

THE
SURE TRIAL
OF
U P R I G H T N E S S.

PSALM XVIII. 23.

P R E F A C E.



IT is the blessed privilege obtained by our Saviour for his people, that sincere though imperfect sanctification is graciously accepted of God the judge of all. This sincere holiness is strictly and indispensably required "by the law of faith, in the hand of the Mediator:" without it we cannot partake of the treasures of mercy and of glory that are revealed in the gospel. It is therefore a matter that infinitely concerns us, both in respect of our present peace and future blessedness, to make a true discovery of our uprightness. And usually all the fears and inquiries about our spiritual state issue in this, whether we are upright or not? The assurance of our uprightness, is a fountain of relief in all perplexing jealousies about the favour of God: for notwithstanding our defects, "he will spare us, as a father spares his son that serves him."

This great question of our sincerity may be cleared by a due observing our hearts and ways: for conscience is an inseparable faculty of the soul, and even in the heathen accused or excused, as their actions were exorbitant or regular according to the internal law, and consequently gave testimonies of their wickedness, or moral integrity. The scripture indeed tells us, "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" But this primarily respects the discerning it by others; as the apostle saith, "who knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him?" There may be the affectation of the name of religion, joined with a disaffection to the thing: there may be solemn formality without cordial godliness; an acting of piety and personating devotion for vile ends. But though the impure artist under a veil of hypocrisy may be concealed from others, yet he is not from the conviction of his own mind.

I shall add further, that many from ignorance or carelessness, may presume they are in a state of salvation, when they are "in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity." There are many

carnal shifts made use of to palliate the evil condition of men's souls, but their security proceeds from the neglect of due examining their hearts and lives. It will be a vain excuse at the last day, "to plead, the serpent beguiled me: for it is not merely our deceivableness, but willingness to be deceived, that exposes us to mistake our spiritual condition by the insinuations of satan. As the wise philosopher observes, * a man is the first and principal flatterer of himself, and therefore apt to be deceived by other flatterers. But if we take "the candle of the Lord," and impartially search ourselves, though the heart be such a dark labyrinth, that every secret turning cannot be discovered; though all the deflections and errors of our ways cannot be exactly known, yet we may understand the habitual frame of our hearts, and the course of our lives.

It is the end of the following sermons, to direct men in the discussion of conscience, that they may not from an erring mind, and corrupt heart, deceive themselves in a matter that so nearly concerns them, and incur the double punishment in proportion to their guilt, as our Saviour foretels, "When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch."

Many useful rules are laid down by divines, whereby true piety may be discerned from counterfeit: but the plainest trial and level to the perception of the lowest christian, is, whether there be a sincere respect to all God's commands, without the reservation of any known sin, how pleasant soever, to the carnal appetites, or the exception against any known duty that is displeasing to them. If men would retire from the vanities and business of the world into themselves, and search their spirits with that seriousness that is due to so weighty a matter; if with a resolution to know the state of their souls, if conscience were inquisitive as under God's eye, that has a full prospect into every breast, they might have an inward testimony of their sincerity or deceitfulness. The apostle refers the decision of our state with respect to God, to the testimony of the enlightened conscience: "if our hearts condemn us not," (of any habitual indulged sin) "then we have peace towards God. If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." From the neglect of trying themselves, many live in a cloud of delusion, and from inward darkness pass to outer darkness for ever.

* *Plut. de adul.*

THE
SURE TRIAL
OF
UPRIGHTNESS.

PSAL. XVIII. 23.

"I was also upright before him: and have kept myself from mine iniquity."

THE title of this psalm declares the occasion of it: David "spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." It is a clear evidence of his heavenly mind, that after his victories and triumphs, when his throne was established in peace, he recounts the signal acts of divine providence with holy ecstasies of praise and thankfulness, and leaves an everlasting memorial of God's excellent goodness to him. Carnal persons in extremities, may be ardent in requests for deliverance, but when it is obtained, they retain but a cold remembrance of God's preserving mercy; nay, they often pervert his benefits: the affluence, and ease, and security of their condition, occasions the ungrateful forgetfulness of their benefactor. Self-love kindles desires for what we want, the love of God inspires a holy heat in praises for what we enjoy.

In the psalm, the inspired composer displays the divine per-

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fections in lofty figures of speech, suitable to sacred poesy, and in a relative endearing way as manifested in his preservation. He attributes such titles to God, as are significant of the benefits he received : sometimes God discovers the crafty and cruel designs that are formed against his people, his eye saves them, and he is styled their "light:" sometimes he breaks the strength of their enemies, his hand and power saves them, he is styled their "defence." Here the psalmist, with exuberant affections, multiplies the divine titles, "the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my shield, and my high tower, and my refuge, and my salvation:" a rock is a natural, a tower an artificial defence; both are used to express the safe protection he found in God. He then sets forth the extremity of his danger, to add a lustre to the name of his preserver: "the waves of death compassed me; the floods of ungodly men made me afraid: his ruin was imminent, and seemed to be inevitable: but in that distress, his fervent prayer, "his crying to God" pierced the heavens, God heard "his voice out of his temple," and speedily in the best season came for his deliverance. "He was seen upon the wings of the wind; he rode upon a cherub," (those swifter spirits) "and did fly." He describes the terrors of his coming against his enemies: "the Lord thundered from the heavens; he sent down his arrows, and scattered them: his lightning discomfited them." The acts of justice reversed, have the ensign of mercy on them: the drowning of the Egyptians in the red sea, was the preserving of the Israelites. Briefly, he ascribes his deliverance to the favour of God as the sole mover, and the power of God as the sole worker of it. "He delivered me, because he delighted in me." His free and compassionate love was primarily active, and drew forth his power in its most noble exercise for the salvation of David. Such an ingenuous and grateful sense the psalmist had of the divine mercy: this gave the sweetest relish of his deliverance; this was his true triumph after the final conquest of his enemies. Indeed his enemies were unjust and cruel, and God vindicated the justice of his cause against them: therefore he saith, "the Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me." He declares the holiness of his conversation: "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly de-

parted from my God." And as an eminent instance of this, he saith, in the words of the text, "I was upright also before him: and kept myself from mine iniquity."

In the text there is a solemn declaration of David's uprightness, by his attesting God the searcher and judge of the heart; "I was upright before him:" and by an infallible proof of it, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

There is one difficulty to be removed before I come to discourse upon the proposition, and that is, how this profession of uprightness is reconcileable with David's actions in the matter of Uriah? Whether we consider the quality of his sins, the crimson guilt, and killing circumstances that attended them; especially the deliberate and cruel contrivance of Uriah's death: or whether we consider the fearful interval between his sin and repentance: for like some fair rivers that in their current suddenly sink under ground, and are lost in their secret passage, till at a great distance they rise and flow again: thus it was with David, he that was so conspicuous in holiness of life, sunk into a gulf of sensuality and cruelty, and for a long time was unrelenting and unreformed, till by a special message from God by the prophet Nathan, he was renewed to repentance, and restored to the forfeited favour of God.

To this objection some learned interpreters answer, that the declaration of his innocence and integrity, must be understood with a tacit exception according to the testimony of scripture concerning him, "that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah." That sin, though a dreadful provocation, yet did not blast the uprightness of the rest of his life, and make it unacceptable to God. 2. This affirmation of David may refer to his afflicted state, when his conscience was tender and vigilant, and his passions so subdued, that though Saul, his most unrighteous and implacable adversary, was at his mercy, and he could as easily have cut off his head, as the lap of his garment; though he was provoked to take his full revenge on him, and put an end to his own fears, yet he rejected the motion with abhorrence; "God forbid I should lift up my hand against the Lord's anointed:" he spared Saul, and would not by such an irregular act obtain the kingdom, though elected to it by God himself. By this

we may take an estimate of his integrity, which God rewarded at last.

The proposition that I shall discourse of is this, that the preserving a man's self from his iniquity, is an undeceiving evidence of uprightness.

In the managing the doctrine, three things are to be considered and unfolded.

I. What sin may be denominated a man's own.

II. What the preserving onesself from that sin implies.

III. How this is an undeceiving evidence of uprightness.

I. What sin may be denominated a man's own.

In general, every sin that a man commits may be styled his own, as it is the issue of his corrupt nature, and the offspring of his depraved will. St. James expresses it, "every man is tempted," (that is, effectually) "when he is drawn away of his own lust." The devil may solicit and excite, but without the consent of the will he can never fasten guilt upon us. Every actual sin is in some degree voluntary: but some sins, in an eminent propriety and peculiar manner, may be called our own; such as there is a strong tendency to commit, either from the natural inclination, or custom, that is an accessory nature, or from special respects that engage the will and affections. As in the natural body composed of various members, some are more dear and useful, as the right eye, and the right hand: so "in the body of the sins of the flesh," as the corrupt nature is styled by the apostle, from the variety and union of the vicious affections, there are some particular lusts, either for pleasure or profit, are as "the right eye, or right hand," in our Saviour's language, so dear to men, that they will lose eternal life rather than be separated from them.

These reigning sins, that have a complete dominion in the unregenerate, are of different kinds in several persons. I will proceed in the discovery of them. 1. By a direct light, from their causes. 2. By a reflex light, from their effects. The causes of special sins are either natural or moral: the natural are the different temperaments of men's bodies, and the connexion of the passions, that so strongly draw the will, that we may as certainly understand what vicious actions are naturally consequent, as astronomers foretel the eclipses of the lights of heaven.

1. I will begin with the consideration of the different tempe-

raiments of men's bodies, which are the secret springs of their inclinations and aversions. It is requisite to premise, that original sin, the poison distilled through all the faculties of man by propagation, is an universal supreme evil: * It is a seminary of all corrupt desires, from whence the issues of actual sins are derived: and that some are less inclined to notorious sins than others, is not from naked nature, but from the singular distinguishing mercy of God.

This depravation, so general and deplorable, was observed by the wiser heathens, who were ignorant of the cause of it, the rebellious sin of Adam, the common father and representative of mankind. This corruption of nature doth not extenuate, but aggravate our guilt: as the psalmist with deep sorrow acknowledges his native inherent pollution; "In sin was I conceived, and in iniquity brought forth." I know many bold inquiring wits have presumed to examine the decrees of God concerning the lapsed state of mankind: but it is much safer † to admire the divine providence, than to argue; to believe the revelation, than to dispute against it.

But although the ‡ corrupt nature virtually includes all sin, yet there is not an equal propensity to all in every person: as in waste neglected grounds, some weeds are ranker and rifer than others, from the quality of the soil; so some kinds of sin are more predominant and evident in the lives of man, according to their peculiar dispositions.

For the unfolding this, we are to consider, that the soul of man in its state of union, has a continual dependance upon the body, both in its intellectual and moral operations. Consider it as a spirit, and in its separate state, it is capable of acting as freely and independently as those pure intelligencies that are distant from alliance with gross matter; but consider the spirit as a soul consociated with a body of flesh, there is a strange circling influence between the soul and the body: the dispositions

* Πανσπερμία παδῶν. *Plut.*

† Quæris tu rationem, ego expavesco altitudinem. Tu ratiocinare, ego miror. *Aug. Serem. 7. de verb. Apost.*

‡ Stultus omnia vitia habet, sed non in omnia natura pronus est: omnia in omnibus sunt, sed non omnia in singulis extant. Omnia in omnibus insunt; sed in quibusdam singula eminent. *Senec. de benef. L. 4.*

of the body suitably incline the soul, and the inclinations of the soul affect the body. In the intellectual operations as the animal spirits are qualified, some are of subtile and quick wits, others of stayed and solid minds ; some are fit for contemplation, others for action. And in moral actions the soul works by the active power of the sensitive faculties, and the actions resemble the instruments. The complexion of our minds as well as manners is usually suitable to our natural temperature. I will more distinctly unfold this. In the human body there is the united figure of the world, the heavy earth, the liquid water, the subtile air, and active fire enter into its composition : from the mixture of these ingredients results the temperature of the bodies ; and as the qualities proper to them are predominant, men are denominated sanguine or melancholy, choleric or phlegmatic : such as the constitution is, such are the inclinations, and such are the actions that flow from them. It is observable, that brute creatures are either fierce or tame, bold or fearful, stupid or docile, as their blood is hotter or colder, of a finer or thicker texture. And in children there is an early disclosure of contrary dispositions according to their temperaments : thus some are soft and ductile, others stiff and stubborn ; some are of a sweet pliable temper, drawn by counsel and the cords of love ; others of a baser cast, will not be led by reason and kindness, but must be constrained by fear ; some are of an ingenuous disposition, blushing at any thing that is indecent and disparaging ; others defy all modesty, and will not change countenance though surprised in a foul action. As the inclination in animals to actions proper to their kind, is discovered by their offers before they are fit for action : birds will attempt to fly before their wings are formed ; so in children, inclinations to particular vices appear according to their different constitutions, before their sensitive faculties are capable of complete acts.

More particularly, those persons in whose complexion blood is predominant, are usually light and vain, sensual and riotous, insolent and aspiring, bold and presumptuous ; those in whom phlegm is the principal ingredient, are idle and slow, cold and careless in things of moment ; the most ardent exhortations are lost upon them, as bags of wool deaden the force of bullets, in yielding without resistance. Those who are timorous and deeply tinctured with melancholy, are suspicious, sour, and inexorable.

The dark shadows of their minds are believed as visible testimonies of dangers ; and their silent suspicions as real proofs. They are jealous of all persons and things : if in conversation there be speech of the virtues they are conscious to want, or the vices they are secretly guilty of, they imagine it is directed to their reproach. They are intractable, and often revengeful ; for melancholy is a vicious humour that retains the impressions of the passions. Those who are choleric by nature, are heady, various, violent, and create perpetual trouble to themselves and others. Such a soul and such a body united, are like two malefactors fastened with one chain. In short, according to the elemental crisis of our bodies, objects affect our senses, and the fancy, with the lower appetite, are the centre of the senses, and there is so near an activity and reference between the passions and the reasonable faculties, that the understanding and will receive impressions accordingly, as the passions are excited and moved.

It is observable, that the corrupt nature in the language of scripture, is usually called flesh, not only as it is transmitted by carnal propagation, but as it is drawn forth by carnal objects, and exercised by the carnal faculties. And as the same constitution is heightened in some, and in a remiss degree, in others, so the lusts proper to it are more or less exorbitant ; as the same sort of vines produce a stronger or weaker grape, according to the quality of the air and soil wherein they are planted. That vicious inclinations spring from the different temperament of men's bodies, there is a pregnant proof in the visible diversity of lusts that are peculiar in degrees of eminence in some families, some countries, and several ages of men's lives. We often see hereditary vices transmitted by descent : some families are voluptuous, others vindictive ; some sordid and covetous, others profuse ; some ambitious, others servile, resembling their parents, from whom the secret seeds of those dispositions are ingenerate in their temper. So in different climates, according to the impression made on the natives by the air and diet, they are distinguished by their * proper vices (not so generally found in other nations) as by their countenances : some are formal and superstitious, others wild and barbarous ; some are crafty and treache-

* Sunt tam civitatum quam singulorum hominum mores : gentes aliæ iracundæ, aliæ audaces quædam timidæ quædam in vinum & venerem proniores. *Liv. Hist.* l. 45.

rous, others are wanton and luxurious. As some diseases reign in some countries, that are less frequent, and not so fatal in other places. The apostle tells us of the Cretians, that "they are always liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies;" their habitual vices fastened this universal character upon them.

And according to the alteration made in the bodies of men in the several ages of life, their vicious affections run in several channels: the spring is the same, corrupt nature; and the issue will be the same, the lake of fire; but the course is different. St. John distinguishes the corrupt inclinations that are predominant in the world, under three titles, "The lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eyes, and pride of life:" 1 John 2. these lusts have their proper seasons, and successively take the throne in men's hearts.

In youth, the lusts that in propriety are called the * "Lusts of the flesh," imperiously reign. Youth is a kind of natural drunkenness, the blood runs races, and with a heat and rapture hurries many into sensual excess and riots. Youth is highly presumptuous, easily deceived, and † refractory to reason: the superior faculties, the understanding and will, are basely servile to the carnal appetites. The wise preacher intimates this in his bitter irony; "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, for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." Eccles. 11. Vain mirth, and loose desires, are usually indulged in the spring of our age: therefore the apostle emphatically warns Timothy, though a mortified young man, "Flee youthful lusts."

