

Sermon XV.

Isaiah lxiv 6, 7.—“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” &c.

This people's condition agreeth well with ours, though the Lord's dealing be very different. The confessory part of this prayer belongeth to us now; and strange it is, that there is such odds of the Lord's dispensations, when there is no difference in our conditions; always we know not how soon the complaint may be ours also. This prayer was prayed long before the judgment and captivity came on, so that it had a prophecy in the bosom of it. Nay, it was the most kindly and affectionate way of warning the people could get, for Isaiah to pour forth such a prayer, as if he beheld with his eyes the calamity, as already come. And indeed it becometh us so to look on the word, as if it gave a present being to things as certain and sensible as if they were really. What strange stupidity must be in us, when present things, inflicted judgments, committed sins, do not so much affect us, as the foresight of them did. Love Isaiah! Always,³⁰³ as this was registrate for the people's use, to cause them to still look on judgments threatened, as performed and present, and anticipate the day of affliction by repentance; and also to be a pattern to them, how to deal with God, and plead with him from such grounds of mercy and covenant-interest: so it may be to us a warning, especially when sin is come to the maturity, and our secure backsliding condition is with child of sad judgments, when the harvest seemeth ripe to put the sickle into it.

There is in these two verses, a confession of their own sinfulness, from which grounds they justify God's proceeding with them, they take the cause upon themselves, and justify him in his judging, whether temporal or spiritual plagues were inflicted.

³⁰³ [That is, however.—*Ed.*]

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In this verse,³⁰⁴ they take a general survey of their sinful estate, concluding themselves unclean, and all their performances and commanded duties, which they counted once their righteousness: and from this ground, they clear God's dealing with them, and put their mouths in the dust; and so from the Lord's judgment they are forced to enter into a search of the cause of so much sin; and from discovered sin, they pronounce God righteous in his judgment. Perceiving a great difference in the Lord's manner of dealing with them, and their fathers, they do not refund³⁰⁵ it upon God, who is righteous in all his ways, but retort it upon themselves, and find a vast discrepance between themselves and their fathers, verse 5. And so it was no wonder that God's dispensation changed upon them. God was wont to meet others, to show himself gracious, even to prevent strokes, but now he was wroth with them. Nay, but there is good cause for it. They rejoice and wrought righteousness, but we have sinned. And this may be said in the general,—never one needeth to quarrel God for severe dealing. If he deal worse with one than with another, let every man look into his own bosom, and see reason sufficient; yea, more provocation in themselves than others. Always in this verse, they come to a more distinct view of their loathsome condition. Anybody may wrap up their repentance in a general notion of sin, but they declare themselves to be more touched with it, and condescend on particulars, yet such particulars as comprehend many others. And in this confession, you may look on the Spirit's work, having some characters of the Spirit in it.

I. They take a general view of their uncleanness and loathsome estate by sin; not only do they see sin, but sin in the sinfulness of it and uncleanness of it.

II. They not only conclude so of the natural estate they were born in, and the loathsomeness of their many foul scandals among them; but they go a further length, to pass as severe a

³⁰⁴ [Verse 6.—*Ed.*]

³⁰⁵ [That is, place it upon God or charge him with it.—*Ed.*]

sentence on their duties and ordinances as God hath done, Isa. i. and lxvi. The Spirit convinceth according to scripture's light, and not according to the dark spark of nature's light; and so that which nature would have busked³⁰⁶ itself with as its ornament, that which they had covered themselves with as their garment, the duties they had spread, as robes of righteousness, over their sins to hide them; all this now goeth under the name of filthiness and sin. They see themselves wrapt up in as vile rags as they covered and hid: commanded duties and manifest breaches come in one category. And not only is it some of them which their own conscience could challenge in the time, but all of them and all kinds of them, moral and ceremonial, duties that were most sincere, had most affection in them, all of them are filthy rags now, which but of late were their righteousness.

III. There is an universality, not only of the actions, but of persons; not only all the peoples or multitudes' performances are abomination; but all of them, Isaiah, and one and other, the holiest of them, come in in this category and rank—"we are all unclean," &c. Though the people, it may be, could not join holy Isaiah with themselves, yet humble Isaiah will join himself with the people, and come in, in one prayer. And no doubt, he was as sensible of sin now, as when he began to prophesy; and growing in holiness, he must grow also in sense of sinfulness. Seeing at the first sight of God's holiness and glory, he cried "unclean," &c. Isa. vi. 5, certainly he doth so now, from such a principle of access to God's holiness, which maketh him abhor himself in dust and ashes.

IV. They are not content with such a general, but condescend to two special things, two spiritual sins, viz. omission, or shifting of spiritual duties, which contained the substance of worship. "None calleth on thee," few or none, none to count upon, calleth on thee; that is, careth for immediate access and approaching

³⁰⁶ [That is, adorned itself.—*Ed.*]

unto God in prayer and meditation, &c. Albeit external and temple-duties be frequent, yet who prayeth in secret? or if any pray, that cannot come in count, the Lord knoweth them not, because they want the Spirit's stamp on them. This must be some other thing than the general conviction of sin which the world hath, who think they pray all their days; here people, who though they make many prayers, Isa. i., yet they see them no prayers, and no calling on God's name now.

