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" This present evil world is a party opposite to God and Christ, and on the devil's side: insomuch that he that lives in friendship with it, lives at enmity with God, James 4:4. And therefore we mast either fight against it, or be ruined by it. And there are these two particulars in the world, that we must fight the fight of faith against: 1. The things, 2. The men of the world.

1st, The things of the world are dangerous enemies to our souls, because of the corruption of our hearts. Hence says the apostle, 1 John 2:15, "Love not the word, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." O the fearful havoc of souls that is made thereby! By thorn many saints have been cast down, wounded, and many sinners have been slain thereby. The things of the world set out three bands

against us, whom we must either fight and overcome by faith, or be ruined by.

1. The white band of the world's smiles.

2. The black band of the world's frowns.

3. The mixed band of the world's cares.

First, The things of the world set out the white band of the world's smiles. And they are stained with the blood of many souls: Prov. 1:32, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." The smiling world does with other men, as the panther is said to do with other beasts. He draws them after him with the sweet smell of his breath, hiding his head, and afterwards devours them. Thus was Demas ruined. The white band fights against souls with two kinds of weapons.

1. Profits of the world. Thus it set upon poor Judas with thirty pieces of silver, and so knocked him down, and slew him. It set on moses with the treasures of Egypt, and had done so to him, had he not had faith to resist it, Heb. 11:26. The Psalmist observes the snare in these, and therefore gives the watchword, Psal. 62:10, "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches Increase, set not your heart upon them." And many a man, who has stood his ground against the black band of the world's frowns, has been overcome with the white, like the man in the fable with the sun and the wind.

2. Pleasures of the world. There are three kinds of them; "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John 2:16.

These are the silken cords, with which souls are drawn to destruction; wherewith when once men come to be bound, they are like iron fetters; the breaking of which, if ever they be broken at all, will cost a flood of tears. Hence prays the penitent Psalmist, Psal. 51:8, "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken, may rejoice." With many they end in a judicial up-giving to vile affections, Rom. 1:26.

These weapons are wielded two ways.

(1.) In expectation. It is the natural desire of all men, "Who will shew us any good?" Psal. 4:6. The world steps in and makes such an offer, as Satan did to Christ; who when he had "taken him into an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," Matth. 4:8, 9. And when once the hope and expectation of its profits and pleasures is greedily embraced by an inordinate affection, the soul is set on fire therewith, and the poor creature runs to its own ruin on its own feet, Prov. 7:22, 23, And so it fares with many in this case; as with the mouse, who, watching for the gaping oyster, thrusts in her head presently when the shell opens; which being immediately closed again, she is crushed. Hence says the apostle, 1 Tim. 6:9, "They that will be rich, fail into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

(2.) In fruition or enjoyment, Luke 18:24, "And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?" Such is the corruption of the heart in man, that it is ten to one if the smiling world draw sot his

heart away from God. Men are apt to love the world inordinately, even when it gives them gall to drink: how hard must it be not to be overcome with it, when it courts men, and lays itself in their bosom! Deut. 33:15, "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation."

Ye must fight against the smiling world by faith if ever ye would have the smiles of the Lord's countenance,

1st, Believing the danger that is in the world's smiles, to your immortal souls. The danger is in the sours being thereby drawn to sin against God, and so in end to be pierced with sorrows. Agur saw this, and believed it; and therefore prays thus, Prov. 30:8, 9, "Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?"—The smiling world is apt to betray men into pride, and a high conceit of themselves, forgetting God, contempt of God's laws, giving up themselves to the swing of their corrupt lusts and affections, &c., and so to work the ruin of the soul, Eccl. 5:13. Believe this on the testimony of God and so shall ye we watch against it,

2dly, Believing the vanity, emptiness, and insufficiency, that is in the world, and all the smiles thereof: Psal. 119:96, "I have seen an end of all perfection, (says the Psalmist;) but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Eccl. 1:2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." What do they avail to a man's real worth? what can they contribute to one's eternal happiness? They are uncertain, and may quickly leave us, and wilt certainly leave us at

length; we must go as we came, naked, Prov. 23:5. They are insufficient, they cannot give ease to the heart of man; one dead fly may spoil all the pot of ointment, as in Haman and Ahab's case. They cannot satisfy the soul; witness the disappointment which the rich man met with, spoke of Luke 12:16, &c.

3dly, Believing the trascendent profit and pleasure, that is to be had in the favour of God, the smiles of his countenance, communion and fellowship with him through Jesus Christ. This believe; and believe, that ye may have it, yea, that ye shall have it, seeking it through Christ: and ye shall overcome the smiling world. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 4:6, 7, "Lord, lift 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 wine increased." Being thus by faith lifted up in your affections to heaven, the earth and all that is in it, will appear very little in your eyes, Matth. 13:45, 46; Philip. 3:8. It is unbelief of, and blindness to the things of a better world, that makes the present evil world so bulky with men.

4thly, Believing the sufficiency of his grace to carry you above them: 2 Cor. 12:9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." There is strength in the Mediator, for men's overcoming the world: believe the promise with application to yourselves, and ye shall be more than conquerors. The promise brings salvation with it; and the faith of it loosed Zaccheus' heart from the world, Luke 19:8.

Secondly, The things of the world set out the black band of the world's frowns. The world ofttimes brings up a train of crosses against men, to drive them away from God. Hence we read of the

apostles "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22. Men must lay their accounts with their ilk days cross: and sometimes all goes wrong together with them; their sun goes down at noon-day, as in Job's case. Crosses in worldly things do often much mischief to the soul; they will irritate their corruptions, discompose them for duty to God, and lead them aside into manifold temptations, Prov. 30:9.

Some have a fighting life with the world all their days: but, alas! it is not the fight of faith with it, but a sinful faithless fighting with it, that carries on the ruin of their souls. Ye will know this faithless fight with it by these two things.

1. All their fight is to get something of the world, not to be kept from the spiritual evil of the world. The world does not prosper with them, as it does with some others: and all their concern is to make a shift for throughbearing, which swallows up all other concerns with them. So they are such sons of earth, as that they live as if the curse of the serpent were lying on them, all their days to go on their belly, and lick the dust. The world flies from them; and yet they court it above all things. God crosses them in it, to bring their hearts off it; but over the belly of all the rebukes of providence, it is their great pursuit, Jer. 5:3, 4.

2. Their fight they have with the world, takes away from them all favour of the word of God, and of religion. A sad instance of this ye have, Exod. 6:9, where, when Moses had spoken to the children of Israel all the promises commanded him of God, mentioned in the preceding verses, it is said, "But they hearkened not unto moses, for

anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." The tight of faith with the world makes the gospel savoury to men: but this carnal fight with it makes it sapless and tastelesss; it rankles their spirits with respect to religion, that many such are not far from thinking that religion is for the wealthier sort; but that as for them, they have another thing ado. And thus the frowning world ruins soul and body to them; at once ruins them for time and eternity.