In the maturer age, the sensual passions are cooler, less vigorous and active, and youthful lusts are changed for other lusts that are not so scandalous, and leave not such a visible stain, but are as destructive to the soul. It is very observable in human nature, that as the affections in their sensible operations decay, the understanding improves and recovers its ruling power: it is visible in many instances, that men in their staid age despise

* *Istæ voluptates ducæ gustus & tactus solæ sunt hominibus communes cum bestiis, & ideo in pecudum numero habetur, quisquis est his ferinis voluptatibus prævinctus. Aug. Gēl.*

† *Cæcerus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper.*

those things that had a ravishing force upon them in their unsettled youth. * But when the mind is tainted with a false esteem of present things, (as it is in all those who are in a state of polluted nature) it leads the will and affections to pursue riches and dignities. Carnal wisdom is distinguished by St. James into three kinds; it is "earthly, sensual, devilish," with respect to the tempting objects in the world, riches, pleasures, honours. The sensual wisdom is in contriving and appointing the means that may accomplish the desires of the flesh. After the flesh is satisfied, the earthly wisdom designs earthly things, and uses such means as are fit to obtain them: to ascend in power and command, or to raise estates, with wretched neglect of the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, that should be sought in the first place, and with the most ardent affections and endeavours. In conjunction with this, the devilish wisdom is practised; for pride and ambition are satan's original sin, as envy and slander are his actual sins. He is continually vexed at the recovery of fallen man, and is his constant accuser. And whilst men are eagerly contending for the world, they are excited from interest and envy, to blast and defeat their concurrents that would be superior or equal to them. This worldly wisdom, though a more solemn folly, yet is as woful and pernicious as the sensual wisdom; for God is injuriously robbed of his right, our highest esteem and affections; and men deceived with the poor pageant of the world, neglect their last and blessed end, and justly perish for ever.

Old age has its peculiar vices. It is true, it mortifies the affections to some vanities. Vespasian the Roman emperor was so tired with the pomp of his triumph, that in the triumphant way, he often reproached himself, that being an old man he was engaged in such an empty and tedious show. And Charles the fifth, in his declining age, preferred the shade of a cloister before the splendour of the empire. But it is attended with other vicious inclinations. Old men are usually querulous, impatient, discontented, suspicious, vainly fearful of contempt or want: and from thence, or some other secret cause, are covetous and sordid

* *Conversis studiis ætas animusq; virilis. Quærit opes, & amicitias, inservit honori.*

in sparing against all the rules of reason and religion. * Covetousness is styled by the apostle, "The root of all evil;" and as the root in winter retains the sap, when the branches have lost their leaves and verdure, so in old age, the winter of life; covetousness preserves its vigour when other vices are fallen off. Usually the nearer men approach to the earth, they are more earthly-minded, and which is strange to amazement, at the sunset of life, are providing for a long day. Briefly, every age has its special vices suitable to the constitution of men's bodies in them, and we must accordingly make our inquiry to discover our own sin.

The connexion of the passions duly observed, will discover the predominant lust. The passions are the motions of the sensitive appetite, whereby the soul approaches to an object that is represented under the pleasant colours of good, or flies from an apprehended evil. They are called passions, because in those motions there is a flowing or ebbing of the spirits and humours, from whence a sensible change is caused in the body, and the soul is in unquiet agitations. It is very difficult to know their original, though the sensible operations are very evident: consider the soul as a spirit, it is exempt from them; the spirit, as a soul, is liable to them. Whether they are derived from the soul to the body, or from the body to the soul, is hard to determine. They are of excellent use, when subordinate to the direction of the renewed mind, and the empire of the sanctified will: when in rise, degrees, and continuance, they are ordered by the rule of true judgment. What the winds are in nature, they are in man: if the air be always calm without agitation, it becomes unhealthful, and unuseful for maintaining commerce between the distant parts of the world: † moderate winds purify the air, and serve for navigation. And thus our voluble passions are of excellent use, and when sanctified, transport the soul to the divine world, to obtain felicity above. But when they are exorbitant and tempestuous, they cause fearful disorders in men, and are the causes of all the ills and miseries in the world. From hence it is that sin in the scripture is usually expressed by lust; "The lusts of the flesh are manifest: those who are Christ's, have crucified

* In frigidis seminibus vehementius inardescit.

† Ad ulteriora noscenda.

the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof." Gal. 5. "Every man that is tempted, is tempted of his own lust." Jam. 1. The reason is, because the corrupt desires of the soul, when inflamed, are the springs of its actings, and strongly engage the mind and will, and all the active powers, to procure their satisfaction.

Now sin being the obliquity of the desiring faculty, we may discover what is the predominant sin, by considering what affection is most ardent and violent, and consequently most depraved and disordered: and this we may, by observing the connexion between them? for they generate one another. As the diseases of the body, though the disorder of nature, yet have certain causes, and a regular course in their accession, inflammation, and revolution: as in the changes of an ague, a shivering cold is attended with a fiery heat, and that with an overflowing sweat; in like manner the irregular passions are productive of one another. Love is the radical affection, and when it leads to a desired object, has always hatred in the rear, if disappointed and crossed in its desires: so joy in the fruition of a dear object, is attended with grief, that lies in ambush, and immediately seizes upon the soul when the object is withdrawn. And as in the vibrations of a pendulum, the motion is always as strong in proportion one way, as it was the other: so according to the excess of love, will be the excess of grief. Of this we have an eminent instance in David, whose sorrow for the death of his rebellious son was as immoderate, as his love the cause of it.

2. I shall now consider the moral causes of habitual sins, the various circumstances of our lives, that are influential to give a custom to nature, and viciousness to custom. As the sea has rocks and sands, gulphs and currents, tempests and calms, so the present life has symbolically in its different states, that endanger us in our passage to the next world. The different conditions of life I will consider under four heads.

1. The several callings wherein men are engaged.
 2. The opposite states of prosperity or adversity that are attended with suitable temptations.
 3. The society with whom we are conversant.
 4. The quality of the times wherein we live.
1. Let us search for the predominant sin in the callings

wherein we are engaged ; for according to their quality, temptations surround us, and are likely to surprise us. The spider spins his web, where flies usually pass to entangle and destroy them : so the subtle tempter lays his snares in our callings wherein we are conversant. John the Baptist therefore, when the publicans addressed to him for instruction, " Master, what shall we do ?" said to them, exact no more than what is appointed you : and to the soldiers he said, do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely ; and be content with your wages : " he warns them against rapine, and force, and injurious accusing others, of which sins publicans and soldiers were usually guilty. I will, to be the more instructive, particularly consider some callings, and the sins that evidently attend them.

The sacred calling of ministers does not secure them from temptations ; but such is the corruption of their hearts, and of the world, that it exposes them to dangerous temptations. The devil scales us on the temple-side, and often gets possession of our hearts. Ministers are often guilty of a spiritless formality in the managing holy things. In the composing of sermons, the mind is exercised about the matter, order, and expressions, without holy affections suitable to divine truths : partly, because from custom the most solemn and concerning things pass through the soul without serious regard and application ; and partly, because the ministerial office obliging us to furnish ourselves with the knowledge of the admirable mysteries of godliness for the instruction of others, we are apt to make that the only end of our studies ; like vintners that buy great quantities of wine for sale, and not for their own use. There is not in many ministers a spark of that heavenly fire which the reflective meditation on spiritual and eternal truths inspires into the soul, which our Saviour came to kindle. Their knowledge is not lively and operative, but like a winter's sun that shines without vital heat. If they are enriched with rare talents, they are apt to profane that holy ordinance of preaching, by secret aims and desires of vain-glory : the temptation is more dangerous, because esteem and praise for intellectual excellencies that are peculiar to man, and wherein the eminence of his nature consists, are very pleasing, even to those who are of an unspotted conversation, and free from carnal pollutions.

Chrysostom confesses of himself, * that when he preached to a thin auditory, his words died on his lips, and his spirit was quenched ; but when he was encompassed with a numerous full assembly, his spirit was inflamed, and he breathed fire. The attention and applause of the hearers, the regarding one another with wonder, as if never man spake better, the reigning over the spirits of men by powerful oratory, are apt to inspire vain-glorious conceits into the preachers. And many carried along by the current of their injudicious auditors, are curious to bespangle their discourses with light ornaments, to please the ear, and are not studious to preach Christ and him crucified, in a style distant from all shadow of vanity, to save the soul.

Another temptation attending that holy calling is, from human passions, which ministers often bring up into the pulpit with them, and with a counterfeit zeal vent their animosities against those of whom they are jealous, as diminishing their secular interests. God under the law severely forbids the offering up sacrifices by common fire, but only by celestial, that was preserved day and night upon the altar by the priests : it is symbolical, that the reprehension of sinners by the servants of God, should not be expressed with heat of anger against their persons, but with holy zeal ; that love to their souls should be the pure motive of the severest rebukes.

Lastly. The great danger is, lest ministers have a respect more to the temporal reward of their office, than the divine end of it. Therefore St. Peter with that solemnity enjoins evangelical pastors, "to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind : neither to act as lords over God's heritage, but to be ensamples to the flock." 1 Pet. 5. 2, 3. It is true, the labourer is worthy of his reward ; and "if we sow spiritual things, is it a great matter (as the apostle saith) if we reap your carnal things?" 1 Cor. 9. 11. But though it is natural and regular to eat to live, yet to live to eat is prodigiously brutish ; so it is a most guilty vile intention to use the sacred ministry for obtaining secular things. This will corrupt the heart, and hinder the discharging the office with sincerity and constancy ; for the end is

* *Habet enim multitudo vim quandam talem, ut quemadmodum tibicen sine tibilis canere, orator sine multitudine audiente eloquens esse non possit.*
Cicer.

the rule and measure of the means, and a worldly minister will frame his sermons, and order his affairs to obtain the world. If it be for his secular interest, he will appear as an apostle, full of zeal against errors and sins: but if the preaching the doctrines of truth and holiness be prejudicial to his worldly designs, he will neglect his duty to preserve the minds of men untainted from destructive errors, he will mollify the threatenings of scripture, rebate their edge, and thereby harden the hearts of presumptuous sinners. As it is observed * of the vines, if they are supported upon crooked stakes, they will grow so; so carnal preachers will conform themselves according to the humours of those upon whom they servilely depend.

In courts of judicature, the temptations are intimated in the wise advice of Jethro to Moses, "that he should choose men fearing God, and hating covetousness." Without the overruling fear of God, judges will not do their duty evenly and courageously: human respects will tempt them to bend the rule to the obliquity of their minds and desires. When they are influenced by the fear or favour of men, they will part with justice, and conscience, and true honour, and their souls. And how often does the weight of gold turn the scales in judgment; and preponderate the reason of the cause with those who are most solemnly obliged to universal rectitude in the discharge of their office? Judges should so impartially, and with that noble resolution perform their duty, as to discourage all attempts to pervert them. Zeuxes having painted a boy carrying some grapes, so coloured according to nature, that the birds pecked at them: † an observer said, the birds discredited the picture; for if the boy had been drawn with equal life, they had not been so bold to fly at the grapes; a sign they fancied the grapes true, and the boy painted. Thus whoever tempts those who sit in judicature to unworthy things, disgraces their dignity, and constructively declares that he esteems them to have an appearance of virtue without sincere zeal for it. And how many who are pleaders, by fallacious colours commend a bad cause, and discredit a good,

* *Pravitas statataminum ad similitudinem sui vitium configurat. Columel. l. 4.*

† *Aves male existimare de tabula, non advolaturas si puer similis esset. Plin. lib. 35.*

and thereby expose themselves to that terrible denunciation, "woe be to them that call good evil, and evil good." A degenerate mind, and mercenary tongue, will plead any cause to obtain the ends of avarice and ambition: as if, according to what an Italian lawyer said of himself, they were the advocates of their clients, and not of justice.

In short, every calling has its temptations: in the various ways of commerce, there are deceitful arts which an upright man observes and abhors. Some callings expose to more temptations than others; so that without circumspection and care, men are undone in the way of their callings. Some engage persons in such a throng of business, that from one rising of the sun to another, they never seriously remember God or their soul. It is therefore a point of great wisdom in the choice of a calling, with a free judgment to consider what is least liable to temptations, and affords more freedom of serving God, and regarding our spiritual state; for the body is not the entire man, and the present life is not his only duration. The apostle directs christians to choose such a state of life, that they may have the advantage of "attending upon the Lord without distraction." 2 Cor. 7. 35.

I shall add, that the several relations wherein we stand, as husbands, parents, masters, and wives, children, servants, have peculiar temptations; and many whose general conversation seems fair and blameless, are not observant of their relative duties. A husband may be harsh and unkind, a parent fond and viciously indulgent, (it was Eli's sin that brought ruin upon his family) a master may be severe and rigorous. Superiors who are to instruct and govern families by holy counsels and examples, often neglect their duty; and by their evil carriage, set a copy which their children and servants transcribe, and derive a woful guilt upon themselves from their multiplied sins. And how often are those in lower relations careless of their proper duties: wives disrespectful, and not observant of their husbands, children disobedient, servants unfaithful? If conscience be enlightened and tender, it will regard the whole compass of our duty, it will see and feel our sinful neglects in any kind, and make us careful according to the extent of its obligation.

2. The opposite states of prosperity and adversity, have suitable temptations adherent to them.

Prosperity is beset with the thickest and most dangerous temptations. In a garden the tempter lay in ambush, and made use of the fruit "that was pleasant to the taste, and pleasant to the eye, and desirable for knowledge;" and by those allurements corrupted and ruined our first parents, to the loss of their innocence and felicity. Although prosperity be a blessing in itself, yet it is often more destructive than adversity, by the inseparable and engaging snares that surround the persons that enjoy it: pride, luxury, security, impiety, grow and flourish in prosperity. Affliction calls home the wandering spirit, makes us reflect with solemnity upon ourselves, excites us to arm our minds with religious resolutions against the world; whereas prosperity relaxes and dissolves the spirit, and foment the lusts of the flesh. Those who live in the courts of princes, where the height of honour, and the centre of pleasure are, where ambition, hypocrisy, avarice, and sensuality reign, are encircled with dangerous enchantments, and usually are charmed and corrupted by them. The court life is splendid to the eye, but very perilous; like a ship that is finely carved and painted, but so leaky, that without continual pumping it cannot be kept above water; so without the strictest guard over their hearts and senses, the prosperous cannot escape the "shipwreck of a good conscience, and fall into many foolish lusts that drown men in perdition." Yet this state of life many aspire to as the most happy. When Lot separated from Abraham, he chose the "pleasant fruitful country that was like the garden of the Lord." Gen. 13. Sad choice! the land was the best, but the inhabitants the worst: within a short time the cry of their sins reached as high as the throne of God, and brought down showers of fire and brimstone, that turned that natural paradise into a hell.

Riches have a train of temptations, and poverty is not exempt from them. It was the wise prayer of Agur, "give me neither poverty nor riches, 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." Prov. 30. 8, 9. A full estate entirely possesses the heart, and excludes the eternal world from the thoughts and affections: it is therefore wise advice, "if riches increase, set not your heart upon them," intimating they are a snare to the most in the corrupt state. They often induce in men's minds an ungrateful oblivion of their divine Benefactor, as it is charged upon

Israel, "their hearts were exalted, therefore they have forgotten me." They incline men to presume upon self-sufficiency, and to rob God of the homage that is due from his creatures, an humble thankful dependance upon his providence every day. The psalmist saith, "they trust in the wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches." They are engaging snares to renounce religion, whenever the sincere, and open profession of it, exposes our estates to hazard. Briefly, as the Israelites made an Egyptian idol of their Egyptian jewels; so worldly things are abused for worldly lusts. The most who enjoy prosperity, perish by the abuse of it: it is a rare effect of divine grace to preserve the heart and conversation pure in such a contagious air, when a thousand fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand. And the contrary state of poverty and affliction in any kind, if sharp, has its peculiar temptations; discontent, and the use of unlawful means to obtain what they want and desire, is the sin of the poor. The afflicted are ready to faint under the weight of sorrow: the loss of one comfort blasts all the content of their lives. There is a perpetual consumption of their thoughts and time in revolving the afflicting circumstances of their condition, and they are apt to think as if God were regardless or very severe to them. Fearful depth! they wretchedly neglect the means that might alleviate their sorrows, and refuse to be comforted, as if they were persons consecrated to calamity; thus life is lingered out in continual languishings, or ended with deadly grief.