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V. To make the challenge the more, and the confession more spiritual and complete, there is discovered to them this ground of their slackness and negligence in all spiritual duties, "None stirreth up himself to take hold on thee." Here is the want of the exercise of faith: faith is the soul's hand and grip, John i. 12; Heb. vi. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 12; Isa. xxvii. 5. Nobody awaketh themselves out of their deadness and security, to lay hold on thee. Lord, thou art going away, and taking good-night of the land, and nobody is like to hold thee by the garment; no Jacobs here, who will not let thee go, till thou bless them; none to prevail with thy Majesty,—every one is like to give Christ a free passport and testimonial to go abroad, and are almost Gadarenes, to pray him to depart out of their coasts. There is a strange looseness and indifferency in men's spirits concerning the one thing necessary. Men lie by and dream over their days, and never put the soul's estate out of question; none will give so much pains, as to clear their interest in thee, to lay hold on thee, so as they may make peace with thee. Now, can there be a more ample and lively description of our estate, both of the land and of particular persons of it? Since this must not be limited to the nation of the Jews, though the prophet spake of the generality of them, yet, no doubt, all mankind is included in the first six verses; and any secure people may be included in the seventh verse, for Paul applieth even such like speeches (Rom. xi. 13.) that were spoken, as you would think, of David's enemies only. Yet the Spirit of God knowing the mind of the Spirit, maketh a

more general use of their condition, to hold out the natural estate of all men out of Christ Jesus.

But there are in these two verses other two things beside the acknowledgment of sin:

I. The acknowledgment of God's righteousness in punishing them, for now they need not quarrel God, they find the cause of their fading in their own bosom. They now join sin and punishment together, whereas in the time of their prosperity they separated punishment from sin; and in the time of their security in adversity they separated sin from punishment: at one time making bare confession of sin, without fear of God's justice, at another time fretting and murmuring at his judgments, without the sense of their sin. But now they join both these, and the sight and sense of God's displeasure maketh sin more bitter, and to abound more, and to appear in the loathsome and provoking nature of it, so that their acknowledgment hath an edge upon it. And again, the sight and sense of sin maketh the judgment appear most righteous, and stoppeth their mouth from murmuring. In the time of their impenitency under the rod, their language was very indifferent, Ezek. xviii. 2. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" they have sinned and we suffer; they have done the wrong and we pay for it. But it is not so now, ver. 5. The fathers have done righteousness in respect of us, and thou wast good unto them; but we are all unclean, and have sinned, and so we are punished.

II. They find some cause and ground in God of their general defection; not that he is the cause of their sin, but in a righteous way he punished sin with sin. God hid his face, denied special grace and influence; and so they lie still in their security, and their sin became a spiritual plague. Or this may be so read,—*None calleth on thy name, when thou didst hide thy face from us, and when thou didst consume us because of our iniquities*; and so it serveth to aggravate their deep security, that, though the Lord was departing from them, yet none would keep him and hold

him. Though he did strike, yet they prayed not; affliction did not awake them out of security, and so the last words, "Thou hast consumed us," &c., are differently expounded and read. Some make it thus, as it is in the translation, "Thou hast hid thy face," and left us in a spiritual deadness, that so there might be no impediment to bring on deserved judgment. If we had called on thee, and laid hold on thee, it might have been prevented, we might have prevailed with God, but now our defence is removed, and thou hast given us up to a spirit of slumber, and so we have no shield to hold off the stroke,—thou hast now good leave to consume us for our sins. Another sense may be—*Thou hast suffered us to consume in our iniquity, thou hast given us up to the hand of our sins.* And this is also a consequent of his hiding his face. Because thou didst hide thy face, thou lettest us perish in our sins; there needeth no more for our consumption, but only help us not out of them, for we can soon destroy ourselves.

First, Sin is in its own nature loathsome, and maketh one unclean before God. Sin's nature is filthiness, vileness, so doth Isaiah speak of himself, chap. vi. 5, when he saw God's holiness; so doth Job abhor himself, which is the affection which turneth a man's face off a loathsome object, when he saw God, Job xl. 4, and xlii. 6. Look how loathsome our natural condition is holden out by God himself, Ezek. xvi. You cannot imagine any deformity in the creature, any filthiness, but it is there. The filthiness and vileness of sin shall appear, if we consider *first* that sin is a transgression of the holy and spiritual command, and so a vile thing, the commandment is holy and good, Rom. vii. And sin violateth and goeth flat contrary to the command, 1 John iii. 4. When so just and so equitable a law is given, God might have exacted other rigorous duties from us, but when it is so framed that the conscience must cry out, All is equity, all is righteous and more than righteous, thou mightest command more, and reward none. It is justice to command, but it is mercy to promise life to obedience, which I owe,—what then must the offence be, against

such a just command, and so holy? If holiness be the beauty of the creation, sin must be the deformity of it, the only spot in its face.