I would advise you to another sort of fighting with the frowning world. Fight in faith against it,

1st, Believing that the ordering of your lot is in the hand of a holy wise God, who knows best what lot is for you, Job 1:21, whether prosperous or cross. The faith of this would make you embrace the world's frowns, and welcome crosses in the world, as well as prosperity, as what God sees meet for you; as did Job, chap. 1:21, who said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

2dly, Believing that the world's frowns, and smiles too, are but empty and passing shews, which will be soon buried in everlasting forgetfulness. As the world's smiles appear more pleasant than indeed they are, so its frowns appear more terrible to the carnal heart, than they are really: Eccl. 1:2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The one and the other are like foam on the water, appearing big, but soon pass away. Being seen by the eye of sense, O how weighty are they! But look to them with an eye of faith, and ye will see they are all but empty noise, which will quickly be laid, 2 Cor. 4:17. The longest term of their

continuance is but a few years at most. When one comes to the grave, the rich and poor are alike there; the black band and the white band are both disbanded there.

3dly, Believing that ye have greater things to be taken up about, than either the world's smiles or frowns. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 4:6, 7, "Lord, lift 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." The one cannot make you happy, nor the other miserable. But the favour of God and his wrath are matters of weight; let it be your care to obtain the one, and escape the other. These things are eternal, the other but temporal; O slight not then the substance, with your concern for the shadow: Matt. 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

4thly, Believing that you are in yourselves unworthy of the least smile of common providence. Hence says Jacob, Gen. 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." And says the church, Lam. 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." O why do crosses in the world go so deep with men, but because of the want of due humiliation? and whence is that want, but from unbelief? The humble soul fighting with the world will surely be victorious, because however it frowns on him, he takes it kindly out of the hand of the Lord, as not worthy of better.

5thly, Believing that your souls are in hazard by the frowning world, as well as the souls of others by the fawning world. Hence is that prayer of Agur's, Prov. 30:8, 9, "Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me.—lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." The devil holds some fast in the iron chains of worldly adversity, as well as he does others in the golden chains of prosperity. Some ignorantly think, that because they are poor in the world, and their lot very hard they will surely be well in another world. O deceive not yourselves. As God has no regard to men's riches in saving them, he has as little regard to their poverty: but be they poor or rich, if they be not in Christ, new creatures, really godly, they will be ruined for ever, John 3:3; Exod. 23:3.

6thly, Believing the great promise of the gospel with application to yourselves, Heb. 8:10, "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, Hos. 2:19, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies." Your crosses in the world may well be taken by you for an alarm, saying, Depart, here is not your rest. God is setting fire to the nests you would build to yourselves among the things of the world; and withal holding out to you the great promise of the gospel. O embrace it, and trust him in it, Zeph. 3:12. And thus shall ye defeat the frowning world effectually. Believing God to be your God in Christ, ye will be very easy whether the world smile or frown, Hab. 3:17.

Lastly, Believing, that, through the grace of Christ Jesus, even the frowns of the world shall be turned to your good: Rom. 8:28, "We

know," says the apostle, "that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." How often has honey been gotten out of the carcas of the lion, and much good found to grow within a thorn-hedge of afflictions? The cross has brought forth much good fruit in them that have been exercised thereby: and God is kind to you indeed, if you take it so, in that he makes the world so strange to you, that ye may the more seek after acquaintance with him.

Thirdly, The things of the world set out the mixed band of the world's cares. There is none will be free of attacks from these: even a crown is lined with cares. Yea, we must needs care; our daily bread will not drop down into our mouths, nor will our necessary business be managed without thought. But men are in danger by lawful things, and not by unlawful only. And the cares of the world are often ruining unto the soul. They are apt to put the man on a rack, to stretch out one's mind as on tenter-pins, degenerating into a faithless anxiety, Matth. 6:25, Take no thought; in the Greek it is, Be not racked in your soul; to trouble one so as to unfit him for his duty to God, Luke 10:41; to swallow up all other concerns, and to render the Lord's word, the food of the soul, quite unprofitable, Matth. 13:22. Fight in faith against them,

1st, Believing that the success of your affairs depends on the blessing of God on your endeavours, not on your anxious care about them; Psal. 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." The vanity and useless-ness of our anxiety may be very plainly read in many experiments; Matthew 6:27, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" In Providence's

management of the world, how often is it seen that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all, Eccl. 9:11; and that by strength no man shall prevail? How often does some unforeseen event render a hopeful and promising project vain? and, on the other hand, set right again what seemed to be quite marred?

2dly, Believing that the best way to secure what is truly necessary and fit for you in this world, it is to be first and mainly taken up about the things of another life. Hence says our Lord, Matth. 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." They that are careful how to please God, God will see to them that they be provided, Psal. 34:10. They whose main care is for the eternal welfare of their souls, may expect, that, in the use of means, the temporal welfare of their bodies shall be seen to by heaven. This is the shortest and surest way to prosper, Psal. 1:3.

3dly, Trusting in t the Lord with all your concerns which require your care, depending on him as the sovereign manager, and as a sure and safe manager for you. Hence is that exhortation, Psal. 37:3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." And ye should trust in him both as to your own conduct and success, both for direction and prospering: Prov. 3:5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not uonto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." This implies three things.

(1.) Laying your burden of care over on the Lord himself, believing that he will care for you, 1 Pet. 5:7. Many an unbelieving lift we take of our own burden, and then we complain that we are not able to go under it: but Jesus Christ is appointed to be the great burden-bearer for poor sinners, and they are called to casttheir burdens on him, Psal. 55:22, and 37:5. If they will needs take their burdens, and keep them on their own shoulders, who can help it? But faith's work is to trust him with all.

(2.) Believing, that he will do the best: Psal. 85:12, "The Lord shall give that which is good;" 34:10, "They that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing." He knows himself what is best for us, we know it not: and we owe to him a faith so far implicit, as to believe whatever God doth is best done; and whatever way he leads us, that it is best for us to follow, as did Abraham, Heb. 11:8. It is the property of faith, thus to resign all to the Lord, trusting, that whatsoever is truly best for us, he will bring it about.

(3.) Staying yourself upon the word of the promise, Gen. 32:12, "I will surely do thee good." Thus faith is to be an anchor of the soul in doubtful events. While anxious care leaves a person nothing to fix on, but causeth him to waver like meteors ill the air; faith fixeth on the promise of God, and renders the soul easy, come what will, Luke 12:29; 1 Sam. 1:18.

2dly, The men of the world are dangerous enemies also. There is an old enmity, which will not cease to work in them, Gen. 3:15. They are agents for the devil, factors for hell, soldiers in pay to fight Satan's battles. No man will get to heaven without a struggle with them; for they are opposite parties to all that really mind to be there. We find

David very concerned to be delivered from them, Psal. 17:13, 14, "Deliver my soul," says he, "from the wicked, which is thy sword: from men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure." We likewise find the apostle Paul was so concerned, 2 Thess. 3:1, 2, "Finally, brethren," says he, "pray for us,—that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." And our Lord forewarns his disciples of the world's hatred, John 15:19, "If ye were of the world," says he, "the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Now, the men of the world manage the battle three ways, viz. (1.) with the tongue, (2.) with their feet, (3.) with their hands; and ye must resist them still one way, viz. in faith.