If the affliction be singular and extraordinary, sorrow often increases to such dismal degrees, that most woful effects proceed from that passion. The anguish of spirit either breaks out in unkindly and unholy expressions, or inwardly festers with repining, vexatious thoughts at their condition. Stubborn spirits are impatient of the evils they suffer, and insensible and undervaluing of the blessings they possess. They neither look upward to the hand of God that disposes all evils, nor inward to their sins, the most righteous procuring cause of them: but serious reflection would constrain them to acknowledge that God punishes them less than their sins deserved, and that their dross needed the vehemence of the fire to purge it away: a meek yielding ourselves, and a complying with the blessed ends of his afflicting providence, will make us to understand by experience,

that all our sharpest sufferings were most wisely and divinely ordered by our heavenly Father.

3. We must search for our peculiar sin in the society with whom we are conversant. Our company that we choose, and are frequently engaged with, discovers us to others and may to ourselves. It is a true glass that by reflection makes visible the countenance and complexion of our minds. Love proceeds from likeness, and the election of friends from a correspondence in the tempers of men. It is true, there may be foreign motives of friendship and commerce, with others from our secular affairs and interests; but inclination is the internal cause of friendship. It is visible, that carnality in its various kinds, cements friendships: the intemperate, the lascivious, the worldly, are endeared to one another by the resemblance in their minds and manners. Besides, examples, if often in our view, and especially of those whom we love, have a strange power to change us into their likeness. It is the observation of the wise man, "he that has fellowship with a proud man, will be like him." * The vicious affections of the heart transpire in words and actions, and insensibly infect others: and in familiar society the contagious evil the more strongly infects, being immediately conveyed. If our intimate friends are worldly wise, who "mind earthly things," sagacious to forecast advantages, and active to accomplish their designs, we may judge of the strain of our affections; for if our "conversations were in heaven," if our frequent and serious discourses were of things above, how to improve spiritual riches, our company would be ungrateful to them: without sympathy there can be no complacency in society. The garlic and onions of the Egyptian earth, is more tasteful to their palates than the bread of angels. Besides, by constant familiarity our minds are apt to be corrupted to value the world as our substantial felicity, and our hearts to be corrupted with the love of it, which is of the spring of men's sins and misery. Thus if we are associates with the voluptuous, there will steal into the heart an allowance of sensuality, and a dislike of holiness as a sour severity. If unregenerate men, though of a civil conversation, be our chosen and familiar friends, our zeal for religion will decline, and lukewarmness be insensibly infused into us. Briefly, as the wax re-

* *Serpunt vitia, & in proximum quemq; transiliunt & contactu nocent.*

ceives the figure of the seal that is applied to it, our minds receive a likeness from the impressions of examples. Therefore a prudence discreet and severe is necessary in the choice of our society. In the human life there is no mistake more dangerous than in the choice of friends with whom we are usually conversant. It is a comprehensive rule, and most useful for the guiding us safely to heaven, to select the wise and holy to be our bosom friends. As a ring touched by a loadstone draws another by an impressed virtue, so in holy society there is divine grace attractive of the hearts of others. "He that walks with the wise, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be afflicted:" that is the penal consequence of being corrupted by them. The sensual and luxurious, by their converse, pervert good dispositions in others, and heighten evil inclinations into habits: they are satan's instruments to draw men into his snares, more familiar devils to tempt and destroy souls. He that chooses evil company, is like one that voluntarily frequents a house infected with the plague; who is either a fool and disvalues life, or desperate and seeks death.

4. We must consider the quality of the times we live in, to discover what sin is predominant in us. There are "evil days" in the apostle's language, with respect to the temptations and troubles that are concomitant with them, "and a wise circumspect walking" is requisite to preserve our innocence and purity. Sometimes those who are dignified with titles and powers, are leaders in sin, and their public practices are so commandingly exemplary, that they easily prevail upon many to follow them; for that is the way to insinuate into their favour, and obtain secular advantages and rewards. From hence it is that some, as if the opposite forms of religion were but different fashions of the same stuff, will put on a new livery according to the master they serve. They have a politic faith, you may coin them a Philip and Mary, or an Elizabeth, as the mintage of the times vary. But the example of the high and noble is no safe rule: a rule of gold, though of value for the matter, yet if crooked, it is useless as a rule. In some ages the poison sheds itself into the whole body of a nation, that rarely any are untainted. The old world was drowned in sensuality, and Noah only escaped. And in the next age, how did idolatry, like an overspreading leprosy infect the world; and Abraham hardly escaped. In Jeremy's time the

land mourned for oaths and curses; men were turned breathing devils, and spake the language of hell before they came there. Sometimes all degrees are so corrupt, that vices pass for virtues, the rage of duelling for heroic valour, luxury and sensuality for innocent and amiable qualities, and holiness, though a divine excellency, and the very beauty of the Deity, is despised and derided: "thus men glory in their shame, and are ashamed of their glory." Now there is no tyranny more violent than of a corrupt custom, no contagion more catching than of national sins. The apostle reminds the Ephesians, that in their heathen state "they walked according to the course of the world." We are therefore strictly commanded, "not to be conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the good, the acceptable and perfect will of God." It is the eminent effect of grace to resist the torrent of the times, and to value the conscience of our duty before all worldly respects: accordingly it is recorded to the everlasting honour of Jehoshaphat, "that he walked in the commandments of God, and not according to the doings of Israel."

I come to show how the peculiar sin may be discovered from its effects, and the discovery from hence is more sensible, than from the causes: for divine grace may control the efficacy of the causes, that a christian may abhor the sin to which there are strong temptations, but effects emergent from inward lusts, discover the habitual frame of the heart.

1st. The sin that is frequently and easily committed, and difficultly retracted, is a man's peculiar sin.

(1.) Frequently. Single acts do not denominate a person, but habits that proceed from repeated acts, are characteristical. Noah's single act of drunkenness, which might proceed from his ignorance of the strength of the wine, or the weakness of his brain, did not argue his being addicted to it: but frequent relapses into that sin, denominate a man a drunkard. A train of sinful actions is from a disposition strongly bent to them. If a man be of a choleric nature, anger will be his *quotidian*; if of a sanguine, licentious mirth will be his *tertian*. It is the character of man in his unregenerate polluted state, he commits sin, it is his trade; and as any particular lust has dominion in his heart, such is the course of his life. When the inclination leads to a calling, a man applies himself continually to it; for the

work produces delight, and the delight strongly inclines him to work : thus according to the tendency of our corrupt natures is the constant practice of sin. We may as surely judge of the active powers of the soul by the actions that proceed from them, as of the vigour of the sap in the root, by the number of the fruits of the tree. It is said of the scoffers, " they walk after their own lusts : which implies the habitual practice of sin, the licence and pleasure they take in a carnal course.

(2.) The sin that is easily committed is our own. As the divine nature in a saint makes him fit for every good work, but especially for the exercise of that grace that is eminently regent in his heart, upon the first call of conscience, he applies himself to his duty : so the corrupt nature prepares men for evil works, and its special tendency is presently inflamed by a suitable object. This indication is clear, with respect to the sins of the desiring and angry appetites. The more quick and speedy the power of a temptation is, the more strong is the vicious inclination. When Achan saw a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, he coveted them and took them : the immediate rise of his affection upon the presence of the object, his presumptuous sacrilege, notwithstanding the terrible interdict, was a convincing sign of his worldly mind. So it is said of the young man in the Proverbs, that was enticed by the blandishments of the harlot, " he went straightway after her." When the alluring object presently inveigles the senses, and easily obtains the consent of the will, we may truly infer what passion reigns in the heart. So a man that is soon angry, whose passion like tinder takes fire at a spark, a small occasion may understand what his nature is. A man, of " a cool spirit," of meek and mortified passions, is not easily incensed.

(3.) The sin that is difficultly retracted. There are principles of conscience in lapsed nature, concerning good and evil that cannot be rased out, and are improved and heightened by revealed light ; from thence there is often an internal conflict between the convinced mind, and the corrupt heart : but the darling lust controls the efficacy of those principles, for nature and custom are of all things most hardly to be changed. Properties inherent in the nature of things are inseparable : thus wallowing in the mire is natural to a swine, and though washed, will return to it. When a lust is deeply rooted in nature, " men cannot

cease from sin." We have a sad instance of this in St. Austin, before his entire and blessed conversion. He declares in his confessions, how extreme hard it was to divorce himself from sensual delights; they were incarnated in his nature, engrafted into his affections, and the separation from them was as the flaying him alive. When he prayed for chastity, it was with a restriction, "Make me chaste, but not too soon:" in the vigour of his age, the sinning season, he was averse to be weaned from those poisonous breasts. Until divine grace changed his nature, he could never rescue himself from the entanglements of his iniquity.

Custom in sin usually proceeds from inclination; and with as strong a sway determines the corrupt will as original nature. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? then may you who are accustomed to do evil do good." Dreadful difficulty! some habitual sinners are secure and stupid, and of such depraved obstinacy, that they will not resolve to cleanse themselves from their defilements. In others there are some sparks of religious fear; but notwithstanding the stings of conscience, continue in the practice of sin. The charming lust, so long indulged, is imperious and peremptory; and till omnipotent grace unbinds the charm, they are never released from the circle of confessing their sins when their desires are sated, and committing them with new heat and rapture upon the returning temptation. Though convictions be heightened into resolutions, the next temptation hinders the effect: they rescind their solemn and sacred engagements, perfidiously break double chains, the law of God with their own vows, grieve his spirit and wound their own; from hence it is evident that such sins are properly men's own.

2ly. That lust to which others are subservient, has the supremacy in the heart. In all the dominions of satan, there is some special lust that is his viceroy, and keeps possession for him. There is an order in the kingdom of darkness, one sin wants the assistance and countenance of another sometimes to disguise and palliate it, or for the doing it. The reigning sin has, as it were, its court and council, its guard and attendants. To illustrate this by its contrary, it is observable there is a concatenation of virtues, and the superior virtue is assisted by other virtues in its exercise: as justice in dispensing what is due to others, is assist-

ed by fortitude and temperance, which regulate fear and desire, that often hinder its most noble exercise : and the actions immediately flowing from courage or temperance, are ascribed to justice, to which they are subservient ; for the end and intention constitute the kinds in the ranks of moral things, either virtues or vices. It is the observation of the philosopher, that one who does an act of robbery that he may have money to corrupt a woman, is not so much covetous as incontinent. Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, dipped his garment in blood to deceive their father, and thereby contracted a crimson guilt ; but cruelty and hypocrisy were subordinate to their envy : they hated him, because the father's love to them was faint in comparison to the warm beams reflected upon Joseph.

3ly. The darling corruption engrosses the thoughts. There is a natural levity and featheriness in the mind, a strange inconsistency and discurrency of the thoughts, but love will fasten them intensely upon its object. From hence it is that habitual and delightful thoughts are the best discovery of our hearts and our spiritual state. Words and actions may be overruled and counterfeited for divers reasons, but thoughts are the invisible productions of the soul, and without fear or mask, without restraint or disguise, undissemblingly discover the disposition of the heart. Thoughts are the immediate offspring of the soul ; and as the waters that immediately flow from the spring are strongest of the mineral, so the thoughts are most deeply tinctured with the affections. A saint is therefore described by his " meditating in the law of God day and night," Psalm 1. which is the natural and necessary effect of his delight in it. * Uncounterfeit religion and holiness consist in the order of love, as St. Austin briefly and fully describes it. The will is carried to its object and end by the motion of love, and love applies the mind entirely to the object to which it is strongly inclined. When the heart is corrupt, the ordinary current of the thoughts is in the channel of our lusts. The contriving thoughts, the devices of the mind, the contemplative thoughts and inward musings are conversant about the beloved lust that engages the mind to it. Thus when covetousness is the reigning passion, the mind is in continual exercise to compass secular ends : it is full of projects how to order

* *Definitio brevis & vera virtutis, ordo est amoris.*

the means most successfully to increase riches, and how to remove whatever may obstruct the main design. The spirit is captivated, and like a drudge in a mill is continually grinding for the satisfaction of the earthly appetite. When the more sensual voluptuous passions are predominant, the contriving thoughts are to make "provisions for the flesh to satisfy the lusts thereof." Rom. 13. 1. The understanding is debased to be the pander and caterer for the intemperate and incontinent appetites. The ambitious spirit lays the scene how to obtain his desired honour, and forecasts how to ascend to some place of eminence: so anger-soured into revenge, envies at the excellencies and advancements of others, turns the mind to plot mischief.

The contemplative thoughts and musings of the mind, are also fixed on the darling lust. As a holy believer, in whose heart the desire of enjoying God in heaven is the supreme affection, frequently ascends in his mind thither, and by solemn serious thoughts substantiates his future happiness, and has an unspeakably glorious joy in the lively hopes of it: thus the unrenewed heart turns the thoughts to the desired object, either in representing it in all its charms, or in reflections upon the enjoyment of what is past, or in expectation of what is to come, and pleases itself with the supposition instead of fruition. A proud person entertains vain-glorious thoughts of his own worth, and worships the vain idol himself: in his mind he repeats the echoes of praise, that his foolish flatterers lavish upon him. It is recorded of Nebuchadnezzar, that as he walked in his palace, he said, "is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" His high towering words were the expression of his thoughts, and discovered pride to be the reigning passion of his heart. The sensual wretch surveys his carnal paradise, and personates the pleasures of sin by impure imaginations: his fancy runs riotously over tempting beauties: by an active contemplation he contracts a new stain, and induces a new guilt upon himself: he commits the same sin a thousand times, by renewing the pleasant thoughts of it, and by carnal complacency in the remembrance.

In the silence of the night, when a curtain of darkness is drawn over the visible world, and the soul not diverted by sensible objects, is most free in its operations, then the thoughts are con-

versant about the beloved sin. It is said of the malicious and revengeful, "they plot mischief upon their beds." The rich fool was contriving how to bestow his fruits and goods, and entertaining himself with the thoughts of festival voluptuous living, in the night wherein his soul was required. And in the morning the virgin thoughts are prostituted to the beloved lust. In the time of divine worship, when the pure majesty and special presence of God should unite the thoughts, and compose the soul to a holy solemn frame, then the beloved lust will be so impudent and outrageous as to break into the mind, the chamber of presence, and seat itself there. As Lot's wife led by an angel out of Sodom, turned a lingering eye towards it, so the carnal heart, even in religious service and addresses to God, reflects upon the sinful object, that has an attractive force upon it. It is charged against those fine hypocrites in Ezekiel; "they sit before thee as my people, and hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Ezek. 33. 31. It is reckoned as an high aggravation of their guilt, "yea in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord." Jer. 23. 11. The familiar lust will haunt men in the divine presence. This makes them cold and careless in holy duties: this makes their devotion so faint and dilute, that God is infinitely provoked by them. In short, the darling lust does so entirely and intensely fix the mind upon it, that men's accounts are dreadfully increased by the swarms of wicked thoughts that defile their souls: and in the day of judgment, that is called the "day of revelation," there will be a discovery made to their everlasting confusion.