Secondly, Look upon sin in the sight of God's holiness and infinite majesty, and O how heinous will it appear! and therefore no man hath seen sin in the vileness of it, but in the light of God's countenance, as Isa. vi. 5, Job. xl. and xlii. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, he cannot look on it, Hab. i. 13. All other things beside sin, God looketh on them as bearing some mark of his own image, all was very good, and God saw it, Gen. i. and ii. Even the basest creatures God looketh on them, and seeth himself in them, but sin is only God's eyesore, that his holiness cannot away with it, it is most contrary unto him, and as to his sovereignty, it is a high contempt and rebellion done to God's Majesty. It putteth God off the throne, will take no law from him, will not acknowledge his law, but, as it were, spitteth in his face, and establisheth another god. There is no punishment so evil, that God will not own as his work, and declare himself to be the author of it, but only sin, his soul abhorreth it, his holy will is against it, he will have no fellowship with it, it is so contrary to him: contradicteth his will, debaseth his authority, despiseth his sovereignty, upendeth his truth. There is a kind of infiniteness in it, nothing can express it but itself no name worse than itself to set it out, the apostle can get no other epithet to it, Rom. vii. 13, than "sinful" sin, so that it cometh in most direct opposition unto God. All that is in God, is God himself, and there is no name can express him sufficiently. If you say God, you say more than can be expressed by many thousand other words. So it is here—sin is purely sin, God is purely good and holy, without mixture, holiness itself, sin is simply evil, without mixture, unholiness itself. Whatever is in it, is sin, is uncleanness. Sin is an infinite wrong, and an infinite and boundless filthiness, because of the infinite person wronged. It is an offence of infinite Majesty and the person wronged aggravateth the offence, if it be simply

contrary to infinite holiness, it must be, in that respect, infinite unholiness and uncleanness.

Thirdly, Look upon the sad effects and consequences of sin,—how miserable, how ruinous it hath made man, and all the creation, and how vile must it be!

I. Look on man's native beauty and excellency, how beautiful a creature! But sin hath cast him down from the top of his excellency, sin made Adam of a friend an enemy, of a courtier with God an open rebel. Was not man's soul of more price than all the world, so that nothing can exchange it? Yet hath sin debased it, and prostituted it to all vile filthy pleasures, hath made the immortal spirit to dwell on the dunghill, feed on ashes, catch vanities, lying vanities, pour out itself to them, serve all the creatures—whereas it should have made them servants, yea, a slave to his own greatest enemy, to the ground he treadeth upon. O what a degenerate plant! It was a noble vine once in paradise, but sin hath made it a wild one, to bring forth sour grapes. What is there in all the world could defile a man? Matt. xv. 20. Nothing that goeth out or cometh in, but sin that proceedeth out of the heart. Man was all light, his judgment sinned into his affections, and through all the man, but sin hath made all darkness, closed up the poor captive understanding, hath built up a thick wall of gross corrupted affections about it, so that light can neither get in nor out. The soul was like a clear running fountain, which yielded fresh clear streams of holy inclinations, desires, affections, actions and emptied itself in the sea of immense Majesty from which these streams first flowed, but now it is a standing putrified puddle, that casteth a vile stink round about, and hath no issue towards God. Man was a glorious creature, fit to be lord over the work of God's own hands, and therefore had God's image in a special manner, holiness and righteousness, God's nature. A piece of divinity was stamped on man, which outshined all created perfections. The sun might blush when it looked on him, for what was material glory to the glory of holiness and beauty

of God's image! But sin hath robbed poor man of this glorious image, hath defaced man, marred all his glory, put on an hellish likeness on him. Holiness only putteth the difference between angels in heaven and devils in hell, and sin only hath made the difference between Adam in paradise, and sinners on the cursed ground, Rom. iii. 23.

II. Sin hath so redounded through man unto all the creation, that it hath defiled it, and made it corruptible and subject to vanity, (Rom. viii. 20, &c.) so that this is a spot in all the creature's face,—that man hath sinned, and used all as weapons of unrighteousness, so that now the creature groaneth to be delivered.

III. It hath brought on all the misery that is come on man, or that is to come, it hath brought on death and damnation as its wages, and the curse of the eternal God, Gal. iii. 13, Rom. vi. 23. How odious then an evil must it be, that hath so much evil in it yea, all evil in the bosom of it! Hell is not evil in respect of sin, for sin deserveth hell, it hath ruined man, and made all the beautiful order of the creation to change.