1. The men of the world fight against the children of God with the tongue. They are the seed of the serpent; and therefore it is no wonder to see them spit their venom against such as go not their way. Hence we read of their "imagining mischiefs in their heart;" of their being "continually gathered together for war;" of their having "sharpened their tongues like a serpent:" of adder's poison being under their lips, Psal. 140:2, 3. Ishmael's mocking Isaac, Gen. 21:9, is called persecution, Gal. 4:29. The trial of the believing Hebrews was the reproaches of ungodly men, Heb. 10:32, 33. See what a conspiracy was formed against Jeremiah, Jer. 18:18, "Come, said they, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah: for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet: come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." See likewise what a secret consultation was formed against David, intimated in that prayer of

his, Psal. 64:2, 3, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: who whet their tongues like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words. God's people are to fight in faith in this case,

1st, Believing, that our God is able to blunt the edge of their swords, and the points of their arrows, and will do it so far as he sees meet. Hence is that promise, Job 5:21, "Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue." It is in the power of their hand to fling dirt upon the faces of God's children; but it is not in their power to cause it to stick, unless the Lord has said it for the greater trial of his people. God has the hearts of all men in his hands, and his people may confidently trust in him with the preserving of their reputation while they keep his way.

2dly, Believing that all the dirt a mischevious world flings in the face of the Lord's people, the day will come that God will wipe it cleanly away from off them, and throw it back on the faces of them that cast it: Is. 51:8, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." A lying tongue is but for a moment, and will rebound upon them that use such a hellish weapon. God has secured by promise the taking away of reproaches from off his people: Psal. 37:6, "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness, as the light, and thy judgment as the moon-day. 68:13, "Though ye have lien among the pots, ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." And so, in the faith of the promise,

they may be very easy; and considering the use God may have for them for their good, may find soul refreshment in them. Hence says our Lord, Matth. 5:11, 12, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." And says the apostle, 2 Cor. 12:10, "I take pleasure in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake."

2. The men of the world fight against the children of God with their feet; that is, by the example of their unholy lives. And much mischief they do by that means; hereby heaps are made to lie upon heaps. Hence says our Lord, Matth. 18:7, "Woe unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." It is hard to bear up against the course of the world lying in wickedness, to swim against that stream, considering the corruption of nature that is in the best. By the force of ill examples, many good men have been worsted, many that had not the root of the matter in them have been ruined: Matth. 24:13, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Fight against it in faith,

1st, Believing, that the way of the world is the way to eternal ruin: Eph. 2:2, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, Prov. 13:20. "A companion of fools shall he destroyed." Are we not expressly told, that the multitude is going in the way to destruction? and that there be very few which are on the way to heaven, Matth. 7. So that whosoever mind for heaven, must needs be nonconformists to the

world, though thereby they become the world's wonder, like Joshua and his fellows. See 1 Pet. 4:4.

2dly, Believing, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, ye shall be able to stand the shock of the corrupt example of the world. The eye of faith will discern the greater strength to be on the side of the wrestler against ill example. Hence said Elisha, in another case, to his servant, 2 Kings 6:16, "Fear not: for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them." And says the apostle, 1 John 4:4, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. If God be for us, who can be against us?" And for us he will be, if we trust him for our upbearing against it. He strengthens the spoiled against the strong: and be the force of the current never so great, they "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth them," Philip. 4:13.

3. The men of the world fight against the children of God with their hands. There is never a wicked man in the world, but, by his natural make and frame, is a persecutor, Gen. 3:15. And none is fit to travel the road to heaven, but they that are resolute to hold on their way, notwithstanding all the mischief a wicked world may do them. Hence says our Lord, Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot he my disciple." Sometimes indeed God binds their hands, that they can do nothing with them against his people; but the mischievous persecuting nature never leaves the serpent's seed: and according as holy providence looseth the cord, so will they vent it. But resist in faith,

1st, Believing, that it is little they can do, when they do their worst. Hence says our Lord, Luke 12:4, 5, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do, But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea I say unto you, fear him." The utmost reach of the most malicious and powerful persecutors, is but to the body, and things that concern time. And what is the body in comparison of the soul? time-things in comparison of those which are eternal? The faith of this carried up the martyrs, and armed them with a holy contempt of the impotent rage of their persecutors.

2dly, Believing that they are ever under the check and control of a gracious God, engaged on the side of those that keep his way: Psal. 76:10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." So that "he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely, Prov. 10:9. How spitefully did Laban pursue Jacob, and Saul, David? but God put a check on them. Faith will discover in this case an almighty power for protection, and man to be but a worm, a fading thing which shall be like grass, Is. 51:12.

3dly, Believing the eternal rest, peace, and safety, that remains for the people of God: 2 Cor. 4:17, 18, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." It is but a short time we are to remain among the inhabitants of this world: the firm faith of that, with the faith of a better life, would make us very easy whether we have their, smiles or frowns. Our great concern is to fight our way to the better world, and resolutely to cleave to the Lord

and the way of duty, over the belly both of the things and the men of the world.

Sixthly, There is a fight of faith with sin: Heb. 12:4, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Of all things, there is nothing so opposite to God as sin is. The devil brought it into the world at first: and fearful havoc has it made therein, ever since its entrance; destroying the most part of Adam's children, wounding and doing mischief to all. And none can reach heaven, but those who both fight and overcome it: and there is no successful fighting against it, but in faith. And that ye may know what you have to fight against here,

1. There is the Captain of this hellish band; that is the sin of our nature.

2. There is a swarm of hellish lusts, as soldiers under the command of the sin of our nature.

First, There is the captain of this hellish band; that is, the sin of our nature, called "the old man, the flesh, and sin," by the way of eminence, Rom. 6:12. Sin is woven into our very natures: our nature has got a wrong set by Adam's fall. It is averse to good, and prone to evil; the bias of it lies quite the wrong way. This corrupt disposition is most active, and by its indwelling and activity fights against the soul. And it exerts itself against the soul especially these three ways.

1. With its guilt, whereby it binds over the soul to the anger of God: the soul out of Christ to his revenging wrath, and even the believing soul to fatherly anger and displeasure, Gal. 3:10; Psal. 89:30, &c. The conscience feeling the band of sin on it is frightened and fired. The

man sees himself, by reason of the corruption and pollution of his nature, an object of God's indignation, liable to the fearful strokes of his hand: even as a serpent, or any other poisonous creature, is liable to the stroke of a man's hand wherever be meets with it. Now, if ever ye would break these bonds of guilt, fight against them in faith,

1st, Believing, that the Lord Jesus Christ has made a complete satisfaction to the justice of God, not only for actual sins, but even for the sin of our nature, Rom. 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." In respect of the sin of our nature we needed a Saviour; and it was reckoned to him, to be cleared by him, as well as our actual transgressions. So that there is a sufficient remedy provided against the guilt of the sin of our nature, in Jesus Christ; so that no man needs to despond in that case as hopeless.

2dly, Believing, embracing, and trusting to the promise of remission of sin through the blood of Christ: Eph. 1:7, "In him we have redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." While the conscience is fired with guilt, faith must discern the promise of remission through Christ held forth in the gospel, like a rope to drowning men, Luke 24:47. And faith must embrace that promise, relying on it as the Lord's own promise; even as the drowning man ventures his life on the rope let down to him: and so shall that guilt be removed, and the conscience purged, Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 3:24, 25. Your warrant is, Acts 13:38, "Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto the you forgiveness of sins."