4ly. The sin men desire to conceal from others, and from conscience, and are apt to defend or extenuate, and are impatient of reproof for it, has a special interest in their affections. Every sinner is a master of this art, to counterfeit the virtues he wants, and dissemble the vices that he allows. It is the observation of "Solomon, God made man upright, but, he sought out many inventions;" especially to palliate and hide, or to excuse his faults. Sin in its native deformity is so foul, that men employ a great deal of art and study, either to conceal it under a veil of darkness, or a deceitful mask of virtue, or by various excuses to lessen its guilt and ignominy. Adam patched up an apron of fig-leaves to cover his nakedness, a resemblance of his care to

hide his sin. David could not expect to deceive God; but to hide his adultery with Bathsheba from men, he sends for Uriah from the army, that he might have gone home to his wife. It is observed of Cæsar and Pompey, whose ambitious spirits aspired to sovereign power, they made use of some ensigns of royalty, to accustom the people by degrees to them, yet were crafty to hide their design. Cæsar sometimes appeared publicly with a wreath of laurel on his head; but lest the people from his wearing that appearance of a crown, should be jealous of his intention, pretended it was only to supply his want of hair, and cover his baldness. Pompey wore a white fillet curiously wrought about his leg, in pretence that his leg was hurt; but in truth, because it was a diadem, a royal ornament, * for which he was reproached by some strict observer. There are innumerable arts used to cover men's respective sins. I shall only instance in one that is usually practised: how do many, like the crafty lapwing that flutters at a distance from its nest, appear zealous against the visible sins of others, that under that shadowy deceit they may hide their own? Their words, feathered with severe censure, fly abroad, wounding the reputation of others for lesser faults, that they may not be suspected to be guilty of worse sins secretly cherished by them.

But if the beloved sin be evident, satan assists the corrupt mind to frame such colourable pretences either to defend or excuse it, that it may not appear in a ghastly manner, attended with strict judgment and an everlasting hell. When a lust has enticed and drawn away the will, the mind is engaged to give colour to the consent, and either directly, or in an oblique way to represent the sin, that it may appear less odious and more amiable. Sometimes the understanding is so perverted by the impression of pleasure, that conscience allows concupiscence. It is a repeated observation of a † wise philosopher, that vices were disguised under the resemblance of virtues, and virtues disparaged under the names of vices; from whence the understanding and

* *Pompeio candida fascia crurum alligatum habenti, dictum fuit, non refert in qua parte corporis sit diadema. Aul. Gell.*

† *Vitia nobis sub virtutum nomine obrepunt. Temeritas sub titulo fortitudinis latet. Moderatio vocatur ignavia, pro cauto timidus accipitur. In his magno periculo erratur. Senec. Fallit enim vitium specie virtutis & umbra. Juven. 14. Sat.*

will, the mind and manners were depraved, and shame was cast upon the virtuous, and boldness given to the vicious. Profuseness is styled magnificence, violence valour, dissoluteness gentility, fraud and craft prudence. On the contrary, sincerity is blasted with the name of folly, patience reputed stupidity, and conscience superstition. The proud will set off the lofty humour and carriage as a decent greatness of spirit, and vilify the humble as low and sordid. The choleric will engage reason to justify his passion; he will alledge the provocation would anger an angel. The lukewarm in religion, will represent lukewarmness as a discreet temperament between the vicious extremes of a wild-fire zeal, and a profane coldness and neglect. The earthly-minded will put flattering colours on covetousness, to make it appear a praise-worthy virtue, a prudent provision for time to come. If men are quite destitute of defence, they will by a mild construction extenuate the guilt of their darling sin. The incontinent person will make a canopy for his lust, as only a human frailty. The intemperate will excuse his excess, as free mirth and harmless society. Many apologies are made for the sins men indulgently commit; some will plead in excuse, a prone necessity of nature; some, the custom of the places they live in; some, their unsettled youth; any thing that may lessen the turpitude in the view of conscience, or in the opinion of others. Now pleading argues love, and love denominates the sin to be their own. * From hence it is that so many contract a desperate hardness, and are irrecoverably depraved. But if men cannot hide or excuse their beloved sin, they are impatient of reproof for it, and with secret discontent, or stormy passions, reject admonition. Some of fair tempers and conversation, if a minister or friend be faithful to their souls, and with holy zeal urges the divorcing command of God between them and their pleasant sins, and represents sincerely the guilt of their sinful course of life, they become fierce and vehement, and recoil upon their reprovers, as arrogating imperious authority, or for rigour and severity, or impertinence in admonishing them; and sometimes re-criminate, that the reprover is as bad or worse himself: like a river that passes without noise, till it meets with the arches of a

* Hoc æque omnium est, vitia sua excusare malint quam effugere. *Senec. Epist. 50.*

bridge that stops its free current, then it swells and roars. In short, the indulgent sinner will endeavour to defend his bosom sin, or to subdue his conscience that it may not torment him for it.

5ly. The sin that the enlightened conscience reflects upon, with anguish and bitter remorse, is usually that which has been indulged, and whereby God has been most dishonoured. There is so deep an impression of the Deity in the soul, and our duty and accountability, that it cannot be utterly defaced; and though the rebellious will and affections control it for a time, yet it remains for the conviction and punishment of delinquents. Conscience is a spy in our bosoms, and observes in order to a discovery; and what is written in its register cannot be rased out. It is true, a spirit of slumber sometimes seizes upon the wicked, and conscience is so stupified, that they sin without reflection and remorse; but there are times wherein conscience is roused up like a lion, and tears "them in pieces" according to the fearful threatening. This is sometimes done by the powerful preaching of the word: the apostle describes "the word of God" by its admirable efficacy; "It is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." When the word by a piercing application discovers the bosom sin, and the fearful judgment that attends it, so that the guilty cannot obscure the evidence of the one, nor avoid the terror of the other, then conscience bleeds afresh that was seared before. There is recorded a wonderful instance of this in the "Acts of the Apostles;" when Paul the prisoner "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," Felix trembled: * the discoursing of those virtues that were directly contrary to his habitual enormities, ripped up his conscience to the quick, and struck into consternation that lofty sinner. From hence it is that many decline a sharp and searching ministry, which is always the token of a guilty heart. The word shining upon the conscience (like the reflection of the sun upon the waters that made them appear like

* Per omnem sævitiam & libidinem jus regium servilli ingenio exercuit. Tacit. *Lib. 5. Hist.*

Τὸ λαγδάνειν φοβεμένε.

blood) makes sins to appear in their crimson guilt, their bloody aggravations. Our Saviour tells us, that "the evil doer neither loves nor comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." John 3. 20. When a powerful preacher, as a second conscience, as if he knew the hearts and ways of men, sets their sins in order before their eyes, and closely applies the threatenings of divine vengeance to them, conscience often joins with him, and as a faithful echo repeats the terrible truths to their conviction and anxiety.

In times of affliction, "when our sins find us out, we usually find out our sins." In full prosperity men are strangers at home, and rarely look inward: they will not endure the inquisition and judicature of conscience: wealth and wickedness harden them against the most serious counsels, the most solemn reproofs and ardent exhortations: they are blind to the sun, and deaf to thunder; but a sharp affliction clears the eyes, unlocks the ears, opens the heart, and pricks the tender vein. The awakened penitent will make an exact search to find out the Achan, the troubler of the soul, and the special sin is so in the interpretation of the vigilant and afflicted conscience. The bitter remembrance of that sin is answerable to its guilt; the more it was indulged, the more the law of God was despised, the more it wounds the spirit: when the pleasure is passed, nothing remains but the sting and poison. Joseph's brethren, who so long had been insensible of their treacherous selling him to bondage and misery; yet in their fears conscience remembers it with aggravations of their unnatural cruelty: "And they said one to another, 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."

Lastly. Consider the several kinds of sins to find out your own: some are of omission, some of commission; some are spiritual and inward; some are carnal, and acted with noise and notice; some distinctly flow from visible causes; some spring from an unsuspected fountain. There are many of a civil composed conversation, who are careless of spiritual duties, of holy communion with God by raised solemn thoughts, and ardent desires, of watchfulness over their hearts, to regulate their aims and affections by the pure law, and are insensible of their neglect and guilt. The unrenewed nature has a strong reluctance

against spiritual duties. Many are righteous to men, and unrighteous towards God; they do not pay those duties that are indispensably from reasonable creatures to the blessed Creator: the highest love for his perfections and benefits, an obedient respect to his commands in their actions, a resigned submission to his will and wisdom, an entire trust in his fatherly providence, and zeal for his glory. Many rob him of that time that is consecrated to his service: the Lord's Day, (though it is our privilege as well as duty to keep it holy) when the public worship is at an end, as if the remainder were unsanctified, they wretchedly waste in complimentary visits, in civil matters, in discourses impertinent to the solemn work of it. Many who are diligent to provide for their families, yet are as bad as infidels in neglecting to instruct their children and servants in the saving doctrine of the gospel, to command them to be circumspect in their ways, to set before them a living pattern of holiness, and carelessly suffer their precious souls to perish for ever. How many who are not guilty of open rebellious sins against the law, yet neglect the great indispensable duty of the gospel, an humble, unfeigned, entire closing with Christ as their Prince and Saviour. They presume upon their moral virtues, of the safety and goodness of their condition: they never had a feeling sense of their want of the imputed righteousness of Christ to reconcile them to God, nor of the holy spirit to make them partakers of the divine nature; as if only the profane, riotous, notorious sinners, had need of his most precious merits and mediation to abolish their guilt, and save them from hell, and of the holy spirit to sanctify them. From hence it is that many civil persons remain in an unrenewed state, and are the natural subjects of satan, and die in their sins. Some are regular in a course of religious duties, they pray, hear the word, receive the sacrament, but without those holy affections that are the life of religious duties, yet content themselves with the external bodily service, which is neither pleasing to God nor profitable to their souls. Some cherish a secret pride that they are not so bad as others; some a vain presumption of the divine favour, because they serve God in a purer way of worship than others, when they neglect substantial religion that recommends us to his gracious eye. Some will severely reflect upon the visible sins of others, whilst there is an unperceived consumption of the spiritual life in themselves. This may seem to proceed from

the hatred of sin, when the real inward motive is to quiet conscience by an appearance of zeal against sin, and make it inob-servant of their inward voluntary defects. The most excellent things may be counterfeit, satan may transform himself into an angel of light; sinful affections may be varnished and gilded, so as to be mistaken for divine graces. Briefly, the heart is an everlasting deceiver, and without a perpetual watchfulness, we are in danger of close corruptions that will blast our sincerity. To find out our sin, it is requisite to search where we may think there is little reason to expect the finding it.

2. I will now consider what the preserving himself from his peculiar sin implies.

(1.) An abstaining from the practice of that sin. When David had an opportunity to destroy Saul, his unrighteous and implacable enemy, and secure himself, when excited to it by Abishai, who would have dispatched him at a blow, yet he rejected the temptation with abhorrence; "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's Anointed;" 1 Sam. 26. 11. thus he preserved his innocence and integrity.

Our Saviour tells us, "He that commits sin, is a servant of sin:" John 8. an indulgent course of sin denominates a person a slave of sin, and a rebel against God, and is utterly inconsistent with sincerity. It is true, an upright man may fall by sudden surreption, by an insinuating infirmity into a foul sin, from which he has a settled aversion, and keeps himself in the general course of his life: and that single act of sin is a blemish of his integrity, but retracted by a speedy repentance, does not denominate him a hypocrite. One may be pale from an accidental surprise by fear, or red through a sudden flush of blood from anger, yet not be so by complexion; for the complexions, pale and sanguine, are drawn by the pencil of nature, the lively characters of the predominant humours, and are usually visible in the countenance.

But although an upright person keeps himself from the gross acts of sins that are clearly against natural conscience, and supernatural grace; yet whilst we are clothed with flesh, the body of sin does not finally expire, and temptations are as importunate as flies about us, (from whom the tempter has his title) that it is morally impossible to be absolutely undefiled: therefore uprightness requires that we should carefully consider our weak

side, what passions we are most inclinable to by our temper; and so diligently fortify ourselves against them, that they may not have dominion over us; and though we cannot arrive, yet we may advance towards the complete conquest of sin. And in our endeavours against the sins to which we are most inclinable, and that often foil us, constancy is inseparable from sincerity. If we neglect the humbling of our souls for unavoidable infirmities, the earnest seeking for the divine mercy and grace, and a careful watching against them, we so far decline from uprightness.

(2.) It implies the mortifying the inward affection to that sin. The rule of our duty requires this: "Cleanse your hands ye sinners, purify your hearts ye double-minded." Jam. 4. 8. The will is the proper principle of sin, and from the depravation of the free faculty actual sins proceed. As the love of the subject is the strength of the prince, so the love of any sin preserves its dominion. There may be a concurrence of circumstances to hinder the actual commission of sin, of which the heart is guilty. An unclean person, when separated from the object of his impure desires, may languish in his lusts, and by contemplative commission be guilty before God. * A malicious person may keep the fire of malice in his breast, without the least discovery by a spark or smoke in his words or actions, waiting for an opportunity that he may take his full revenge, and is a murderer in his wishes. The rapacious desire of another's goods without actual robbery, induces the guilt of theft. There may be an invincible bar between the sinful affection and the object.

Sickness or age may so waste the vigour of the body, that we cannot perform the gross acts of sin: but this abstinence has no moral value, for it only proceeds from the disability of the instrumental faculties. If one in a consumption leaves his revelling and licentiousness, it is no sign of divine grace, but of wasted nature. As in a sick person the appetite fails, "the soul abhors dainty meat;" Job. 33. but if he recovers, his appetite revives, and is more craving for his abstinence: thus many who could not enjoy their pleasant lusts in the time of diseases, being restored to strength, their vicious affections are reinvited by new temptations, and with greater excess act over their old sins, as if they

* *Latro est etiam antequam inquiret annus: fecit enim quisquis quantum voluit. Senec.*

would pay interest for their impatient forbearance. An old sinner may retain and cherish the fire of lust in his heart, when age has snowed upon his head : as in mount *Ætna* the sulphureous fire and snow are near together. But as the philosopher observes, if a young eye were put into an old man's head, he would see as clearly as ever. So if natural strength were restored in an unconverted sinner, he would be as ardent and active in prosecuting his carnal desires as before.

Terrors of conscience may stop the current of men's lusts : fear has torment, and is inconsistent with the pleasures of sin : the fear of visible vengeance, that sometimes strikes the wicked, or the apprehension of judgment to come, may control the licentious appetites from breaking forth into actual commission of sins. But as when the lions spared Daniel, it was not from the change of their wild devouring nature, for they destroyed his accusers immediately, * but from the suspending their hurtful power : so when a strong fear lays a restraint upon the active powers, yet inward lust is the same, and would licentiously commit sin, were the restraint taken away.

The keeping ones self from sin, that is the sign of uprightness proceeds from the mortification of " the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof." The apostle tells us, " carnal circumcision, without the circumcision of the heart, was of no avail to obtain the favour of God : " so the outward forbearance of sin without inward purity, can never commend us to the divine acceptance. A rebel may be driven from the frontiers, but so long as he keeps the royal city, he is unsubdued : so if a lust keeps possession of the heart, though the executive powers may be retained or disabled from the outward acts, it still reigns.

3. I shall now prove that the keeping a man's self from his special sin, is an undeceiving evidence of sincerity.

1st. God approves it : " I was upright before him. God has not eyes of flesh, he doth not see as man sees." The deepest breast is as clear as crystal in his sight. He " weighs the spirits of men," and exactly knows what is true gold, and what is counterfeit. He is the searcher and judge of our hearts, and his approbation is the strongest seal of our uprightness. As God said to Abraham, " now I know thou fearest me, in that thou hast

* *Amari licet, potiri non licet.*

not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Gén. 22. 12. So if we sacrifice at his command, the sin that is as dear to us as Isaac was to his father, the sin of our love and delight, the sin that is ours by choice and custom, then we shall hear the blessed testimony from heaven, that we love God in sincerity; he will own us as his friends. Sincere christians can appeal to God in the psalmist's language, and with his affections; "Lord, search me, and try me, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in me:" they are not conscious of any indulged course of sin, which would make them fearful of his pure and piercing eye.

2dly. It will appear that the keeping ourselves from our peculiar sins, is an infallible proof of uprightness, by considering in what it consists. In scripture uprightness is equivalent to perfection and integrity, and opposite to guilt.