IV. It separateth man from God, which is worst of all, and this is included in the text, “We are all as an unclean thing,” or man is as a leprous man set apart, because of pollution, that may not come to the temple, or worship God, so hath iniquity separated between God and us, Isa. lix. 2. And O how sad a divorcement is this! it maketh men without God in the world, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, in whose favour is life, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. Now poor man is made miserable, deprived of his felicity, which only consisted in enjoyment of God. Sin as a thick partition wall, is come in between, enmity also is come in, and divideth old friends, Eph. ii. 14-17, and now no heavenly or comfortable influence can break through the night of darkness is begun which must prove everlasting. Except the partition-wall be removed, all must wither and decay as without the sun.

V. Look on the price paid for sin, on the cleansing that washeth it away, and you may see unspeakable deformity and vileness in it. The redemption of the soul is precious silver and gold and precious stones will not do it,—that would be utterly contemned. “What!” saith God, “presumptuous sinner, wilt thou give me a farthing in payment of a sum which all the world, sold at the dearest, would not discharge?” Psal. xlix. 7, 8, 1 Pet. i. 18. It is no corruptible thing, but the blood of the Son of God. O what must the debt be, when the price is so infinite! the Son of God must die, nay, it is not sacrifice or offering—“Lo, I come to do thy will,” it is Christ himself that is the ransom, Psal. xl. 6, 7. And it is not much soap or nitre, it is not much repentance and tears that will wash away this filthiness, no, it is of a deeper dye, it is crimson ingrained filthiness, Jer. ii. 22 and Isa. i. 16. Blood of bulls and goats cannot do it, but only the blood of the immaculate Lamb offered up by himself, (Heb. x. 4, 5,) the blood of Him, “who by the eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot unto God,” Heb. ix. 14. What must sin be, that must have such a fountain opened for it? It must be strange uncleanness when the blood of Christ only can cleanse it, Zech. xiii. 1.

“We all,” &c. Mark, *first*, Sin hath gone over us all, and made all mankind unclean, Rom. iii. 10, 22. Every one of Adam's posterity is born unclean, “For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Job. xiv. 4. Consider: How sin defaced innocent Adam, how one sin made him so vile, and spoiled him of the divine nature, and so the root was made unclean, and the branches must follow the root, and so are we all born and conceived in sin, Psalm li. 5. We carry in us original corruption, flowing from the first actual sin of Adam, and this maketh poor children, before they do good or evil, to be abominably vile in God's sight, even as the child is set out, Ezek. xvi. Every one cometh of evil parents, all come of Adam the rebel, what a loathsome sight would a child be to us so described, “Cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day it is born,” and what must it all be before

God, who is of purer eyes than to behold sin? *Secondly*, Unto all this we have added innumerable actual transgressions as so many filthy streams flowing out at the members, from the inward puddle of original corruption; and so how much more vile are we all nor infants can be, or Adam was in the day he was cast out of paradise! And thus, Rom. iii. from verse 10, are the branches set down in word, thought, and deed; so that all the inclinations and motions and actions of the man are only evil continually. Every man shall find his count past counting; one day's faults would weary you, but what will your whole life do? Known sins are innumerable, what must unknown be? Every man's heart is like the troubled sea, that casteth up mire and dirt daily, and cannot be at rest. The heart is daily flowing and ebbing in this corruption, it cometh out daily to the borders of all the members; and there are some high spring-tides, when sin aboundeth more. When in one member of the tongue a world of evil is, what can be in all the members? And what in the soul, that is more capable than all the world? Well, then, every man hath sinned in Adam, and hath sinned also in his own person, and sealed Adam's first rebellion by so many thousand actions like it. Every man hath approved the sin that first ruined man, and made himself much more loathsome nor Adam was; therefore all mankind may say, "We all are as an unclean thing." Now from all this, we would gladly discover unto you what your condition is by sin; if the Lord would shine, how vile would you be! Always we must declare this unto you in the Lord's name, you are all unclean, not only born in sin and iniquity, not only have you a body of death within you, that hath all the members; but all these members have one time or other acted and brought forth fruit unto death. How vile, then, must you be in God's sight! It is a strange love that you have to yourselves, that you cannot apprehend how God can hate you! But if he find sin in you, wonder rather how he can look upon you; we would then have you to know this, that there can be no fellowship between God and you in your natural estate.

As men cannot inhabit a vile person's house, no more can God enter into your souls. There is an absolute necessity of washing, before you can be his house and temple. Hath that one sin of Adam made that glorious person so deformed, that he could not look on himself, but cover himself? And hath it been of so defiling a nature, that it hath redounded in all the posterity; and, as unclean things under the law defiled all they touched, so hath that sin subjected all the creatures to corruption? O then imagine what an unspeakable defilement must be on us all, who are not only guilty of Adam's sin, but of many thousands beside! If one sin have so much loathsomeness in it, what must so many out of number, united in one person, even as in us all? No unclean thing can enter into heaven above: know this for a truth, you cannot see God's face in the case you are born into. You know nothing of sin, who wonder that any should go to hell. No, if you knew anything of sin, you would wonder that ever God should look on such cast out in the open field in their blood.