3dly, Believing and applying to yourselves, and pleading the perfect holiness of Christ's birth and nature, as a public person, Col. 2:10, 11. Thus faith may triumph over the sin of one's nature, as to the guilt of it. While the law says, Thou hast an unholy nature, and therefore must die the death: Yea, may the soul say, True, my nature is unholy in me; but Christ has satisfied for that guilt: and I have a holy nature in Christ, in him as a public person I was born holy, and retain the holiness of nature: and therefore I must not die, but live.

OBJECTION But, alas! I dare not apply Christ's perfect holiness to myself, for I fear I have not right to it. ANSWER. There is a twofold right. (1.) To a thing. (2.) In it. What right has a beggar to a penny which a man seriously holds out to him, saying, Hae, there is a penny? He certainly has a right to that penny: he may lawfully take it out of that man's hand, and put in his pocket. Such a right every one of you has to Christ's righteousness, whereof this is a part. It is God's gift to you Rom. 5:17; John 6:32; held out to you to be received and applied by faith, Rom. 1:17. If the beggar neglect or refuse it, though he had a right to it, he is justly deprived of it; and the man may put it in his own pocket again: but if he do take it, then he has a right to it; it is his own in possession, and cannot be taken from him again. Go then, and take the gift of righteousness out of Christ's hand, verily believing that ye have a right to it.

2. With its motions and activity, Rom. 7:5. It is an active principle, still tending to corrupt the soul more, fighting for the throne in the heart, and to cause the soul obey it, in fulfilling its lusts. And it must be fought against, to the breaking of its designs, Rom. 6:12. It is a restless enemy, present at all times with a man, and especially active at some times, and particularly when one would do good: as it was

with Paul, Rom. 7:21. It is like a dunghill, still sending forth its filthy steams. And as it strives to strengthen itself, and to have the throne; so the Christian must fight against it, to bear it down, weaken, and get it mortified, Gal. 5:17 And ye must for this cause fight in faith against it,

1st, Believing that it is your most dangerous enemy: for so it is indeed. Never did Paul cry out to be delivered from the most bloody men that were set against him, as from indwelling sin. Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! It is a domestic enemy; an enemy within, more dangerous than all the enemies we have without, whether devils or the present evil world. Were it not for it, they would have a cold coal to blow at. But this furnishes them with notable advantages against us.

2dly, Believing Christ to be the great ordinance of God for sanctification, and looking for your sanctification from him, on the credit of the promise held out in the gospel to you, Is. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Men have by nature's light been convinced of the necessity of sanctification; and some have thought one means proper to obtain it, and others another. Pagans have thought washings with water, sacrifices, the study of moral virtue, proper means for it. The Jews have added to these the observation of Moses' law, moral, ceremonal, and judicial. The Papists hare thought a multitude of uninstituted ceremonies, fastings, whippings, &c. with the work itself in sacraments, all proper to sanctify the unholy. Legalists look on their own faithless endeavours after holiness, their watchings, &c. as proper means to obtain it. But all in vain.

But God has appointed his own Son to be the great ordinance for sanctification of the unholy, that the praise of our sanctification may be his own, as well as of our justification, 1 Cor. 1:30, 31. And he has lodged the fulness of the Spirit of holiness in him, to be partaken of in the way of believing, Acts 26:18. Look how the stung Israelites were cured in the wilderness by looking to the brazen serpent, believing that by that means they should be healed; so is an unholy sinner made holy, looking unto Jesus, trusting unto him for their sanctification, John 3:14, 15, or as the woman with the bloody issue. Hence the church, believing the promise of sanctification says, Micah 7:19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

3dly, Struggling against it in the faith of its having got its death's wounds, in the death and resurrection of Christ, as a public person, Rom, 6:6–9. No wonder they be still under the power of indwelling sin, who struggle against it without an eye to the death of Christ. But the soul by faith eying the death and resurrection of Christ, as the death of sin, will thereby be animated to act against it, like a giant refreshed with wine. The sins of all that are Christ's were imputed to him, and he by his sufferings expiated the guilt of them; and so he rose again free of that imputed guilt: so, in virtue of his death and resurrection, it loses its power over those that are his. And by faith of it, we become partakers of it.

4thly, Believing that we shall get the victory over it through Jesus Christ, Rom. 8:24, 25, "O wretched man that I am, (says Paul); who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." They will fight well who are sure of the

victory: and it is faith's work to believe the victory over sin, according to the promise, Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." This was in cluded in the first promise, Gen. 3:15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent; which was proposed to our first parents to be by them believed.

With its sting still sticking close to the soul, Rom. 7:17. It cleaves to us, like a stain that cannot be got fully washed off, while we are in this world. It is like the fretting leprosy in the walls of the house, not to be quite removed, till the house be pulled down. Notwithstanding all the struggles against it, it cannot be got to the door till death. Fight in faith against it,

1st, Making no truce with it, but ever seeking its ruin, in the faith of Christ's excellency, and sin's hatefulness. The eye of faith fixing on the glory of Christ held forth in the gospel, has a transforming virtue. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. 3:18, "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And thus the heart is separated from sin, and set against it, while yet sin cleaves to the soul. Like the house of David and the house of Saul: no league between them, but the war continued till the house of Saul was quite sunk.

2dly, Believing, that the victory over it will be at length full and complete. Resist it in the faith of this. However it appears to be fixed with bands of iron and brass, yet the breaking thereof shall come suddenly, at an instant. As the walls of Jericho fell down on the seventh day, that were not moved while the Israelites compassed

them the six days: so at death these walls will fall down, and be razed to the foundation.

Secondly, There is a swarm of hellish lusts as soldiers under the command of the sin of our nature, Rom. 6:12. These are the members of the old man, the streams flowing from the bitter fountain of the corruption of nature. These "war against the soul," 1 Pet. 2:11. They seek to drive the soul from God, they push on men to satisfy them with forbidden fruit, and at length drown the soul in destruction and perdition, where they get the final victory, 1 Tim. 6:9. Against these also ye must fight in faith, resist them, deny them, weaken, mortify, and crucify them.

It is a difficult fight; but faith will help you out in it, as difficult as it is.

1. Their name may be legion, because they are many, Tit. 3:3. All sin is radically in the corrupt nature of man: and there is never a temptation in the world, but there is in our nature some lust or other akin to it. Look through the world, and see all the abominations which any where appear there some are athiests, adulterers, &c. But the corrupt affections are in every body's heart naturally, Prov. 27:19, "As in water face answereth to face; so the heart of man to man." But resist ye, believing, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, the victory is to be got over them all, Psal. 118:12. There is neither strength nor multitude to be feared, where one by faith can oppose to both, the almighty power engaged on the side of the wrestlers against sin. Therefore says the apostle, 2 Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The blood of Christ is

of infinite value, the Spirit of Christ of infinite efficacy, and faith must rely on these.

2. Their allies are all the powers of hell; Satan, John 8:44, the world, Tit. 2:12. All the snares and temptations that are in the world, are allied to some lust of the heart, which answers to them as tinder to fire. Bat ye should resist, believing that greater is he that is in you, than he that is in that combat, 1 John 4:4. Oppose to these by faith the divine attributes, his power, wisdom, &c. the name of the Lord, which is a strong tower, &c.

3. Their lodging is not far off. It is the corrupt heart; thence it. is that they issue out against us, Mark 7:21. The heart of man is like a common inn, often so thronged with strangers, that there is no room for the entertainment of the master. But ye must resist them notwithstanding, believing that your helper is as near you as those your enemies, 1 John 4:4. O it is a trying consideration to a gracious soul to think, that sin is woven into one's very nature, mixed with one's very constitution. But let faith discern the union betwixt Christ and the soul; let the Christian believe that Christ dwells in him by his Spirit, in an indissoluble union; so may he see how to get clear of sin at length.