(1.) It is equivalent to perfection; "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Psal. 37. 37. The absolute perfection of holiness is not attainable upon earth, none are refined to a height of purity without mixtures and allays: but according to the mitigation of the gospel, the saints, whose aims, desires, and endeavours are to obtain perfection, are accepted in the blessed Mediator as perfect. Now the indulgence of any darling sin, is utterly inconsistent with perfection in the mild sense of the gospel, and consequently with uprightness. This will be more evident, by considering, that uprightness is equivalent with integrity. The psalmist prays, "let integrity and uprightness preserve me." Integrity implies an uniform equal respect to all the divine commands. When conscience of our duty to God, and the reverence of his authority shining in his law, inclines us to obey all his will, we are upright. Partial obedience that divides the precepts, and complies with those that are agreeing with our carnal affections and interest, and neglects the rest, is as inconsistent with sincerity as death and life. As the soul in the natural man is a vital principle from whence all the actions of life and sense proceed; so renewing grace is a principle of universal obedience. Herod "did many things gladly, upon the preaching of John the Baptist:" but he would not part with Herodias, his charming lust still had dominion in his heart. The young man observed other commands of the law, but when our Saviour tried his integrity, by command-

ing him "to sell all, and to give it to the poor, and he should have treasure in heaven;" it is said, "he went away sorrowful:" covetousness was his bosom sin, and blasted the sincerity of his obedience.

(2.) Uprightness is opposite to guile. Our Saviour gives this testimony of Nathaniel, "behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile;" a genuine son of Israel, whose character was sincerity. Guile implies a reserved affection for a particular sin, under a pretence of religious observing the divine law. The scripture sets forth by conjugal love, the dearest resemblance of the mutual love between Christ and his church. If a wife should take another besides her husband into her embraces, she is an adulteress, false to her husband; and all her amiable attractive society with him, is but the fine hypocrisy and pretence of love. Thus when one bosom sin is retained, the heart is false to God, notwithstanding the most specious devotion: the indulgent practice of one sin impeaches our integrity.

(3.) To this I shall add select examples of uprightness recorded in scripture. It is said of Noah, "he was a just man, and perfect in his generations: for when the whole world lay in wickedness, he preserved himself unspotted from their pollutions:" this was a noble testimony of his uprightness in the esteem of God. Joseph repelled the impure solicitations of his mistress with indignation: "how shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" David when old, and his blood and spirits so frozen, that no clothes could warm him, that a fair young virgin lying in his bosom was not blemished by him, was not from divine grace, but wasted nature: but that Joseph in the vigour of his age, the sinning season, kept himself undefiled, was the sure symptom of sincerity. Job has this testimony from God; that "he was a perfect upright man:" and in the depth of his affliction, he tells his suspicious friends, "till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live;" Job 31. 4, 5, 6, 7. that is, of reigning hypocrisy of which they had accused him. His uprightness he proves by an induction: he preserved himself from the sin of his age: in his youth, when sensual lusts are impetuous, he "made a covenant with his eyes not to look upon a maid:" and for this reason, because he was under "the inspection and observance of God." He kept himself from the sins of his calling: he was a

magistrate, and in the exercise of his office, "his foot never hastened to deceit, and no blot cleaved to his hand:" upon this he appeals to the enlightened tribunal above, "let me be weighed in the balance, that God may know my integrity." He kept himself from the sins of his condition; for though high in dignity, yet so humble, "that he despised not the cause of his manservant or maid-servant that contended with him:" though in full prosperity, yet so compassionate, that as a "father he fed the poor, and clothed the naked." He was so sensible of his dependant mutable state here, "that gold was not his hope, nor the fine gold his confidence:" and so heavenly and spiritual in his mind and affections, "that he did not rejoice because his wealth was great, and because his hand had gotten much." This reflection upon the temper of his heart, and his deportment in his prosperous state, was the main assurance of his integrity.

THE APPLICATION.

1. Let us be excited to make a judgment of ourselves by this rule. The true decision of our spiritual state, results from the testimony of conscience concerning our uprightness or insincerity. "If our hearts condemn us not" of predominant hypocrisy, some indulged habitual sin, "then have we confidence towards God," that we are accepted of him. If conscience be enlightened and faithful in the trial, a man cannot deliberately deceive himself: he must know whether his resolutions and endeavours be to obey "all the will of God;" or, whether, like an intermitting pulse, that sometimes beats regularly, and then falters, he is zealous in some duties, and cold or careless in others? Saul would offer sacrifice, but not obey the divine command to destroy all the Amalekites: for his partiality and hypocrisy he was rejected of God. But it is the character of David, he was a "man after God's own heart, in that he did all his will." It is not the authority of the lawgiver, but other motives that sway those who observe some commands, and are disrespectful of others. A servant that readily goes to a fair or a feast when sent by his master, and neglects other duties, does not his master's command from obedience, but his own choice. Sincere obedience is to the roy-

alty of the divine law, and is commensurate to its purity and extent.

There are two requisites to make a certain sign of a thing: 1. If the sign be never without the thing signified. 2. If the thing be never without the sign. The redness of the sky is but a contingent sign of fair weather, because the appearance of it in the morning is often followed with storms and rain; and sometimes a fair day is without that visible sign. But daylight is an infallible sign of the sun's being risen: for its ascending in the horizon always causes day, and without the presence of the sun, all inferior lights can never cause day. Thus the abstaining from the beloved lust is a sure sign of uprightness: for it is inconsistent with hypocrisy, and the inseparable effect of sincerity. It is inconsistent with hypocrisy: till the divine grace cleanses the heart, alters the taste of our appetites, and purifies our affections, we shall never detest and forsake our own sins that are fleshed in our natures.

It is true, there may be an abstaining from some sins, when the heart is not sincere towards God: for some particular sins are opposite to the respective tempers of men, and the averness from them is not the effect of supernatural grace, but of natural constitution. As that meat that is delicious to one palate, to another is distasteful; so the sins that have a temperamental relish to some, are disagreeing to others.

It is observed of those who are stung with a tarantula, the sweetest music does not move them till those notes are struck that are harmonious with their distemper, and then delightfully transported, they fall a dancing till their strength is spent. Thus temptations are prevalent according to the complexional lusts of human nature. But when there is no harmony and agreement between the objects without, and the affections within, the tempter loses his design. A voluptuous brute, whose heart is always smothering or flaming with impure desires, may have no inclination to covetousness: a covetous wretch, whose soul cleaves to the earth, may feel no temptation at the sight of an exquisite beauty. Some are made captives by one passion, and some by another. In the mysterious fable, Perseus, who encountered the terrors of Medusa, was easily overcome by the

beauty of Andromeda. * Virtue victorious over fear is often corrupted by pleasure.

Besides, some lusts are of a repugnant nature. This difference is observable between errors and truth, vices and virtues. Errors are inconsistent and irreconcilable, and at war among themselves: but truth has an universal consent and mutual dependence in all its parts: there is no contrariety between natural and supernatural verities. Vices are sometimes so contrary in their ends and exercise, that they fall foul upon one another, that none can be so universally wicked, as to commit all sins, but if he be addicted to one must forsake the other. But there is a connexion between the graces of the Holy Spirit; though different in their objects and natures, yet they have the same tendency, the glory of God and our own salvation, and are united in the subject. There is but one way to heaven, as there can be but one straight way to a place: but there are innumerable deviations from it, as many "crooked ways" to hell as there are sinful lusts that bring men thither. The prophet tells us, "all we like sheep have gone astray, every one in his own way." There are many by-paths that lead to destruction.

We must also observe to prevent mistakes, there may be a forsaking of a particular sin that has been delightful and predominant, without sincerity towards God: for another lust may have got possession of the heart, and take the throne. There is an alternate succession of appetites in the corrupt nature, according to the change of men's tempers or interests in the world. As seeds sown in that order in a garden, that it is always full of the fruits in season: so original sin that is sown in our nature, is productive of divers lusts, some in the spring, others in the summer of our age, some in the autumn, others in the winter. Sensual lusts flourish in youth, but when mature age has cooled these desires, worldly lusts succeed; in old age there is no relish of sensuality, but covetousness reigns imperiously. And as the conditions and interests of men alter, so their affections change; they are not constant to their bosom-sins. Now he that expels one sin, and entertains another, continues in a state of sin; it is but exchanging one familiar for another; or to borrow the pro-

* Victorq; Medusæ victus in Andromeda. *Manil.*

phet's expression, "it is as if one should fly from a lion, and meet with a bear, that will as certainly devour him."

The forsaking our respective sin is the inseparable effect of uprightness. It has been proved before, that if the heart be divided between obedience to the divine law, and inclination to any sin, it is false to God. Repenting Ephraim said, "what have I to do any more with idols?" Hosea 14. An expression of vehement detestation: idolatry had been the reigning sin of that tribe, and therefore the renouncing of idols was a clear convincing sign of their sound conversion. It is impossible that sincere love to God, and the habitual allowance of a known sin should be in the same heart, as for the ark of God and the idol of the Philistines to be placed on the same altar: uprightness is consistent with frailties, but not with chosen lusts. As loyalty to the prince is consistent with some actions contravening his laws, that proceed from ignorance or surprise: but loyalty is inconsistent with rebellion, that is open treason, or with treasonable designs that are secret rebellion. So any sin that men presumptuously live in, or consent to in their hearts, is absolutely inconsistent with uprightness.

2. Let us be excited to keep ourselves with all diligence from our iniquity. This is the master-piece of mortification, the noble effect of renewing grace, and very difficult to the corrupt nature. To enforce this duty, I will propound those *motives* and *means* as are very conducing for our performance of it.

The *motives* are,

(1.) Habitual indulged lusts are irreconcilable with the state of grace; they render the sinner, till forsaken, incapable of God's pardoning mercy here, and the heavenly glory hereafter. The gospel is a gracious act of oblivion for the restoring of rebellious sinners to the favour of God: but the pardon is obtained upon conditions that are indispensable. Mercy is assured to penitent believers for all their sins of ignorance, and those frailties that are the causes of their daily sorrow and watchfulness, and for all presumptuous sins retracted by repentance: but the Saviour of the world excludes the impenitent and unreformed from mercy; "unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Now when repentance is sound and solemn, the spirit is deeply wounded for that sin whereby God has been most dishonoured, and his law violated: the remembrance of it opens a full stream of tears,

and excites a holy hatred : and according to the degrees of sorrow and revenge, there will be care to preserve ourselves from that sin. The psalmist saith, " blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, in whose spirit there is no guile ;" implying, that one reserved lust which is a certain argument of deceit in the fairest professors of religion, is a bar against the pardon of our sins. The tenor of the unchangeable covenant of grace is, " I will write my laws in their hearts ; and I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more : " God promises to reconcile their affections to his commands. The law may be written in the mind and memory of an unsanctified person, for the ideas of the most repugnant things are consistent in those faculties ; but the heart is not capable of contrary objects ; the love of God's law expels the predominant love of sin. Now since the promise of pardon is in conjunction with inward sanctification, which implies an universal aversion from sin, it is evident that indulged habitual lusts are not capable of pardon : whatever quality the sin be of, whether of omission or commission, the allowance makes it destructive to sinners. As from what corner soever a blasting wind comes, whether from the east or the north, it destroys the fruits. If but one selected sin remains in the affections and practice, it contracts the malignity of all the rest, and will prove deadly to the soul,

It is not a presumptuous reliance on the merits of Christ will " save men with their sins."

The atonement made to divine justice by the precious sacrifice of the Lamb of God, was never designed for the reconciling God to those who with depraved obstinacy continue in their sins : it is utterly inconsistent with the divine wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth, to appoint a sacrifice for the expiation of final impenitency : such out-sin the death of Christ, I will not say as to its infinite merit, but as to the application and intended benefit of it. The value of his death to abolish the guilt, and the virtue of it to mortify the power of sin are inseparable. The precious balm has a fragrant smell that revives the spirits, but without applying its substance to the wound the scent will not heal it. The soul must feel the power of Christ's sufferings to kill our sins, otherwise the pleasing belief of his righteousness will not justify us before God. The mercy-seat sprinkled with his blood affords

protection from the avenger to all relenting, returning sinners; but justice will tear the presumptuous sinner from the horns of the altar.

The most rigorous penance will not avail without mortifying the affection to sin: the most severe discipline to the body, is but like a mountebank's applying the salve to the weapon without dressing the wound, that cannot work a sound cure.

The dispensing of the treasure of merits to penitent paymasters, and giving mercenary bills of exchange to receive righteousness from others, is so wretched and transparent a fallacy, that were not the minds of men prodigiously stupified, it is impossible they should believe it will avail them before the judgment-seat of God.

Let our prayers be never so frequent and earnest, they are of no prevalency with God whilst the beloved sin is retained. The condition of our favourable audience is set down by Solomon in his divine prayer at the dedication of the temple; "what prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all the people of Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hand to heaven; then hear thou in heaven, and hearing forgive." 1 Kings 8. 38. If they shall be sensible of the bosom sin, of its pestilential malignity, and with repenting sorrow acknowledge and forsake it, they are prepared objects of mercy. David saith, "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." God sees through all the disguises of hypocrites, and has a bright prospect into the heart, if any insinuating infirmity be cherished there, it will make him averse from our persons and requests.

It is not the performance of religious and charitable duties, that will purchase indulgence for a beloved sin. The most costly sacrifices, the most liberal charities, are neither pleasing to God, nor profitable to us, without an unfeigned renouncing of our sins. It is a carnal shift that many use to excuse the practice of a chosen sin, by the doing some good things: many strict observers of the rituals of religion, are dissolute epicures: as if they might compensate for their voluntary defects in one duty by their care in another. But if conscience be not so far stupified that it can neither hear, nor see, nor speak, it is impossible but the guilty deceiver must be terrified with the words of St. James, "that whosoever shall keep the whole law, yet offend in one

point, he is guilty of all :” the most strict observance of one precept will not excuse disobedience to another : the voluntary continued transgression of any command involves a man under the guilt of breaking the entire law, the divine authority being despised that makes it binding. I will instance in one kind of sins. * Many that have increased their estates by craft and circumvention, or by violence and rapine, will bequeath part to pious uses, presuming by a kind of composition with God to be discharged of their guilty gains. St. Austin observes that some in his time thought it to be obedience to the command of our Saviour, “ make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” This is to defile and debase the name of the righteous and Holy God, it is to make him altogether like to corrupt men, as if he would be bribed to patronize their wickedness. And in other cases, thus monstrously carnal men bend the rule of rectitude to the obliquity of their desires. They are willing to deceive themselves, and imagine that only ministers of a preciser strain will terrify them with eternal judgment for one retained sin ; they desire and are apt to believe such a mercy, as will bring them to heaven with their sins in their bosoms. But the apostle warns us, “ be not deceived, God is not mocked ; as a man sows, so shall he reap.”

There are sure and tender mercies for the upright ; but strict and certain justice for the wicked. Sincerity is so amiable and pleasing in God’s eyes, that he graciously passes by many infirmities upon that account. It is said of Asa, “ that his heart was perfect all his days,” 2 Chron. 15. 17. and notwithstanding some gross faults, God accepted him. But when the heart is corrupted by the love of some pleasant or profitable sin, it renders a person with the most specious services odious in God’s sight. In short, indulged known sins that men habitually commit in hopes of an easy absolution, are not the spots of God’s children. It is so directly contrary to the divine nature, to that holy ingenuous fear of offending our heavenly Father resulting

* Putant se facere quod præceptum est, dicunt enim rapereres alienas Mammona est iniquitatis : erogare inde aliquid maxime egentibus sanctis hoc est, facere amicos de Mammona Iniquitatis. Intellectus iste corrigendus est, imo de tabulis cordis delendus est, Noli talem pingere Deum, Aug. Ser. 25. de Verb. Dom.

from it, that only the wicked are capable of such a disposition. Presumptuous sins are a contumelious abuse of divine mercy, and exasperate that high and tender attribute to the confusion of sinners at the last. "Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in heart. As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." Psal. 125. 4.

(2.) We may, by divine grace, subdue the strongest lusts, that from our nature and temper, or from custom, and the interests of the carnal state have rule over us. The new covenant assures believers, that "sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law but under grace." The law strictly forbids sin, but the gospel furnishes with strength to subdue it. It is true, inherent corruption has so divested men of spiritual strength, that they cannot free themselves from the power and infection of sin: and when any lust is fomented by temptations, and has been frequently gratified, it is more hard to be subdued.