Next, You must know the insufficiency of all things imaginable, to wash away sin's filthiness, except the blood of Christ. Since you are unclean, do you not ask, how shall we be washed? Indeed many have an easy answer, and pass it lightly. The multitude know no way to cleanse in, but the tears of repentance and mourning; and so, many think themselves clean, when they run and pour out a tear as Esau did for the blessing. But what saith the Lord? "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked." Can such an ingrained uncleanness, can such an infinite spot in the immortal soul, be so lightly dashed out? Many think baptism cleanseth them, but was not this people circumcised, as ye are baptized? And Peter tells us, it is not the washing of water, &c. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Sacrifice and offering will not do it. This people thought, sure they had satisfied God, when they brought a lamb, &c., but all this is abomination. Would not many of you think yourselves cleansed from sin, if you offered all your substance, and the fruit of your

body for the sin of your soul? Nay, but you must see an absolute necessity of the opened fountain of Christ's blood, that cleanseth from all sin.

Then we would have you abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, and see nothing in all the creation so vile as you; look on sin in the sight of God's face, and how unholy will it appear! There are many sins, little ones, that in our practice pass for venal and uncontrolled; but look on the filthy loathsome nature of all sin, and hate the least offence, for it hath a kind of infiniteness in it, and blotteth the soul, defileth the person. How great a necessity is there of continual application to the fountain, of dwelling beside it, that you may wash daily! David's so often repeated and inculcated prayer, "Wash me, cleanse me," &c. Psalm li., declareth that he hath apprehended much uncleanness in sin, that it needeth so many applications of the precious blood. And you who have come to Jesus, and are clean, O how much owe you to free grace, that passed by you in your blood, and said, "Live, it is a time of love!" How strange is it, that glorious Majesty cometh to own deformity, and cometh to clothe it with his own garments! Praise the virtue of that blood, that is more precious than the blood of bulls and goats, that can so thoroughly purge, as you shall have no more conscience of sin. [443]

Unclean sinners, wash you, make you clean,—there is a fountain opened; though sin were as scarlet, it can perfectly change the colour of it. If you wash not while the fountain is open, it will quickly be sealed on you, and then it shall be said, when the angel sweareth by him that liveth forever and ever, that time shall be no more, then shall it be said, "let him that is unclean be unclean still." Now, cleansing is offered in the gospel,—if you will love your loathsomeness so well, as not to dip yourselves in this fountain, then let the unclean be so still. Your repentance will never change your colour, though you should melt in sorrow: and therefore you who have found a way to be saved otherwise

nor³⁰⁷ by Jesus Christ, you shall be deceived. Your tears and mourning that you might have had, though Christ had never come into the world, is all you use to speak of, and build your hope on; and if you speak of Christ, it is in such terms as to buy him by such repentance; so that the truth is, you use but Christ's name as a shadow, you make no use of him; he needed not to have come into the world, for many of you could have done as well without him. But as many of you as cannot find cleansing, who see filth increase by washing, come to Christ Jesus, and say, "If you wilt, thou canst make me clean," Matt viii. 2. Nothing beside Jesus can do it—believe his sufficiency. Nothing beside him will do—believe his willingness; for, for this cause he is an open fountain, that all may come and draw.

³⁰⁷ [*Scottice for than.—Ed.*]

Sermon XVI.

Isaiah lxiv. 6, 7.—“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Not only are the direct breaches of the command uncleanness, and men originally and actually unclean, but even our holy actions, our commanded duties. Take a man's civility, religion, and all his universal inherent righteousness,—all are filthy rags. And here the church confesseth nothing but what God accuseth her of, Isa. lxvi. 8, and chap. i. ver. 11, 12, 13, &c. This people was much in ceremonial and external duties; and therefore they cried, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of Lord!” as if this would have outcried all their other sins; therefore were they proud, and lords in their own estimation, and innocent, Jer. ii. 31, 35. They thought the many good services they did to God might compensate all their wrongs, Mic. vi. 6, 7. They gave a price to justice for their sins, even a confession of it, by offering a lamb, &c. and a purpose to amend. But, lo! what sense the prophet hath of all this, “Lord, all our righteousnesses” are filthy likewise. Albeit we have paid the debt of sins with duties, yet now we see all these are sins themselves, and must have another sacrifice; so that all matter of boasting is now removed, and we are stript naked of all righteousness. We covered our filthiness before with duties, now both the one and the other is filthy. We would look upon two sorts of righteousnesses, the natural man's, and the converted man's, upon the one's civility and fair profession, and upon the other's real or true grace in discharge of duties, and we shall find good reason to conclude both the one and the other under filthiness, so that there is no ground of boasting, no inherent righteousness can make us accepted before God. [444]