4. Their qualities are very bad. They are the brats of Babel, the offspring of hell. And,

1st, They are greedy and insatiable lusts, Gal. 5:17. They are like the grave and the barren womb, that never say, It is enough. Where they are indulged, and yielded to, they fill the man's hands continually, seeking meat for them, to the provoking of God, Psal. 78:18; James 4:3. And the more they are gratified and fed, the more they still

crave: so that they "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Is. 57:20.

But ye must resist them, if ye mind for heaven. Ye must deny their cravings, Tit. 2:12. Make no provision for them, but starve them, however painful that may be, Rom. 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." This is the way to rid yourselves of their trouble: for men's lusts are like fire, that will die out if there be no fuel laid to them.

(1.) Believing, that there is a fulness in Christ, enough to satisfy the soul, to give the heart a complete rest, that it shall need none of those things which nourish lusts, Matth. 13:45, 46. The one pearl discovered, stays the pursuit after the many. Hence faith contracts the desires of the soul into one, Psal. 27:4 which is the better part. O what is the cause men are so taken up to satisfy their lusts with their proper food, but the not believing of the fulness of Christ? Psal. 4:6, 7.

(2.) Embracing that fulness of Christ for, and instead of those things your hearts lust after. This is the import of selling all and buying the field, the one pearl; the soul taking Christ for these things, as in buying one takes the commodity bought instead of all he pays. The surest and shortest way to mortification of lusts is this way of believing, whereby the soul makes a happy exchange; for and instead of such lusts which cleave to him, embracing Christ, from him to draw that content and satisfaction he sought in the lust. Thus men deal with their hearts, as men with children, giving them one thing to get another from them, Rom. 13:14 forecited.

(3.) Believing, that you shall find that rest and satisfaction of heart in Christ, which you sought in your lusts. This is the import of the gospel-offer to all, Matth. 9:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is. 55:1, "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." And if you believe it not, you believe not the gospel aright: and always the less ye believe it, the surer gripe will your heart hold of its lusts. But believe it firmly; and the more firmly you believe it, the more will ye let go your gripes of your lusts.

2dly, They are hurtful lusts, 1 Tim. 6:9. And they extend their hurt to the tenderest part of the man, and to the not only wounding, but ruining of it, if the effect thereof be not stopped, destroying the soul. They hurt as water hurteth, drowning the soul, ibid.: as fire hurteth, burning it up, Rom. 1:27; as a canker hurteth, eating it away, 2 Tim. 2:17; as poison hurteth, killing it, Psal. 140:3; Is. 59:5. They extend their hurt not only to the party in whose breast they are lodged, but to others, Eccl. 9:18, "One sinner destroyeth much good" Sometimes one's lust involves many in guilt, and many in trouble; like a fire breaking out in a house, burning down the houses nearest it, and putting all into trouble and vexation. Thus Achan's last involved his whole family in guilt, and troubled all Israel. Adam's Inst ruined all the world.

Ye must therefore beware of them, and of the hurt by them. But deceive not yourselves, thinking ye may entertain them, and not be hurt by them; that ye can take the serpent in your bosom, and not be stung thereby, Prov. 6:27, 28; Eccl. 10:8. Resist the beginnings of your lusts, nip them in the bad. The longer they go on, they will be

the harder to master, like a fire, or a water. If they have got up upon you, by all means endeavour to hinder their spreading; and speedily quench them, if they are spread. To do it to purpose, do it in faith,

(1.) Putting yourself under the divine protection, by trusting in the shadow of the wings of a God in Christ. This is the work of faith. Hence says Boaz to Ruth, chap. 2:12, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." This has the promise of protection, Psal, 91:1, &c. Faith sees the hazard the soul is in from hurtful lusts, and therefore disposeth the soul to all due precaution, and to put the soul in the Lord's band for keeping, as the chickens get in under the wings of the hen, Psal. 31:5.

(2.) Applying the Redeemer's blood for purging away the guilt brought on the soul by these lusts, Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:14. This is the only way to remove the hurt of them in that case. Thus the hurt of the guilt of them shall be cured, Mark 16:17, 18. The guilt of them casts the conscience into a fever; but faith applying the blood of Christ held out in the promise of the gospel, obtains pardon of the guilt, and cools the sick conscience, Is. 33:24. The access to this blood is free to all, Zech. 13:1, "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. 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

(3.) Trusting to the fulness of the Spirit of sanctification in Christ, for breaking the power of these lusts, 1 Cor. 1:30. We are not man enough for the least of these powers of hell: therefore we are to trust

to borrowed strength, 2 Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And going out against them in the name of the Lord, like David with his sling, we shall do valiantly: for he "strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong; so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress," Amos 5:9. Thus many who have long been a prey to their lusts, like dead men lying in the grave to the worms, receiving the Spirit of life from Jesus Christ, have shook them off. "For," says the apostle, "the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death," Rom. 8:2. And in them has been fulfilled in a spiritual sense, Is. 14:2, "The people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord, for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors." And this in virtue of that, Psal. 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive."

3dly, They are restless lusts; "like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, Is. 57:20. They are like the midges in a summer day, ever in motion, working some annoyance to the soul. For temptations are thick in the world, and they never want something to stir them up, they are warring lusts, they are never at peace, they are ever in the field of battle.

(1.) Warring among themselves, one against another, Jam. 4:1. And the soul of man is what they are warring for, which shall possess it, and be governor of it. In this respect the poor sinner's heart is like a town situated in the confines of the territories of several ambitious princes, which is tossed and harrassed amongst them, he fightng to have it, and he fighting to have it; one turning out another, &c. Thus

pride and ambition draw the mind one way, covetousness draws him another way: contrary lusts at once fight in him. And there is no peace for the man, but by mortifying both the contending parties.

(2.) They war against the soul, 1 Pet. 2:11. All of them are enemies to it, and seek its ruin. Though they be contrary one to another, yet they conspire together for the destruction of the soul; like Herod and Pontius Pilate against Christ. The soul, in respect of its make and constitution, is most allied to heaven, and therefore is the special object of their rage.

Wherefore ye also, if ye mind for heaven, must lay your accounts with a continual warfare. Ye must never let down your watch, nor lay by your armour, but ever stand in a fighting posture, Eph. 6:14, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth," &c. As there is no peace to be made betwixt contrary lusts, so ye must not side with any of the parties, nor be at peace with either, but maintain the fight against both. And fight in faith,

[1.] Believing that this war will have a comfortable end at length, and ye shall have a profound, perfect, lasting peace, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. Though the war with your lusts must be a lasting one; it is good news, that it will not be everlasting; but the peace obtained through the complete victory will be so. Take courage, O Christian, the last stroke will be given ere long in this battle, which will be the decisive stroke. The day will come, when the enemies "ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever, Exod. 14:13. In heaven ye will get eternal peace and rest, Rev. 21:5. There the centinels are called from their posts, and the men of war lay by their swords, and put on their crowns.