The apostle speaks of some, "whose eyes were full of adultery, that could not cease from sin:" they were in a state of carnality, and loved to be so. When lust is imperious, and the will servile, men cannot wean themselves from the poisoned breasts. This disability consists in the depraved obstinacy of the will, that aggravates their sin and judgment. Yet so foolish are sinners, as to use this plea to make them excusable for their habitual lusts: conscience checks them; and some faint desires they have to avoid their sins, but they cannot change their natures. They colour licentiousness with the pretence of necessity: they complain of their chains, to let loose the reins of their exorbitant desires in a course of sin. But natural corruption that involves us under guilt, cannot make us innocent. It is true, if in our original condition, the human will had been stamped by fate with an unalterable ininclination to sin, we could not have been guilty: * for if there be no principles of liberty, all the names of good and evil are cancelled, and all moral means, instructions, persuasions, threatenings, are but lost labour. In brutes there are some natural resemblances of virtue and vice, yet not worthy of reward or punishment; only so far as by imagination they are

* Nec bonus quisq; nec malus dici debeat, nec esse valeat, nisi volens.

capable of instruction and discipline, and by coming near to reason, have a little imitation of liberty, they are rewarded or punished. But man in the condition wherein he was created, had perfect freedom, becoming the dignity of the reasonable creature, and was enriched with all the graces of which original righteousness was compounded : the harmonious orders, and coherent dispositions of the soul and body qualified him for his duty. But in the state wherein his voluntary sin has sunk him, the body is often distempered by the annoyance of the mind, and the soul pays an unnatural and injurious tribute to the vicious appetites of the body : and when corruption is heightened by custom, and the natural propensity inflamed by temptations, any lust becomes more irresistible : so that without a new nature inspired from above, they cannot rescue themselves from the bondage of sin.

Now the moral impotence in men to vanquish their lusts, though it will be no apology at the day of judgment, yet it will discourage them from making resistance : for who will attempt an impossibility ? Despair of success relaxes the active powers, cuts the nerves of our endeavours, and blunts the edge of industry. It is related of the West-Indians, that upon the first incursion of the Spaniards into their country, they tamely yielded to their tyranny : for seeing them clad in armour which their spears could not pierce, they fancied them to be the children of the sun, invulnerable and immortal. But an Indian carrying a Spaniard over a river, resolved to try whether he were mortal, and plunged him under water so long till he was drowned. From that experiment they took courage, and resolved to kill their enemies who were capable of dying, and recover their dear liberty lost by so foolish a conceit. Thus men will languish in a worse servitude, if they fancy the lusts of the flesh, their intimate enemies to be insuperable. Fear congeals the spirits, and disables from noble enterprises, which hope persuades and courage executes. Now we have an army of conquerors to encourage us in the spiritual war with the flesh, the world, and satan, enemies in combination against us. How many saints have preserved themselves unspotted from the most alluring temptations ? They were not statues, without sensible faculties, but ordered them according to the rule of life ; they were not without a conflict of carnal passions, but by the Holy Spirit subdued them : and though some obtained a clearer victory than others, yet all

were victorious by divine grace. The examples of so many holy and heavenly men, prove as clearly and convincingly, that the strongest lusts may be subdued, as the walking of Diogenes demonstrated there was progressive motion against the sophistical arguments of Zeno. "I can do all things, saith the apostle, through Christ that strengthens me." To omnipotent grace all things are easy. Our Saviour speaking of the extreme difficulty of a rich man's salvation; "that it is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," presently mitigates the difficulty; "what is impossible to men, is possible to God." He can sanctify a rich man, that his humility shall be as low, as his estate is raised above others; that his affection shall be heavenly in the affluence of the world; that trust in God shall be his dearest treasure. Divine grace is a sure fountain of assistance to all that sincerely seek it. It is the promise of God, "Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?" The idols that charmed their imaginations, should be rejected with deep abhorrence. Our Saviour cured the paralytic person that for thirty-eight years had been in a desperate case, incurable by natural remedies: an emblem of the efficacy of divine grace in curing the most inveterate habits of sin. There are recorded some eminent instances of the power of grace in changing the nature of men. Nicodemus came to our Saviour concealed, at first by night, as being ashamed or afraid of observation in the day: "but when he was born again by the renovation of the spirit," what an admirable change was wrought in him: with a holy heat of affection he defended our Saviour when alive, in the presence of the pharisees, his unrighteous and implacable enemies: he brought costly preparations for his funeral when dead: and these two glorious effects of his valour, are recorded by St. John with this addition, "this is that Nicodemus that came to Jesus by night." John 7. 19. John 19. 37. No passion is more ungovernable than fear, yet even the apostles did not express such fidelity and fervency for the honour of their master. Another instance is of the jailor that kept the apostles prisoners: he was of a harsh cruel temper; a quality adherent to his office; but grace so intenerated and softened his heart, that "he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, Acts 16. 33. A visible and sudden effect of the spirit of love and power, and of a sound

mind. It is recorded of many who used "curious arts, they brought their magical books, though counted worth fifty thousand pieces of silver, and burnt them: so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." Acts 19. 19, 20. How insuperable soever sin is to naked nature, it may be subdued by grace. St. John gives an honourable testimony of the christians to whom he wrote: "my little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the evil one: for the spirit that is in you is greater than that which is in the world." The Holy Spirit is not only greater in himself than the tempter, but as fortifying weak christians is superior to the evil spirit, with all his train of artillery, the manifold temptations which the world affords in his war against our souls. Satan takes advantage, not only from our security, but our pusillanimity: we are therefore "commanded to resist the devil, and he will flee from us." * What is observed of the crocodile, is applicable to the great enemy of our salvation: he is terrible in his assaults upon the faint-hearted, but flies from those who are watchful to resist his temptations.

To excite christians to make serious and hopeful trials for the subduing the strongest corruptions, I will select two examples of the virtuous heathens, who restrained anger and lust, that are the most rebellious passions against the empire of the mind. Socrates by natural temper was choleric, yet he had so far reduced his passions under the command of reason, that upon any violent provocation, his countenance was more placid and calm, his voice more temperate, and his words more obliging: thus by wise counsel and circumspection, he obtained a happy victory over himself.

The other is of young Scipio, the Roman general in Spain, who when a virgin of exquisite beauty was presented to him among other captives, religiously abstained from touching her, and restored her to the prince to whom she was espoused. How do such examples of the poor pagans, who in the glimmerings of nature expressed such virtues, upbraid christians who are servants to their corruptions in the light of divine revelation? If by the practice of philosophy they kept themselves from the dominion of their carnal appetites, shall not christians by a supernatural aid obtain a clearer victory over them? In vain do men pre-

* *Terribilis contra fugaces hæc bestia, fugax contra sequentes. Plin.*

tend want of strength to vanquish their stubborn lusts; for if they sincerely seek for divine grace, and are faithful in the use of means proper to that end, they shall obtain a blessed freedom from the power of sin.

(3.) The subduing the ruling lust, will make the victory over other sins more easy. Our commission against sin, is like that of Saul against the Amalekites, to destroy them all: if any one be spared, it will prove as fatal to us as the Amalekite that dispatched Saul, who suffered him to live when the whole lineage was doomed to utter excision. Now amongst the divers lusts that war against the soul, some are the leaders that give vigour to the rest, that recal them when withdrawn, rally them when scattered; and renew the fight against us. As the virtues of the sanctified mind, so the passions of the carnal appetite assist one another: therefore when the corrupt passion that was so dangerously influential upon the rest, is subdued by divine grace, they necessarily decline, and are easily mortified.

The temperamental lust is the root from whence many others spring and are fed, and the eradicating of that takes away the strength and life of other vicious affections. The king of Syria commanded his captains not to fight against small or great, but only against the king of Israel; and after he was slain, the victory over his army was presently obtained. Let us direct our zeal against the leading lust, for all the servile lusts must fall and die with it. * When Mithridates the king of Pontus, a fierce implacable enemy of the Romans was killed, their joy was exuberant in sacrifices and feasts, esteeming that an army of enemies were extinguished in his death.

Besides, one victory inspires courage to achieve another. When David was to encounter with Goliath, he derived confidence from his experience; "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." 1 Sam. 17. 37. The visible expresses of the divine power in conquering the former enemies of the church, were the support of their faith: "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord, and put on strength; art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, Pharaoh and the Egyptian army?" Isa. 51. 9. In our spiritual

* In uno Mithridate infinitos hostes petiisse rati. *Flor.*

warfare; experience of the divine assistance is a cordial that fortifies the spirits: if the strongest and fiercest of our corruptions lie bleeding ready to expire, we shall not fear the rest. The same grace that has subdued the reigning lust, will make an impression of obedience upon our affections that are less powerful in us.

(4.) Consider how dearly our sins cost our Saviour, his sacred blood, to reconcile us to God, and to set us free from their dominion. This is an argument purely evangelical, and most worthy the breast of a christian. He dearly purchased a title to our love, and the serious contemplation of his passion, has an admirable efficacy to inspire the flame, and consequently to make sin odious, that must be expiated and purged away by such bitter sufferings. Our sins brought our Saviour to the cross, and can we entertain them in our hearts with the crimson guilt that cleaves to them? Can we live in the practice of them, and crucify him afresh? He "came to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works." How can we defeat the end and disparage the efficacy of his death? How can we violate such dear obligations? To cherish any sin is the most ungracious and unkind return to his bleeding dying love, who valued our souls more than his most precious life. Were it not visible by daily experience, that many are so prodigiously wicked, it would raise our wonder how it is possible, that any christian to whom the love of the Son of God in dying for our sins is revealed, should indulge himself in any sin. If we did frequently and with solemnity and seriousness remember the death of our Saviour, and his blessed intention in it, we should find that change in our hearts in regard of our sins, as Ammon did in his affections to his sister Tamar: his incestuous love to her at first was a secret fire that consumed him; but after he had dishonoured her, and polluted himself, his hatred of her was more extreme than his love before: thus the sins that have been as near to us as our bosoms, as pleasant as our corrupt inclinations, as familiar and intimate as custom, that have deeply defiled our souls, we should with stronger detestation reject them, than ever with delight we committed them.

(5.) The blessed reward of uprightness is a powerful motive to excite us to keep ourselves from our sins. The firmament is not sowed thicker with stars, than the scripture with precious

promises to the upright. They have a peculiar interest in the love of God that is the fountain of felicity: "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Prov. 15. 10. He is most graciously ready to supply all their wants, satisfy their desires, allay their sorrows, overcome their fears. "The Lord is a sun and a shield: he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly." Psal. 84. A comprehensive promise of the blessings of time and eternity.

The highest honour is the reward of subduing our rebellious lusts. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Prov. 16. 32. The quality of the enemy makes the victory more illustrious. Now the rebellious passions that war against the soul, are enemies infinitely more dangerous than those who destroy the bodies and estates of men. The conquest of armies and cities is achieved by boldness and strength, that are not the peculiar excellencies of man, for the horse and the lion are superior to him in those respects: but the reducing his unruly affections into holy order, is the effect of divine grace, wherein we resemble God. How many of the famous heroes, in the world's account, were worse than wild beasts, enemies to humanity, that unnaturally and barbarously spilt the blood of thousands to purple their usurped royalty? But in subduing the tyrannous passions of lust and anger under the sovereignty of the renewed mind, there is the happy union of innocence and victory.

There are degrees in the exaltation of the saints, as the passions their inward enemies which they subdued, were more stubborn, and hardly to be overcome. In some there is such a concord of humours, such a placid mild temper, that they enjoy a pacific possession of themselves: but this is the benefit of nature, not of victorious grace. * Where there is little resistance, there is no honour to overcome; where there is no matter of triumph, there is no glory in triumphing. But when in the natural temper there are seeds of incitation to fierce anger and inordinate lust, and when those propensities are inflamed by temptations, if we subdue those disorderly and violent passions, it is the most noble effect of divine grace. On the contrary, the sinner that yields himself to the sway of the carnal appetites, is "the ser-

* *Magis extra vitia quam cum virtutibus. Tacit. Lib. 1. de Claudio.*

vant of corruption:" 1 Pet. 4: is defiled and debased in such a manner; that he is sunk below the beasts that perish: for what is baser than corruption, except the sinner that obeys it?

The peace and joy that is the reward of victory over our sins, cannot be understood but by experience. What a savour of life is the death of a reigning sin? What an angelical comfort was it to Joseph and the blessed mother of Christ, when the advice was brought from heaven to them in Egypt; "Arise, for they are dead that sought the young child's life?" What consolation does it afford, when the holy spirit witnesses with our spirits, that the enemy in our bosoms, that sought the life of our souls, is mortified by repentance? the psalmist tells us, "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart." Psal. 97. 11. The present sense of God's favour, and the future hope of glory, shed abroad that bright serenity in their breasts, that is a reflection of heaven.

In our extremity; when a good and quiet conscience will be more valuable than crowns and sceptres, and solid comforts more worth than the world, how refreshing will the inward testimony be of our uprightness? When Hezekiah was under the sentence of death, and his kingdom could afford him no comfort, this allayed his sorrows, "Remember, O Lord, that I have walked before thee with an upright heart." Isa. 38. 3. This testimony of conscience will calm our agonies, and expel the terrors of that last enemy: this when we are ready to die, will assure us that our Redeemer lives. The two substantial joys, (how divine!) the one from the reflection upon the past life, the other from the prospect of eternal life, are the blessed reward of uprightness. In short, the sum of felicity is expressly assured to them: "The upright shall dwell in thy presence, where is fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure flow for ever.

(6.) Consider the woful effects of indulging the lusts, that by pleasure or profit bribe men to give consent to their commission. The naked light of reason discovers sin, and makes it uneasy to conscience: but a strong light armed with terrors, the law of God, with the doom annexed to the precept against rebellious sinners, makes it fearful. The command is peremptory and universal, with respect to all temptations and allurements to sin, be they as dear and difficult to be parted with, as the "right eye, or right hand," Mat. 5. the most useful and precious instru-

ments of life, yet they must with abhorrence be cast from us, or "the whole man will be cast into hell fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9. This terrible threatening is sadly repeated by our Saviour three times, to make the more powerful impression upon sinners.

The guilty accusing conscience begins the everlasting hell here. Our Saviour saith, that "a woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into world:" but a sinner, after he hath brought forth his sin with pleasure, is struck with horror at the monstrous birth. When conscience is strongly awakened, it arraigns and condemns without partiality: the sinner is the executioner of the sentence upon himself. The torment of the spirit is invisible to others, and in that the liker hell, and unavoidable. It is as the cruel practice of the tyrant, related by the poet, who fastened a dead body and a living together, that the putrefaction and stench of the one, might cause a lingering death in the other: this is a little resemblance of the effect of the guilty conscience charged with "dead works," and inseparable from the sinner. All the pleasure of the world cannot stupify the sense, or mitigate the torments of the wounded spirit.

In the approaches of death, the sins men have indulgently committed, return to the memory, and the ghastly apparition strikes them into consternation: the thoughts are fearfully transferred from the sick body to the guilty soul, from the consideration of the first death to the second, that immediately attends it. In vain they desire to live, for time is irrevocably passed, and the season of mercy expired: in vain they desire to die entirely, and put an end to their misery, for immortality is the inseparable but fatal privilege of their nature. If they look upward, revenging justice is ready to pass a heavy doom; if beneath, a fearful depth is ready to swallow them up. Who can express the agonies and throws of the guilty conscience, the dismal degrees of the tormenting passions in the wicked, under the apprehensions of eternal judgment? Yet the most fearful apprehensions are not commensurate to the prepared plagues by vindictive justice for impenitent sinners. "Who knows the power of God's wrath?" The chosen expressions in scripture to represent it, will be verified in higher degrees, than can be inflicted from the most vehem-

ment and terrible things in the world. Fire is so tormenting to sense, that no man can endure the point of the flame of a candle upon his flesh: "Who then can dwell with devouring fire, and with everlasting burning?"

Besides, the damned are not only passive, but active in their wretched state: there is a hell of rancour and indignation within, and of fire and brimstone without them: what furious reflections will they make upon their votary madness, that for the seeming pleasures of sin that were but for a season, they should continue their rebellion against omnipotent Deity, and bring upon themselves his fierce and unchangeable displeasure. This infinitely aggravates their misery: after a million of years, the entire sum remains that revenging justice will exact for ever. The righteous Judge will never so far be reconciled as to annihilate them. Perfection of misery! Desperate sorrow! A life in torments that never dies, a death that never ends.