First, then, Whatever men can do from natural principles, all the flower and perfection of men's actions, both civil and

religious, is but abominable before God, as long as their persons are unjustified. Every performance is defiled by the uncleanness of the person; and therefore God heareth not sinners, (John viii.,) that is, unjustified sinners; though they pray much, yet God heareth them not. And this is lively expressed by Hag. ii. 12, 13, 14. As the priest's holy garments and flesh could not make bread or pottage holy, but the unclean body could make these unclean; so this nation's and people's performances and holy duties, could not make them holy, and their persons clean, but their unclean persons and actions made all their performances unclean. The solemn meeting and sacrifice, &c. could not make them accepted, but their unclean persons made their solemn meetings and religious duties vile and abominable in God's sight: and thus to the unclean all things are unclean, even their mind and conscience, Tit. i. 15. The unbelieving man, who is born unclean, and defiled with so much original corruption, and so many actual transgressions, defileth all things he toucheth. As a dead body, or a leprous garment, under the law, made all unclean it touched, and nothing could make it holy by touching of it; so all your civility, all your profession, will never contribute to the cleansing of your person; and your persons shall defile all your most clean actions. God loveth not that stock of Adam, and all that groweth on it must be hateful; he is only well-pleased in Jesus Christ, and with those who are transplanted out of rotten Adam into the true vine Jesus. It is such fruit only that can be acceptable; therefore, until you be sprinkled with clean water, and made clean according to the new covenant-way, you cannot please God. Believe this,—your sins and your duties are one, your oaths and your prayers are in the same account with God. What have you then to build upon, when all this is removed? You must once be stript naked of all coverings; and will not your nakedness then be great? The Pharisee went away unjustified, and the poor repenting sinner justified. What was the reason? There are not many of you have such a fair venture for heaven as

he had,—so many prayers, fastings, alms, to ground your hope on. Nay, but all this would never justify his person, because once he was unclean, come of Adam, and had contracted more uncleanness, and all that is like the leprous garment, defiling all that cometh near it; so that whatever hath any dependence on a son of Adam, must contract filthiness. Now, I ask your consciences, have you so many specious coverings to adorn yourself with? Is not your outside spotted, and not so clean as the young civil man and the religious Pharisee? Certainly no; and yet you have no other ground to plead the acceptation of your persons upon, but only this, your prayers and tears, or some such duty performed by you. Well, all is uncleanness, since your persons were once unclean,—no soap nor nitre can wash it, no holy flesh make it holy, no good wishes nor duties can make it acceptable. Did not this people think of their duties as much as you do? and had more reason so to do; for our congregations have not so much form of godliness as they had, and yet God solemnly protested to them that all their works were defiled, even those which they took to wash themselves with. So your repentance and tears must be as filthy as the sin you would wash by it.

Secondly, The uncleanness of men's practice maketh unclean performances. Unclean hands maketh unclean prayers, Isa. i. 15. When men go on in sin, and use their members as instruments of unrighteousness against God, and guiltiness is above their head unrepented of and unpardoned, then whatever the members act for God in religious duties, it must be also abominable; for will God take prayers from such a mouth, that cursing cometh out of? Isa. iii. 10, 11, 12. Shall sweet water come out of one fountain with bitter? Or can a fig-tree bear both thistles and grapes? Certainly, profane conversation must make unclean profession; and therefore your coming to the church and ordinances, your praying in your families, or such like, must of necessity be defiled, since out of the same mouth cometh cursing, railing, lying, filthy speeches. Your tongues are so often employed in God's

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dishonour, to blaspheme his name, to slander your neighbours, to reproach the saints, that all your prayers must be of the same stamp, and as bitter as the other stream of your actions. When you stretch forth your hands to make many prayers, to take the bread and wine, shall not God hide his face from such hands as are unclean with many abominations, some murdering, some abusing their neighbours, some sabbath breaking, some filthiness? How oft have your hands and feet served you to evil turns? And therefore, your good turns will never come in remembrance. Nay, believe it, you cannot be heard of God, while you cover any offence. And this I may say in general, even to the saints; any known sin given way to, and entertained without controlment, without wrestling against it, hindereth the acceptation of your solemn approaches. If your heart regard iniquity, shall God hear? Psal. lxvi. 18. No, believe it, the least sin that you may judge at first venial, and then give it toleration and indulgence, shall separate between God's face and you. Your prayers are abomination, because of such an idol perked up in the heart beside God, that getteth the honour and worship due to him, and God must answer you according to it, Ezek. xix. 1, 3, 4. God will not be inquired of such as give allowance to sin, Ezek. xiv. 2-4. And, on the other hand, no sin, how great and heinous soever, can hinder God's gracious acceptation, when souls fly unto Jesus and turn their back upon sin, or giveth it no heart allowance. And to the multitude I say, all that you do or touch in a duty must be defiled, because your whole way is unclean, Hag. ii. 12-14. Think you to sin all the week through, and worship God on the Sabbath? Will you lie, swear, commit adultery, rail and curse, and come and stand before me, saith the Lord? No, certainly, you cannot be accepted. And will you hate reformation in your lives, and yet take his covenant in your mouth, and call yourselves by his name, "Christians?" And shall not God challenge you for that, as much as for your swearing, and cursing, and lying, &c.? Indeed the Lord putteth all in one roll, and you need not please

yourselves in such things, Psal. i. 16; Jer. vii. 9, 10; for it is all one to you to go to tavern to drink, and come to the sermon,—to blaspheme God's name, and call on it; because the profanity of the one defileth the other, and the holiness of the other cannot make you holy.