[2.] Believing that your helper is ever as ready as your enemies, Psal. 16:8. It is a weighty consideration, that Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and our enemies within are restless. But faith wants not a solid relief to oppose unto this, looking to the promise, Psal. 121:4, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep, Is. 27:3, "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." At what time soever the enemies attack us, we may have access to our help: and the faith of the promise will fetch it in as quickly as by a look, Is. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

[3.] Believing that his grace is ever sufficient for you, 2 Cor. 12:9. Though the war last long, the stock of strength cannot be wasted, in which ye must fight; since it is an inexhaustible treasure in Christ Jesus, to which ye can never come amiss, John 1:16. Indeed, if ye fight in your own strength, ye will soon find it wasted: but faith's work is to fetch in strength from Christ and it is sufficient for the continued warfare, Is. 40:31.

Lastly, They are deceitful lusts, Eph. 4:22. We are apt to be beguiled by them, if we take not good heed. They deceive sinners, and then take them captive, Tit. 3:3; and then slay them, Rom. 7:11. They are the golden cup in Satan's hand, by which he ministers poison to the soul. They are deceitful: for,

(1.) They always promise what they never perform, 2 Pet. 2:19. Who is the man that is not disappointed in them looking for that content and satisfaction he never finds? How was Judas deceived that way?

(2.) They often commend themselves to men under the mask of some harmless thing, or some real virtue, Col. 2:18. Thus, like Satan, they transform themselves into an angel of light. So many call evil good, and good evil, &c.

(3.) There is a hidden mischief in them, when they are most smiling. There is a hook always, which is covered with the bait, James 1:14, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed." It is a metaphor taken from fishes caught by the bait, and drawn out of the water. But,

Ye must have your eyes in your head, and not be ignorant of Satan's devices, Prov. 22:3. Be not rash, but try ere ye trust. Forbidden fruit may be fair to look at, and the devil's ground may be very smooth; and the sinner see no hazard where death is at his elbow, Prov. 14:12. Therefore fight as against a deceitful enemy, Eph. 6:11. And fight in faith,

[1.] Believing the testimony of God concerning the heart, Jer. 17:9, that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? and therefore keeping a watchful eye, a holy jealousy over it: Prov. 28:14, "Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief." Faith is the soul's going out of itself to the Lord, and brings off the man from leaning to his own understanding, Prov. 3:5, and trusting to his own heart, Prov. 28:26. For these are the things that betray a man into the hands of deceitful lusts.

[2.] Trusting to the conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ, Prov. 3:6. He is the Captain of salvation, the appointed leader of his people, eyes to them in the wilderness. And he will teach those who are willing to be

taught, Psal. 25:9. And there is no way to get clear of the deceitful lusts, but by shutting our own eyes, and looking to the Lord for light to discern our way. For he is made wisdom for us, 1 Cor. 1:30, and by faith in him, "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err in the way of holiness," Is. 35:8.

Lastly, There is a fight with death. This is the last enemy ye will have to grapple with: 1 Cor. 15:26, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death." There was never any who escaped this combat, but Enoch and Elias. As for all others, the encounter with it is appointed of Heaven, Heb. 9:27. And there is no freeing of any from this battle, Eccl. 8:8. Many trouble not themselves to fight with temptation, or with sin, but live at peace with these their enemies: but, whether they will or not, they must feel the bitterness of death. If ever ye would fight it so as to overcome, ye must fight in faith. Here consider,

1. How death may attack you; and,

2. In what shapes it may do so.

lst, How death may attack you. And that,

First, With sorrow and heaviness, Psal. 116:3. Death is apt to let in a flood of sorrows upon poor sinners: so that those who have spent their days in mirth, find then all their mirth quite swallowed up in that flood; and they who have had a life of sorrows, feel then the flood of them swelling to the brim. And there are two sluices death opens to let in this flood.

1. The separation of the man from this world, and all things in it, Is. 38:11. It comes to carry the man off from this world; to separate

betwixt him and his nearest relations; to put an end to any portion of his under the sun, that he shall no more see the sun rise or set again, and have no more access to his own house, or bed, or board. This is apt to let in a flood of sorrow upon the man. And there is no way to hold out against it, but one of these two;

1st, By turning it into the matter of joy: like those mentioned in Job 3:22, "which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave;" when the man is so wearied of the world, that his heart leaps for joy, when God's messenger, death, knocks at his door.

2dly, By a Christian resignation to the will of the Lord, Luke 2:29, the man being ready calmly to deliver up unto the hands of God, all he has here.

Now, if ye would fight death's sorrows on this head, viz. separation from the world, either of these ways; ye must do it in faith,

(1.) Believing, that, through the alone merits of Christ, ye shall be admitted into a better world, set down in a better house, at a better table, and lie better, even in Abraham's bosom, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. Nothing else will work the soul into that Christian resignation. The heart of man will never be truly content to give away this world's good things, while it has no comfortable prospect of better: and therefore Christian resignation at death, will be according to faith's view of better things in the other world, Heb. 11:13.

(2.) Trusting the same Lord Jesus with the charge and care of those whom ye are to leave and are concerned for, 1 Pet. 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." With an eye to this, the Lord has made that promise, Jer. 49:11, "Leave thy fatherless

children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." Ungodly men can have no such comfort, in the abundance they have to leave theirs, as a godly man may have in this way of believing, Heb. 11:22.

2. The separation of the soul from the body, Is. 38:13, 14. The soul and body are closely knit; but death comes to loose the silver cord that knits them together; like a whirlwind to separate them, and carry them far asunder. The soul has a sure prospect of a separate state, which it has no experience of; and the consideration thereof is apt to fill it with sorrow, on the account of its foreseen widowhood.

There is no making head against this, but in faith;

1st, Believing the soul's union with Jesus Christ, and with God through him, Rom. 8:38, 39. Thus the soul has full comfort against the separation that death makes. Though the man's spirit parts with his body, yet the Spirit of God still dwells in the soul. God would have his people believe this particularly: and for that cause he has appointed the sacraments, signifying and sealing their union with Christ.

2dly, Believing and trusting for the blessed resurrection of the body at God's appointed time, Job 19:26. It stays the sorrow of friends at their parting, that they look to meet again in peace: and when the soul and body are parting, the stronger the faith of the joyful resurrection is, the less will the sorrow be on that head. And all that are Christ's have good ground for it: for our Lord has said, John 11:25, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Secondly, Death may attack you with fear and terror. Death is of all terrors the most terrible. Hence we read of being "brought to the king of terrors, Job. 18:14. And therefore the scripture expresseth the greatest consternation by the terrors of death; as in the case of David, Psal. 55:4, "The terrors of death are fallen upon me." And says Job, chap. 24:17, "For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." Death will appal and damp the stoutest heart: it will fill them with fear, who have been a terror to others in the land of the living. But faith will bear out, where natural courage falls like a dyke of sand before a sweeping flood. Now, there are three sources of the terrors of death.

1. Guilt lying on the soul, 1 Cor. 15:56, "The sting of death is sin." By the guilt of sin, the sinner is bound over to death; so that is the sting wherewith it pierces men. The native guilt of sin binds over the sinner to death in its full extent, even to revenging wrath: the moderated guilt of it binds over the sinner to unstiuged death. When death comes up, it takes the man prisoner as a guilty man; and so fills him with terror. Here must be a close fight of faith to stop this source of fear and terror.