Surely it is impossible for men that have reasonable minds to choose the pleasures of sin, that are like bubbles on the water that presently break and vanish, when attended with misery that admits no ease or end. Is there any possible comparison between them? The serious belief of hell cannot consist with the knowledge and purpose of sin, and the delightful practice of it: either the belief of it will infuse and impress such efficacious virtue into men's minds that will restrain them from sin, or the habitual course of sin will extinguish or eclipse the belief of the punishment.

It is recorded of Croesus, when pursued by the army of the Persians, he filled a strait passage between the mountains with boughs of trees and set fire to them, and thereby secured his retreat: if men were so wise as to set the fire of hell between the temptations of sin and their affections, it would be a sure defence from their spiritual enemies. But the scene of torments prepared for unreformed sinners, is little understood and less believed by men whilst they are in prosperity: though the Saviour of the world has in great mercy revealed them in such expressions, as may terrify even secure carnalists, that only live to sense. Infidelity lies at the bottom, and renders the most terrible truths ineffectual. There is such a riddle in the tempers of men, they are not sensible of divine mercies till deprived of them, nor of divine judgments till they feel them. But if right reason were

attended to, they must be convinced of unseen rewards and punishment to be dispensed in the next state. For the light of nature discovers an essential difference between moral good and evil : from hence proceed the reflections of conscience either approving or condemning our own actions, and making a judgment upon the actions of others by that common rule, according to which all acknowledge that men ought to live. This truth is so engraven in the human nature, that even the most wicked sinners, who endeavour, if it were possible, to make conscience so blind as not to see, and stupid as not to feel, yet cannot totally exclude the application of it to themselves, and will acknowledge the obligation of it in the general, and with respect to others. Now the law of God written in man's heart necessarily infers a judgment upon the transgressors of it, and the judgment includes a punishment becoming the majesty of the Lawgiver that ordains it, and the extent of his power that executes it. Divine revelation makes this truth much more clear and certain. The apostle tells us, "If we live after the flesh, we shall die:" and will God cease to be holy, and just, and true, that impenitent sinners may escape punishment?

But there are some poisonous principles infused into the hearts of men, that encourage them in their sins, notwithstanding their assent to the doctrine of a future judgment.

Some cannot persuade themselves, that God will be so strict and severe, that for a single forbidden pleasure, when they respect other commands of his law, he will condemn them for ever. The secret presumption that one transgression will not provoke their Judge to extreme wrath, hardens them in a sinful course. But St. James declares, "He that offends in one point is guilty of all." One known allowed sin that a man habitually commits, involves him in the guilt of rebellion against the divine authority that made the law. It was observed before, Herod did some things according to John's divine instructions, but he would not part with Herodias, and that one sin denominated him wicked. Many are like him, they observe some rules of religion, perform some duties, are zealous against some sins, but there is an Herodias, a sin pleasant to the taste of their temper, that they will not relinquish, and without any promise, nay against the threatenings of God, they believe he will be merciful to them notwithstanding their wickedness. This presumption is an unnatural

abuse of God's mercy. This exasperates that high and tender attribute: for what can be more provoking than to imagine that the divine mercy should encourage sin, and protect unreformed sinners from the arrests of vindictive justice?

The blood that Ahab spared in Benhadad induced a deadly guilt, as that he spilt of Naboth; as God spake by the prophet to him, "Because thou hast spared that man, whom I appointed to destruction, thy life shall go for his life:" the application is easy, to spare the life of sin will cost the life of the sinner. One lust that adhering custom, or the closer nature, or any carnal interest so endears to men, that they do not sincerely desire and endeavour to mortify and forsake, will be fatal to them for ever.

Some habitual sinners when terrified with the apprehension of future judgment, (for God sometimes thunders in the conscience as well as in the air) endeavour to quiet their fears by presuming that the death of Christ will reconcile offended justice, and his blood cleanse them from all sin. They will lean upon the cross to save them from falling into the bottomless pit, but not crucify one lust on it. The vanity of this has been showed before: I shall only add, that it is most opprobrious to the Son of God, and most destructive to sinners; for it is to make him the minister of sin, as if he came into the world to compose a church of rotten and corrupt members, and unite it to himself: such a mystical body would be more monstrous than Nebuchadnezzar's image, of which the head was gold, and feet was miry clay. And this will be most destructive to their souls; for by turning the remedy of sin into an occasion of sinning, they derive a woful guilt from the death of Christ instead of the precious benefits purchased by it for true believers. For an unreformed sinner to oppose the blood of Christ to the fears of damnation, renders his condition desperate.

The most who continue in a sinful course, strive to elude the warnings of conscience, by resolving that after the season of sinning is passed, they will reform, and apply themselves to seek the favour and grace of God. But how hazardous; how incongruous is the delay of serious repentance? How hazardous? The lives of sinners are forfeited in law, their time is a reprieve depending merely upon the favour of the Judge, how can they have a warrant for a day? But they are young, and strong, and

think the day of death and their last account to be at a great distance. Vain security! as if death were not in every place, and every hour, as near rebellious sinners as their sins that deserve it: "if thou doest evil," says God to Cain, "sin is at the door." Damnation is ready to tread upon the heels of sinners, and if divine clemency and patience did not interpose, would immediately seize upon them. God sometimes shoots from the clouds, and breaks the strongest buildings into ruins: it is not the error of his hand, but his pity, that impenitent sinners escape his visible vengeance. But who can assure them of future time?

Besides, suppose that sinners who hate to be reformed whilst present temptations are so inviting, had a lease of time, can they command the grace of God? They now suppress the motions of the Spirit, and in effect say to him, as Felix to St. Paul, awakening his conscience with a sermon "of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come: Go away for the present, when it is a convenient season I will call for thee." But will the holy Spirit assist them at death who have always resisted him in their lives? Without his powerful quickening grace, they will be unrelenting in their guilty polluted state: and can they have any regular hope to obtain repentance unto life, when they have so often quenched his warm excitations? Delay proceeds from hardness of heart, and merits final desertion from God.

How incongruous is it to expect, that divine mercy will accept of a death-bed repentance, that is merely by constraint of fear, and a resolution to live well when they know they can live no longer? To continue in sin upon this conceit, that God will easily be reconciled to sinners at the last; that confession with the mixed affections of sorrow and fear, for the sensible effects of sin in pains and sickness, and worse that immediately attend it in the next state, will obtain a total and final acquittance from our Judge, is an extreme dishonour to his ruling wisdom, his unspotted holiness, his incorruptible justice, and inviolable truth. The mercy of God that will justify all unfeignedly repenting believing sinners for Christ's sake, will justify God in the condemning wilful obstinate sinners, who render themselves eternally unworthy of it.

To conclude the motives; if we desire the favour of God that

is better than life, if we fear his wrath that is worse than death, if we would obtain heaven, or escape hell, let us mortify our respective sins.

I shall now propound the *means* that are requisite for the preserving us from our special sins. If the following rules seem harsh and distasteful to the carnal mind, it is to be considered, that medicines for the recovery and preservation of health, are not sweetmeats of a pleasant relish.

(1.) In order to the keeping ourselves pure and upright, we must be inquisitive to understand intimately and distinctly what are the sins to which we are most liable: for he that doth not know what he should fear, is careless, and secure, easily disordered and vanquished by a temptation. Some lusts are open and notorious in the gross commission: others lie deep and are of a harder disclosure. Ignorance is the strong defence of sin; it begins in inward darkness: the captive is kept securely in the dungeon. The understanding directs the will, the will commands the practice: if the sin be undiscovered, we are not acquainted with our danger, and shall not avoid it. A principal part of our knowledge is terminated upon ourselves: what is the weakest part with respect to our natures, minds, and affections: otherwise not provided of defence, we shall be overcome without resistance.

Now by applying the rules that have been largely insisted on in explicating the doctrinal point, we may understand our peculiar sins. If we consider our constitution, we may know what sins are suitable to our tempers. Our frequent lapses are a sensible discovery how the weight of nature inclines us. The reflecting upon the several ages of life, and our conditions in the world, will be an indication what sins endanger our souls: the young are strongly disposed to pleasures, the old to avarice, the healthful and prosperous to intemperance in the use of worldly things, the sick and afflicted to impatience, the rich to security, the poor to envy.

When the special sin is found stripped of its flattering colours, divest it of its alluring dress, that it may appear in its foul deformity, and kindle an aversion in our breasts against it. The correcting vicious errors begins in the enlightened mind, * that

* Et hoc ipsum argumentum est in melius translatis animi, quod vitia sua quæ ad huc ignorabat videt. *Senec. Epist. 6.*

discovers them, and our proneness to them. And since we are so apt to disguise our darling sins, and to be partial to ourselves, let us with the psalmist, pray to the Father of lights, "that he would search us, and try us, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in us, to discover it to us by the light of his word, and cover it with his pardoning mercy, and lead us in the way everlasting."

(2.) Diligent watchfulness and circumspection is an effectual means to keep ourselves from the sins that easily encompass us. This implies prudence to discover dangers, and the exercise of the spiritual powers to prevent and resist them. Watchfulness is a universal duty of constant revolution: there are respective duties that belong to persons according to their relations, and several conditions: there are duties of stated times and seasons: but the duty of watchfulness to prevent sin, extends to all in this frail state, according to our Saviour's command to his disciples, "what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch:" and at all times; for though we are not always engaged in actual fight, we are always in the field, liable to manifold temptations, that are ready to surprise us upon careless neglect of our duty. Habitual grace if it be not drawn forth into exercise by constant watchfulness, cannot fortify us against sin.

A saint that is humble and watchful, preserves himself from the power and infection of sin, that another who in degrees of grace excels him, but relaxes his watch, is sadly foiled by. Joseph, a young man, by vigilance, and avoiding the temptation, kept himself untainted from the impure solicitations of his mistress: David, though of great experience in religion, and of eminent holiness, yet when he intermitted his watch, how suddenly was he surprised? From a careless glance, curiosity passed into complacence, complacence into lust, lust into adultery, and is an eternal example to excite our fear and caution. If there be not a continued diligence, the same holy person that with defiance and indignation has resisted the tempter at some times, has been vanquished at other times. Lot was righteous in Sodom, but how foully and wofully he fell in the mountain?

Now our chief care must be directed to avoid our special sins. It is a fundamental rule in the christian life, that our weakest part is to be guarded with most jealousy, and fortified with the strongest defence: for the most frequent and dangerous assaults

are on the side that is most open to surprise.* The subtle tempter addresses his insinuations in compliance to our affections: he knew the softness of Adam towards his wife, and chose her to be the instrument of persuading him to eat of the forbidden fruit. Every one has a carnal part, that like Eve the mother of our miseries, is prevalent to corrupt us, and accordingly he suits his temptations. It was the crafty counsel of Balaam to Balak, Numb. 31. 16. not to encounter the Israelites with armed soldiers, but with the allurements of women, by whom they were corrupted and seduced to impurity and idolatry; and thereby provoked God's wrath, and were divested of his protection. When Ulysses was employed to discover Achilles, who was concealed in the habit of a virgin amongst the maids of honour, he carried a † pack of toys, and a lance: and whilst the women were looking upon the ribbons, and lace, and glasses, Achilles takes up the lance, that was suitable to his martial spirit, and so was discovered, and drawn to the Trojan war, that proved fatal to him. Thus the tempter is observant of our inclinations: he will interpret a blush, a glance, a smile, a discontented gesture, any signs of our affections, and by proper motives excites the desiring and angry appetites, and is usually successful. His advantage is chiefly from our security. It is easy to surprise a suspectless enemy. St. Peter straitly warns us, "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5. 8. His diligence is equal to his malice. If we are not wise and watchful, we shall fall into his snares. There is a fearful instance of it in Adam, who lost the image and favour of God in an hour, that his posterity cannot recover to all ages; yet there was no corruption in his nature, he was furnished with sufficient grace: he might easily have repelled the motion to the confusion of the tempter; but through carelessness he neglected his duty to the eternal Lawgiver, slighted the double death, that of the soul and the body, that was threatened to deter him from sin, and innocence did not preserve him from seduction. What reason is there to make us watchful, both against our spiritual

* *Ea maxime quisq; petitur, qua patet. Senec.*

† *Arma ego femineis animum motura virilem mercibus inservi. Ovid.*

enemies, and our own drowsiness, lest security steal upon us without observation? for our hearts are as ready to sin as Satan is to tempt: besides the impression from tempting objects without us, there is treacherous danger within: our prime care must be to keep a severe command over our minds and hearts, to prevent the entrance of sin. The carnal appetite allures the will to consent to the actual commission, by the mediation of the mind that represents the pleasures and profits of sin. Therefore conscience must be a vigilant sentinel to prevent, as far as is possible, the first springing thoughts, the first risings of the sinful affections. Sinful thoughts and desires are possible acts, and are more odious to God than the gross commission is to men. The pernicious inspirations of the tempter are gradual: as one that kindles a fire with a small breath, cherishes the faint sparks till raised into a flame; so warm desires are cherished by the thoughts, till they break forth into a wilder flame. This is the most difficult part of our duty; we may more easily decline temptations from without, than keep a constant guard within. But there is no * excuse for the neglect of this duty, the consequence being of no less moment than salvation. "We are commanded to keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life, and of death also." As the elective faculty is inclined and determined, such will be the quality of our actions, either holy and good, or vicious and evil, and such will be the reward in the next state. It is true, it is morally impossible for even the best men to be so exact in their watch, but vain thoughts may suddenly spring into the mind, and indeliberate motions may rise in the will, (which should be matter of sorrow :) but we may suppress those beginnings of sin, and prevent the morose thoughts, the musings of the mind upon the pleasure or profit, that makes the temptation so strong as to overcome us. If a watch be set at the gates of a town, to prevent any commerce with infected places, though it is not possible to exclude pestilential vapours that mix with the air, and fly imperceptibly about, yet the persons and goods that come from infected places may be excluded. "A child of God keeps himself, that the wicked one touches him

* Multa sunt observanda pugnantibus, si quidem nulla est negligentiae venia, ubi de salute certatur. *Veget.*

not ;" that is, receives no defiling impressions, by yielding to his suggestions.

Our next care must be to avoid the outward temptations, that are apt to excite those lusts that are most natural to us. The art of our spiritual enemy is to make use of objects * without, to entice the affections within us. The world affords variety of temptations, that through the senses pierce the heart and wound the spirit. It is therefore our duty and safety, with the strictest caution, to guard our senses. The most make no other use of their senses than the brutes ; it were well they made no worse. The acts of the understanding are immanent and invisible, the affections mix with sensible objects, and are actuated with heat and motion from them. For this reason holy men have been so careful to lay a restraint upon the senses. Job " made a covenant with his eyes, not to look upon a maid." David prays, " turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." When Solomon had so earnestly pressed the divine counsel " to keep the heart with diligence," he annexes most fitly for that end ; " put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee : let thy eyes look right on, and let thy eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established : turn not to the right hand or the left ; remove thy foot from evil." The sum of which counsel is, that we should so exactly guard our sensitive faculties, so order our words, our looks, our ways, as to preserve ourselves from every evil thing. Our great security is in flying from temptations. Lot was strictly commanded " not to look back on Sodom : " his wife, by casting a lingering eye towards it, was " turned into a pillar of salt, to season the world by her example, to beware of the occasions of sin."

It is extreme folly to enter into temptation : for as near as the melting of wax is when it is near the flame, so are the carnal affections of being enticed, and the will of consenting when near inflaming objects. Our sad experience may instruct us, how prone our hearts are to yield to inviting occasions of sin, and how often we have been foiled by venturing into the confines of temptation. Solomon observes, " surely in vain is the net spread

* *Eripiunt omnes animo sine vulnere vires : hæc sunt jucundi causa cibibus ; mali. Ovid.*

in sight of any bird." Prov. 1. 17. If the toils be never so craftily laid, and the bait be very enticing, yet a silly bird has that foresight and caution, that it will not be tempted to run into the net, but fly from the present danger. What unaccountable folly is it in men, though the temptations of sin are never so alluring to the carnal appetites, not to make use of the eye and wing, to fear and fly from the entanglements of iniquity.