Thirdly, The natural man's performances want the uprightness, reality, and sincerity that is required. It is but a painted tomb, full of rottenness within; it is but a shadow without substance, for he wanteth the spiritual part of worship, which God careth for, who will be worshipped “in spirit and in truth,” John iv. 24. Now, what is it that the most part of you can speak of, but an outside of some few duties, soon numbered? You hear the preaching, and your hearts wander about your business. You hear, and are not so much affected as you would be to hear some old story or fable told you. A stage play acted before this generation would move them more than the gospel doth; so that Christ may take up this lamentation, “We have piped to you, and you have not danced; lamented to you, and you have not mourned.” You use to tell over some words in your prayers, and are not so serious in any approach to God, as in twenty other things of the world. Whatever you plead of your heart's rightness, and have recourse to it, when your conversation cannot defend you, yet your hearts are the worst of all, and have no uprightness towards God; for you know that what duties you go about, it is not from an inward principle, but from education, or custom, or constraint. Are you upright, when you are forced, for fear of censure, to come here, or to pray at home? Is that sincerity and spiritual worship? And for the more polished and refined professors, you have this moth in your performances, and this fly to make your ointment to stink, that you do much to be seen of men. Therefore, what little fervour of spirit is in secret duties, there you may measure your attitude and your life. And O! how wearisome, how lifeless are secret approaches! You would not have many errands to God, if you thought no body looked upon you. And for spirituality, it is

a mystery in all men's practice. Who directeth his duty to God's glory? If you get some flash of liberty, you have your desire; but who misseth God's presence in duties, which a world will approve? Who go mourning as without the sun, even when you have the sunshine of ordinances, and walk in the light of them?

And, *Fourthly*, Though your performances had uprightness of heart going along, and much affection in them, yet all are filthy, because of want of faith in Jesus Christ. When you make your duties a covering of your sins, and think to satisfy God's justice for the rest of your faults, by doing some point of your duty, then it cannot choose but be polluted in his sight. And this very thing was the cause of God's rejecting the Jews' righteousness, even because they did not look to the end of the mystery, Christ Jesus: did not pull by the vail of ceremonies, to see the immaculate Lamb of God slain for sin; and therefore doth the Lord so quarrel with them, as if he had never commanded them to do such things, Isa. i. 12, 13, "Who hath required these things at your hands? Bring no more vain oblations;" all is abomination. Even as God should say to you, when you come to the church, Who required you to come? Who commanded you to come to hear the preaching? What have you to do to pray? What warrant have you to communicate? All your praying, hearing, communicating, is abomination; who commanded you to do these things? Would you not think it a foolish question? You would soon answer, that God himself commanded you, and will he not let us do his bidding? Indeed this people, no doubt, have said so in their heart, and wondered what it meant. Nay, but here is the mystery,—you go about these commanded duties not in a commanded way, and so the obedience is but rebellion. You bring offerings and incense, and think that I am pacified when you bring alms,—you judge you have given me a recompence; whereas, all that is mine, and what pleasure have I in these things? I never appointed you sacrifices for this end, but to lead you into the knowledge of my Son, which is to be slain in the fulness of time, and by

one offering to perfect all. I commanded you to look on Jesus Christ slain, in the slain Lamb, and so to expect remission and salvation in him; but you never looked to more nor the ceremony, and made that your saviour and mediator; and therefore it is all abomination. When you slay a lamb, and offer incense, it is all one thing as to cut off a dog's neck, or kill a man. So may the Lord say to this generation, I command you to pray, to repent and mourn for sin, to come and hear the word; but withal you must deny all these, and count yourselves unprofitable servants; you must singly cast your soul's burden on Christ Jesus. But now, saith the Lord, who commanded your repentance? For when you sit down to pray, or come in public to confess sin before the congregation, you think you are washen. When you have said, you have sinned, and if you come to the length of tears and sorrow, O then, sure you are pardoned, though in the meantime you have no thought of Jesus Christ, and know no use of him! Therefore, saith the Lord, who commanded you to do these things? You think you have satisfied for your sin, when you pay a penalty; but who requireth this? I will reckon with you for these, as well as the sins you pray and mourn for, because you do not singly look to Christ Jesus. Now, if he had never come to the world, your ground of confidence would not fail you; for you might have prayed as much, mourned and confessed, and promised amendment; and so you pass by the Son of God, in whom only the Father is well-pleased. Think, then, upon this,—whatever you make your righteousness, there needeth no other thing to make it filthy, but to make it your righteousness. Your confidence in your good heart to God, prayer day and night, and such like, is the most loathsome thing in God's eyes. Except you come to this, to count your prayers, as God doth, among your oaths; to count your solemn duties among profane scandalous actions, as the Lord doth, Isa. i. and lxvi. 3, then certainly, you do adorn yourselves with them, and cover your nakedness of other faults with such leaves as Adam did, but you shall be

more discovered. Your garment is as filthy as that it hideth, even because you make that use of it to hide your sin and cover it.