1st, Over the belly of all your doubts, fears, and felt unworthiness, stretching out the hand of faith, and laying it on the head of the great sacrifice Christ, and so transferring all your guilt on him, Rom. 3:25, and 5:11. Ye must believe in, and trust on the obedience and death of Christ, for the removal of your guilt; believing, that, for the sake of a crucified Christ, all your sins shall be pardoned. And for the warrant of your so trusting, ye must discern the pardon offered to you through Christ in the gospel, Acts 2:38, 39; and so, amidst all your

doubts and fears, anchor your souls on the faithfulness of God in the promise. Thus ye shall pull out death's sting, obtaining the removal of guilt by faith in his blood.

2dly, Believing and applying to yourselves Christ's full answering of the demands of the law, whereby the law is disarmed of its curse, and the bond of it as a covenant is loosed from off you, Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:14. Death's strength lies in guilt: take away guilt off the soul, death is like Samson without his hair. The strength of guilt lies in the law as a covenant: remove the bond of the law from off the man, and the man's guilt is like the cords the Philistines bound Samson with, which became as flax burnt with fire, Judg. 16:14. Let faith apply to the soul Christ's obedience and death, and so his fully answering the demands of the law: and, then the law can have no more effect on you, than a subscribed bond fully paid and discharged, blotted and rent in pieces, can have on you.

2. The unseen unknown world, therefore called the land of darkness, Job 10:21. One is apt to be seized with fear, when they are to be carried into a place which they do not know. Death comes to carry us to another world, which we never saw, nor can see till we be there, never to come back: and that makes it terrible. It is the world of spirits: the blessed spirits dwelling in the upper regions; the damned spirits in the lower. We are so unacquainted with the inhabitants of that world, that the sight of a spirit, good or bad, would be enough to frighten us while we are here: what wonder then that death be terrible, coming to carry us, where there are none but spirits? Here is great necessity of faith, to bear up against the fear rising from thence. We must then stay our hearts by faith,

1st, Firmly believing the scripture accounts of the unseen world, Heb. 11:1. Though we have never seen it, yet we have heard of it: though we never were there, yet the map of it has been laid before us in the Bible; and there we have it described both the upper and lower part of it. And in that map, drawn by inspired pens, not capable of erring, the lower part of that world is not more dreadful, than the upper part is pleasant and desirable, John 14:2; Rev. 21. The faith of heaven is staying to the heart in some measure.

2dly, Firmly believing the scripture account of the way to heaven; that Christ is the way to it, John 14:6; and that by faith we walk in him to it, Col. 2:6. If we believe not this, our hearts have nothing to stay themselves on, but are left at an utter uncertainty, in our encounter with death. Therefore labour to strengthen your faith of this, that it may not be yea and nay, but yea with you, 2 Cor. 1:19, 20; that "he that believeth, shall be saved."

3dly, Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, for your safe passage to the upper part of the unseen world, Psal. 73:24, and 31:5; committing your soul to him, rolling the weight of your through-bearing on him as the Captain of salvation appointed of God to bring many sons to glory. Take hold of him, by his word of promise, by the everlasting covenant, 2 Sam. 23:5; and labour to gripe some particular promise for that end, as Is. 43:2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Heb. 13:5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Is. 35:9, 10, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord

shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

4thly, Believing that your Lord Christ is Lord of the unseen world, and that the whole compass of it above and below is nnder his dominion, Rev. 1:18. It is in his hand that the disposing of souls to any part of that world is. Neither is he to fight with the prince of darkness, on that side, about any soul. That fight of his with Satan was in this world. When one comes there, the devil cannot touch him, unless given up to him as an executioner. And he has said it, that none that believe in him shall be damned, Mark 16:16. Believe it with application.

5thly, Believing, that as soon as your soul departs out of your body, God will receive it into his own hand, Psal. 31:5. compared with Luke 23:46. So David believed, Psal. 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It shall be conducted by angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22. Believe, that the same God who brought thee out of the womb, safe into this world, when thou wast a naked helpless infant, and by his providence preserved thee, will take the same care of thee, when entering into the unseen world. This is the comfort of faith in death; agreeably to what the Psalmist saith, Psal. 22:9, 10, "But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly."

Lastly, That thy God will fit thee both for the place and the company, however unfit thou art for them now, Heb. 12:23. He will do it in a moment, as appears from parity of reason from 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," &c. Believe that he will fit thee, not only for the sight or knowledge of the spirits there before thee, but for communion with them. And thou mayst confirm thy faith of this, by the experience thou hast had (1.) of his fitting thee for communion with the inhabitants of this world, though thou camest into it an infant knowing nobody there, no not the mother that bare thee; and (2.) of his fitting thee for communion with himself, though thou wast by nature dead in sin.

3. The judgment, Heb. 9:27. The appearing before a tribunal is an awful thing. When a guilty creature is lying on a death-bed, drawing his last breath, and considers that in a little he is to be carried before his judge in another world, to be judged, and give account of his deeds done in the body, and to receive his sentence for eternity, in well or woe; no wonder fear and terror seize him. There is no making head against this but by faith,

1st, Receiving and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ, with all his salvation offered to you in the gospel, John 1:12. So in Rev. 22:17, the offer of Christ is made, after the warning given of Christ's coming to judgment: for this only is the way how a sinner may stand before him. While a sinner breathes in this world, he is in the way: and that is the time to agree with the adversary. Christ and all his salvation is offered; that is, pardon, peace, right to glory, sanctification &c. And it is the work of faith to receive them, held forth in the gospel-promise.

For this cause it is necessary to judge ourselves, and condemn ourselves; to call over all our bypast life, with the sin of our nature: and renouncing all confidence in ourselves, to fly to the horns of the altar, confiding in a crucified Christ, upon the ground of God's faithfulness in the promise of the gospel; John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2dly, Believing, that the same Jesus who is offered, and whom you have embraced, in the gospel, is the judge whom you are to appear before, John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." This is a fit means to abate the terror of the judgment-seat to a believer. For thus, by the eye of faith, the soul may see, that it is the very same person who is its head, husband, advocate, and the redeemer, who is its judge. And thus a full fountain of consolation is opened against the terrors of death, arising from the judgment.

3dly, Believing, that you being in Christ, judgment will not proceed upon you according to the law of works, but according to the law of faith, i. e. the covenant of grace, Rev. 20:12. The law of works adjudgeth every one that sins in the least to die, Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10; and according to it shall all unbelievers be judged; but no believer, Rom. 6:14. The covenant of grace adjudgeth every soul united to Christ by faith, how many soever his sins have been, to live eternally, for the sake of Christ's obedience and death imputed to him, Rom. 8:1; John 3:16.

Lastly, Believing, that the covert of Christ's blood is a perfect covert, within which not one drop of revenging wrath can fall here or

hereafter, Is. 32:2; and that faith's plea will never be rejected, for it is established by the covenant betwixt the Father and the Son, and God's faithfulness is impawned for it. Let the believer then, thinking on the tribunal, behold the rainbow about the throne, Rev. 4:3. compared with Is. 54:9. and be comforted against the terror of death from this quarter.