Besides, we forfeit the divine assistance, by entertaining the temptations of sin. The promise of preserving grace is to us while we are faithful to God: "he will keep us in all our ways," whilst we are constant in our duty, otherwise we cannot depend upon his gracious presence and assistance. If a soldier be commanded by a general to fight a duel with an enemy, he will arm him with armour of proof, and secure him from treachery: but if one from vain glory, from rage or revenge, against the command of his superior shall engage in a duel, he fights with great hazard, and if he conquers, is punished for his disobedience. Thus if in the regular course of our lives, the divine providence so order things, that temptations approach us, upon our earnest and constant prayer, we shall be furnished with "the armour of God, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation." But if we run into temptations, we provoke him to desert us; and if we are not overcome by them, yet for our transgressing his holy command, we are liable to his displeasure.

Confirming grace is a continual emanation from the Holy Spirit, without which we shall fall every hour. It is therefore extremely hazardous to venture into temptations: for the corrupt nature that with weight and violence inclines us to sin, is within, and supernatural strength to control the combined efficacy of the inclination, and the occasion is from above, which is justly withdrawn when we "grieve the Holy Spirit," by conversing with the temptations of sin. "The fear of the Lord is clean," effectively, as it induces an holy caution and circumspection to preserve ourselves from the defiling, captivating snares of sin. It is a petition more necessary than that for our daily bread; "lead us not into temptation:" considering our inseparable frailty, and the arts of our spiritual enemies to take every advantage over us, we should with all possible ardency of affection pray, that we be not exposed to temptations, or not vanquished by them: but if

we rashly expose ourselves, our prayers will be an indictment against us, and we shall fall under condemnation.

(3.) Serious resolutions, and solemn engagements, are of excellent efficacy to bind our deceitful hearts from yielding to sin. In the christian life a general resolution is absolutely necessary, of being faithful to God, never to have correspondence with his enemies, but always to cleave to our duty, notwithstanding all the allurements or terrors of the world to supplant our integrity, and surprise our constancy. David tells us, "I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Psal. 119. 106. The divine law binds us antecedently to our consent, but having taken the oath of fidelity to God, there is superinduced a new obligation to fasten us to his service. After this, to revolt from our duty, is rebellion heightened with the guilt of perfidiousness. Besides, solemn engagements against particular sins are necessary: Ephraim "shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?" He had been enchanted with the love of idols, which he renounces with indignation. A practical decree, a steadfast resolution to forsake our sin, will produce a diligent use of means in order to that end.

In resolving against sin, we must depend upon the present and perpetual assistance of the divine grace, without which our resolutions will neither be sincere nor effectual. Carnal men under judgments, do often relent and resolve against their sins; from the convinced mind, transient wishes, and floating purposes of reformation arise: but till the heart be renewed by divine grace, the will is incomplete: there are secret and sometimes undiscovered affections to sin, that by new temptations are drawn forth and betray them to satan. It is a charge against the hypocrites in the prophecy of Hosea, "they were like a deceitful bow," that being ill made, or ill bent, never sent the arrow directly to the mark: sometimes after the carnal faculties have been sated with the gross fruition, men renounce their sins, and promise they will never "return more to folly:" but those resolutions are as insufficient to fortify them against the new incursion of tempting objects, as a wall of glass to resist the battery of cannon; for there is no permanent overruling principle in the heart, that makes the resolution steadfast against sin. But suppose the resolutions be sincere, and proceed from a full bent of the heart

against sin, yet if divine grace do not ratify them, a strong temptation will break them, as a gust of wind breaks the strings of a cobweb. St. Peter consulting his affection, not his strength, presumptuously engaged to his master, "though all men forsake thee, I will not forsake thee:" but in the time of trial, surprised with so strong a fear, that precluded serious recollection, and distracted his mind from the deliberate comparing of the evil of sin with the instant danger, he most unworthily denied his master, and is a sad instance how weak and wavering the best men are, without the continual influences of the holy spirit to determine their wills, and make them with unfainting courage persevere in their duty.

There is a vast difference between the sight of a storm at sea, and a ship in violent agitation by the winds and waves, and the miserable passengers with pale affrighted countenances, expecting present death, in a lively picture; and being in a real ship, in the midst of a real tempest, and in real danger of being swallowed up by the ocean. The sight of such a spectacle without fear, is but painted courage, as the object is upon which it is exercised: if one should presume that his heart were impenetrable to fear, because he sees the representation of extreme danger without fear, it were egregious folly, and would be soon confuted if he were actually in extreme danger of perishing in the raging sea. Thus there is a great difference between temptations represented in our thoughts, and when immediately and really before us: and between religious resolutions when temptations are at a distance, and when actually incumbent on us. There may be such resolutions conceived in the mind in the absence of temptations, that we may think ourselves guarded safely against our sins; and yet at the first encounter of a strong temptation, our resolutions may cool and faint, and our vows of obedience may vanish as the "morning dew before the heat of the sun:" there is such a levity and featheriness in our minds, such a mutability and inconstancy in our hearts. Therefore the scripture doth so frequently inculcate the duty of continual trust in God, to assist us by his strength to overcome our spiritual enemies. Divine grace raises our thoughts into steadfast resolutions against sin, turns our resolutions into holy actions, our actions into permanent habits. "God works in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure."

(4.) If upon intermitting our watch, we fall into the sin that we are prone to, speedy and deep repentance is necessary to recover the favour of God, and to preserve us for the future against it. Sins of relapse more easily prevail than in the first temptation; because the tenderness and reluctancy of conscience is lessened by the commission of sin: they are more pernicious to the soul, for besides the enhancing of guilt, the unclean spirit returns with more imperiousness from indignation that he was expelled. If we have been effectually tempted to sin, let us presently retract it by repentance: there will be a suspension of God's favour, whilst we continue without a due sense of our sin; "let not the sun go down upon God's wrath," but with prayers and tears sue out his pardoning mercy. The neglect of present repentance is a step to final impenitence, that is unpardonable. * Who can tell the degrees of danger in continuing in sin a day? How many have been cut off in their early sins, and lost their time, and hopes, and souls for ever? But that which more specially belongs to the present matter, is this, by the neglect of speedy repentance, sin is more difficultly retracted. By continuance in sin, the heart is more unwilling and unable to mortify it. The habits of the mind differ from the habits of the body: these wear out by continuance, the others are more firm and powerful: they are second inclinations, and as violent as the first that are deeply set in corrupt nature. The healing a fresh wound is much more easy than an inveterate ulcer: the healing the soul, and renewing it by repentance, is much more easy and safe, presently after the wounding it by sin, than after continuance under the power and infection of sin.

A deep heart-breaking sorrow will prevent relapses into sin. When conscience represents our sin in its killing circumstances, as committed against the knowledge of the divine law, and our vows of obedience, against the tender mercies, and dreadful justice of God: that for the low and despicable satisfaction of the sensual part, we have made ourselves unholy and unhappy: from hence the soul is struck with a sorrow so pungent, that the love of pleasure is mortified, and the sweetest sin is imbittered. The

* *Omnia vitia penitus insidant, nisi dum surgunt oppressa sint; vehementius contra inveterata pugnandum est: nam vulnus sanitas facilius est dum a sanguine recentia sunt, ubi corrupta in malum ulcus se verterunt difficilior curantur.* Senec. ad Marc.

remembrance of that perplexing anguish will heighten the aversion and resolution against sin : the soul will fly with horror the occasions of offending God, and recoil at the first glance of that sin that cost it so dear, and which if entertained, will renew its agonies. As one that narrowly escapes from being consumed by fire, retains so strong an impression of the terror, that makes him always circumspect to avoid the like danger. "David's broken bones made" him understand what a fearful sin adultery was, and cautious ever after. But a slight confession, a superficial sorrow, a few sad thoughts and tears, are soon forgot : when the sinner presumes by a slight repentance to obtain reconciliation with God, he is ready to answer the next temptation, and return to folly.

(5.) Fervent and constant prayer for the renewing grace of God, is indispensably necessary to preserve us from our sins. It is by the spirit of holiness that "we mortify the deeds of the body:" that we put off the old man, and put on the new. Sanctifying grace introduces a new nature, the prolific and productive principle of a new life : it turns the current of the affections from sin to holiness. This is as astonishing as the miraculous motion of the shadow upon Ahaz's dial, "that went ten degrees backward." Unregenerate morality may lop the branches, restrain from the gross acts, but sanctifying grace strikes at the root of sin, the inward affection. There are some medicines that will stop the fits of the falling-sickness for a time, but not expelling the cause, the disease invades nature again : so moral counsels, and politic respects, may stop the breaking forth of the lusts of the flesh, but the inward affection of sin remaining will make us apt to fall by the commission of it. Sanctifying grace makes an inward universal change in the soul : he that was unclean in his thoughts and desires, by the transforming power of the spirit, "loves pureness of heart," delights in it, and has a fixed hatred against any thing that defiles : the soul that "cleaves to the dust," and pursues the acquisition of earthly things as his treasure, being refined and elevated by grace, seeks the things above, with vigorous endeavours.

In this the diseases of the body differ from those of the mind :
 * the first, notwithstanding the most earnest desire of cures, may

* *Pars sanitatis velle sanari fuit. Ita est paucos servitus plures servitutum teneant. Senec. Epist. 21,*

be incurable : the other when the desires are sincere of spiritual healing, are in the happy way of cure, for vicious affections are the diseases of the soul. This change of the affections, the effect of supernatural grace, is obtained by fervent prayer. Our Saviour assures us, that "our heavenly Father will freely and abundantly give the Holy Spirit to those who ask it" with such ardent affections, as flow from their feeling sense of the want of his influences. In humble prayer we acknowledge our unworthiness, our weakness, our absolute necessity of divine grace to mortify our lusts : in believing prayer we glorify his mercy, and his omnipotence, that he is both willing and powerful to make us victorious over our worst enemies. The prayer of Jehosaphat, when invaded by a vast army, conspiring the destruction of his kingdom, is a copy to be transcribed by us : "O our God, we have no might against this great company that comes against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee." 2 Chron. 20. Thus satan, the world, and the flesh, are combined in warring against the soul, and we are utterly unable to resist them, we must therefore address ourselves "to the God of all grace, to strengthen our inward man. And since some lusts have such strong possession, that like that stubborn sort of spirits mentioned in the gospel, they cannot be expelled but by fasting and prayer, we must with the most zealous devotion, prayer joined with fasting, implore grace to subdue them.

Prayer must be continual : if we intermit this recourse to heaven, we shall presently find ourselves like Samson when his hair was shaved, weak like other men. Grace in the saints is not like light in the sun, that springs from itself, but like the light of a lamp that is constantly fed with supplies of oil, otherwise the weak light will faint and die. Inherent grace is maintained by the continual emanations from the holy Spirit : nay the habits of grace are drawn forth into act and vigorous exercise, by supervenient exciting grace, without which they would be ineffective and useless. As there cannot be actual sight, unless the light in the eye be irradiated by light of the air : so without special assisting grace we cannot do any spiritual good nor avoid evil : we shall be foiled by every temptation, even the best will leave God, and provoke God to leave them. Our Saviour therefore enjoins his disciples the double duty, "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." David with his severe

resolutions to be circumspect, joined his fervent requests to God: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue, I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." Psal. 143. 3. His special guidance is necessary to regulate our tongues, that we neither offend God, nor justly provoke men.

(Lastly.) Faith in the Redeemer is a sovereign effectual means for the mortifying sin. The Son of God incarnate is the fountain of inherent as well as imputed righteousness: grace and glory are conveyed to us by the hands of the Mediator. The supernatural power to do good, and vanquish evil is from him: "Of ourselves we cannot conceive a good thought; through Christ strengthening us we can do all things." Spiritual blessings he purchased for us by his humiliation, and confers in his exaltation. "He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it by the washing of water and the word." Eph. 4. 8. Psal. 68. Being risen and ascended, he received of his Father divine gifts, and gives grace unto men. "He gives repentance," which principally consists in the mortifying sin: "he blesses us in turning us from our iniquities." Acts. 5.

The mortification of sin is peculiarly attributed to his death. 1. With respect to its meritorious causality, that reconciled God to us, and obtained of him the sanctifying spirit, that is the seal of his love, to communicate "the divine nature to us, by which we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." The redemption of a captive may illustrate the redemption of sinners: for as in restoring a captive to liberty, there must be the payment of the ransom, and the breaking of his chains, so in redeeming a sinner there was the price laid down, the invaluable blood of the Son of God, to procure our spiritual freedom: for the ignominious and cruel bondage under Satan, was the penal effect of the first transgression: and the invisible chains, the darkness of mind, the hardness of heart, the rebellion of will, the disorder of affections, and all the vicious habits that kept him in the bondage of satan, are to be broken and removed. For this reason it is said, "God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemning sin in the flesh:" that is, Christ dying as a sacrifice for sin, reconciled God, and the fruit of that reconciliation, is the breaking the tyrannous empire of

sin under which we were involved, that we may enjoy the liberty of the Sons of God. Sin brought our Saviour to the cross, and he brought sin to the cross: when he died naturally, sin died legally, that is, was condemned to lose its power in the hearts and lives of believers. The excellent ends of our Saviour's death are expressed by the apostle; "he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, abolish the guilt of sin, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." 2. By way of representation. As Christ died for sin, we must die to sin: he expiated the guilt of all sin for penitent believers; and a universal crucifixion of sin is the imitation of his death. The apostle insists on this as a truth of the clearest evidence to christians, "know ye not that so many as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him in baptism; that 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." The sum of which reasoning is, that our crucifying the corrupt nature, with all its various affections and lusts, is a lively resemblance of the death of Christ, which was designed both to be operative in us of the death of sin, and to be significative of it. From whence it follows, it is the indispensable duty of all christians to transcribe the copy of his death in their hearts and lives. The death of Christ mortifies sin by moral influence, as it is an expression of God's transcendent love to us, and his righteous and holy severity against sin; both which are such powerful motives to destroy sin, that whoever does not feel their efficacy, is dead as the grave, without the least vital spark of grateful love to Christ.

Now the unfeigned belief of the meritorious and efficacious sufferings of Christ, is the means by which the value of his death is applied, and the virtue of it derived to us for the killing of our sins. It is by faith we are united to him as our head, the fountain of spiritual sense and active power. "He dwells in our hearts by faith, and by the eminent operations of his spirit, strengthens the inner man. Faith excites us to mortify the inhabiting corruption, by arguing from the love of Christ in dying

for us ; he left heaven for us, shall not we leave earth for him ? he denied his natural innocent wills to submit to the death of the cross for our salvation ; shall not we deny our depraved rebellious wills for his glory ? And unless desperate sinners, who are fallen as low as hell, who can resist such melting persuasions ? The apostle speaks with the most feeling expressions ; “ the love of Christ constrains us ; has an absolute invincible empire over us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, that henceforth we should live to him who died for us. And it is the noble and sensible effect of quickening grace to mortify sin. Faith as it obliges, so it encourages to subdue our sins, by reflecting upon the end of Christ’s death, which shall certainly be accomplished. St. Paul in his conflict with an incessant enemy, was fortified by an assurance from God, “ My grace is sufficient for thee :” the temptation was not presently removed, but strength conveyed by which he was superior to it. Our special sins so easily encompass us, that considering our imminent danger, we may fear the issue of the fight ; but the believing remembrance of our Saviour’s death, inspires new life and heat into us, knowing that he hath not died in vain. Faith raises the drooping spirit, by reflecting upon the compassionate willingness of Christ, to relieve and strengthen us in the holy war. When he was upon earth, he prayed his father “ to keep us from the evil of the world.” This was the copy of his continual intercession for us in heaven ; from whence we are infallibly assured, that he is most tenderly inclined to assist us, and preserve us from the malignant influence of the world. For these reasons, faith in Christ has a cleansing virtue, a victorious efficacy attributed to it : “ faith purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. A sincere believer that makes use of the divine ordinances, prayer, hearing the word, the confirming sacrament, and other holy means for the subduing his corruptions, shall certainly obtain a final victory, and the reward of it, a triumphant felicity.