Thirdly, With despondency, Lam. 3:18. This is the most fearful weapon wherewith death attacks a man; when it goes about to raise a man's hope in Christ, making his heart to sink within him as hopeless, filling him with a fearful expectation of eternal destruction, Job 33:22. This may be the case of those that are strangers to Christ, whom death seizing after a lifetime spent in profanity and wickedness, their sins, especially their gross heaven-daring abominations staring them in the face while they are death's prisoners, are apt to fill them with despair of mercy, Job 18:14. It may also be the case of saints after a careless untender walk, Psal. 69:2, 77:7; Matth. 25:5. Here is need of faith in a special manner,

1st, Believing with application the infinite efficacy of the blood and Spirit of Christ Jesus, Heb. 7:25. The soul would behold that blood as the blood of the Son of God, 1 John 1:7, and therefore of infinite efficacy to do away the greatest guilt; as the sea, to quench a house on fire, as well as a candle: his Spirit is of infinite efficacy, as able to wipe away the deepest stains of sins, as others, 1 Cor. 6:11: a water-flood, sweeping away whole dunghills, as well as mole-hills.

2dly, Believing that ye are still within the compass of the gospel offer, Is. 55:1; Rev. 22:17. Yea, it is directed to you in particular, as Jer. 3:1, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to

me, saith the Lord." Is. 1:18, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God has made no exception of sinners of any size, who will come in; though ordinarily a profane graceless life has a disagreeable end; they that live gracelessly, for the most part dying hardened, sometimes in sullen despondency: yet the case of the thief on the cross, shews a possibility of its being otherwise.

Lastly, Believing, griping, and hanging by the promise of the gospel, over the belly of all objections. Acts 16:21. Though you are in a boisterous sea, where one wave comes after another to sweep you away; yet quit not your gripe, Heb. 10:39; but hope against hope, as Abraham did; for it is pleasing to God, Psal. 147:11, and will have a good issue, as in the woman of Canaan.

2dly, Consider in what shapes death may attack us. There is one way of coming into the world, but there are many ways of going out of it. Which of them may be ours, we know not; and therefore it concerns us to be ready to encounter death, and fight the last battle successfully, in whatever shape death come upon us. I will take notice of these four.

1. A violent death, by the hands of men. This the heaviest of deaths, when it is an ill cause; as in the case of malefactors, by the hand of public justice; and of men falling sacrifices to their own and others rage in their private godless quarrels. All I say to that, is, to advise you to live by faith, that ye may be preserved from such a death, Prov. 28:17; Matth. 26:52. But even in a good cause men may be brought to it, whether more solemnly by process of law, or

summarily by the hands of bloody men. Death in that shape must be fought,

1st, Believing that that was the kind of death which Christ died, and so has sanctified it to his own, that they may comfortably venture on it for his sake and cause. And the saints of the highest class have died so, dying martyrs, in numberless multitudes. Our Lord will have all his to lay their accounts with it, Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me," says he, "and hate not—his own life, he cannot be my disciple;" though he does not call them all to it. But many who have been called to it have rejoiced in it as their honour.

2dly, Believing that great truth with application, Matth. 16:25. "Whosoever shall save his life, shall loose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." When one's life comes in competition with the honour of Christ and the cause of truth, and they will, for saving themselves, make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; they lose their souls, to save their bodies for a little time: whereas they to whom Christ's honour is more dear than their own lives, their souls shall be saved eternally, and eternal glory will more than make make up all their losses.

2. A painful death. Death in any shape can hardly want pain; but death is certainly more painful to some than to others. O what piercing pains, gripes, and torments, do some suffer at their death! What struggles and wrestlings have some with death, before their souls leave their bodies! What measure of these pains is allotted to us we do not know; but every one will at length feel his own part of them.

Our business is to bear them Christianly and patiently; and that I we will never do to purpose, but by faith,

1st, Cleaving to Christ in them by faith, Job 13:15, and believing, that through his grace they shall have a comfortable end in due time, 2 Tim. 4:6, 7, 8. Faith's view of the eternal rest in heaven, is the best cordial in the pain of death. When the soul believes, that the last pain is coming up, the last sob; after which sorrow and sighing shall for ever fly away; that will make the man stand the shock of the sharpest pains Christianly and patiently.

2dly, Believing that the body of death and sin, which thou hast had many a battle with in thy life, is by that means to be put to the door. Death came in by sin, and sin must go out by death. Every pain and gripe looseth a pin of the tabernacle; and according as death makes its progress in the believer's body, sin is the nearer to a removal outof his soul. And when death has perfected its work on the body, the soul shall then be perfected, Heb. 12:23. A Christian will abide sore thrusts patiently, in the faith of this their thrusting out his worst enemy.

3dly, By the eye of faith discerning death unstinged to thee, by the death of Christ. Our Lord Christ has said it, and done it, Hos. 13:14, "I will ransom thee 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; repentance shall be bid from mine eyes:" and therefore a dying saint should comfort himself in it, and believing sing, as in 1 Cor. 15:55–57, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength, of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord

Jesus Christ." That whereby the believer's dying body is pained, is not death's sting: he may therefore bear it the better. Death's sting stings the soul and conscience, and leaves the venom of the curse there, which will scorch the man eternally. These pains are but as a bee-sting in comparison of that.

3. A longsome or lingering death. Death makes quick harvest with some, but with others death's work is spun out to a great length; whereby they have many deaths in one, are often looking for the last stroke, but it is long a coming. This is a great trial, and we know not but it may be ours. Therefore we should be prepared for it, and lay up timely for it. We will never manage it well, but by faith,

1st, Believing always that it is coming; but at what hour, we know not. The faith of this will make us keep up our watch, Matth. 24:42. They may watch at first, who may let down their watch when they find the Bridegroom delays his coming; and so they may be surprised, as the foolish virgins when their lamps were out. But the faith of this will put us on Job's resolution, chap. 14:14, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

2dly, Believing that therein the Lord has you upon your trials, 1 Pet. 1:6, 7. He is in that case taking a trial of your faith, love, patience, and Christian fortitude. And if God opens to any of us a scene of trial of more variety and greater length than that of others, it is our business to behave well in the trial laid to our hand.

3dly, By the eye of faith discerning the eternal weight of glory, on the other side of the trial: and if we weigh the one by the other, the most longsome struggle with death will appear both light and momentary, 2 Cor. 4:17, 18, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,

worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal."

4. Lastly, A sudden death. Death sometimes makes a wide step, so that it is upon a man ere he can well perceive it coming. It is what may be our lot; for it is common to good and bad. Good Eli died so, as well as Ananias and Sapphira, who died with a lie in their mouth. And therefore it concerns us to be prepared for it; which we can never be but by believing. And,

1st, Securing ourselves within the true ark, timely, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting him in the offer of the gospel covenant, John 1:12. Then come death when and how it will, we are habitually ready for it: and it shall not be able to loose the marriage-knot cast by faith betwixt Christ and our souls, Rom. 8:38. &c. If in that case, it come suddenly on us, it shall but waft us over more speedily into Immanuel's land.

2dly, Resolutely renewing the actings of faith on Christ, at death's sudden approach, Is. 45:22. What a man has done before, he may the more easily do again on a signal given: and a believer may through grace renew his acting of faith, upon death's short warning. If death be sudden, the act of faith, may be as sudden, as reaching in a moment from earth to the highest heavens: and therefore compared to a look.

And thus I have gone through the Christian warfare, even to the last battle. May the Lord thus teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight.

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