Next, The Lord's children have no ground of boasting either, from their own righteousness; the holiest saint on earth must abhor himself in dust and ashes, and holy Isaiah joineth himself in with a profane people. When he cometh to God to be justified, he cometh among the ungodly,—he bringeth no righteousness with him, he cometh in among them that work not. Now, you shall find good ground why it must be so:

I. There are ordinarily many blemishes in our holiest actions, spots upon our cleanest garments; often formality eateth up the life of duties, and representeth a body without a soul in it. You sit down to pray out of custom, morning and evening; and if there were no more to prove it, this may suffice. When pray you but at such times? You have an ordinary, and go not by it. No advantage is taken of providence, no necessity constraineth when occasion offereth; and so it is like the world's appointed hours. How great deadness and indisposition creepeth in! so that this is the ordinary complaint; yea, all prayers are filled with it,—scarcely any room for other petitions, because of the want of frame for prayer itself. The word is heard as a discourse, and on whom hath it operation to stir up affections, either of joy or of trembling? Christians, you come not to hear God speak, and so you meet with empty ordinances—God is not in them. How often do crooked and sinister ends creep in, and bias the spirit! Men ask, to spend on their lusts, and to satisfy their own ambition. Some would have more grace to be more eminent, or to have a more pleasant life; and this is but the seeking to spend on your lusts. If affection run in the channel of a duty, it is often muddy, and runneth through our corruptions: liberty in duties is principled with carnal affection and self-love. Will not often the wind of applause in company fill the sails, and make your course swifter and freer nor when you are alone? And often

much love to a particular³⁰⁸ maketh more in seeking it. And that which is a moth to eat up and consume all our duties is conceit and self-confidence in going about them, and attributing to ourselves after them. It is but very rare that any man both acted from Jesus Christ as the principle, and also putteth over his work on Christ singly as the end. Alas! too often do men draw out of Christ's fulness, and raise up their own glory upon it, and adorn themselves with the spoils of his honour; for we use to pray from a habit of it, and go to it as men acquainted with it, and when we get any satisfaction to our own minds, O how doth the soul return on itself, and goeth not forward as it goeth! It is so well pleased with itself, when it getteth liberty to approach, that it doth not put all over on Jesus, and take shame to itself. As long as there is a body of death within, holiness cannot be pure and unmixed; our duties run through a dirty channel, and cannot choose but contract filth. While sin lodgeth under one roof so near grace, grace must be in its exercise marred; and therefore the holy apostle must cry, Rom. vii. 19. "The good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do," and verse 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

II. Though there were not such blemishes and spots in the face of our righteousness, yet it is here in a state of imperfection, and but in its minority, and so must be filthy in the Lord's sight. It was perfect holiness, according to the perfect rule of God's law, that Adam was to be justified by, according to the covenant of works; exact obedience, not one wanting,—or else all that can be done, came short of righteousness: one breach bringeth the curse on. All obedience, if there be a failing in a little, will not bring the blessing on: he that doth all, liveth; and he that doth not all, is cursed. And therefore, Christians, all you do cannot commend

³⁰⁸ [There is some obscurity in this sentence. The sentiment that is expressed, however, seems to be this:—*Much love to a particular object makes the act of seeking or praying for it to be loved more.*—Ed.]

your persons to God, for if he examine you by the rule of the law, O how short will the holiest come! Paul and Isaiah dare not come into such a reckoning; neither is all obeyed, nor any in the measure and manner commanded. And therefore, you might cry down all your performances, when you could challenge them with no particular blot, with this—all is short of the command, and infinitely short. I have been aiming at holiness so long, I have stretched out my strength, and what have I attained? It may be, I have outstripped equals, and there seemeth to be some distance between me and others; nay, but the command is unspeakably more before me nor I am before others. I have reached but a span of that boundless perfection of holiness; it is but a grain weight of the eternal weight of grace, and I must forget it, and stand before God, as if I had lost mind of duties, appear in his presence as if I had attained nothing; for the length that is before my hand drowneth up all attainments.

III. Nay, but put the case were man perfect, yet should he not know his soul, but despise his life: the Lord putteth no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly, and the heavens are not clean in his sight; how then must man be abominable, that hath his foundation in the dust, and drinketh in iniquity like water? How should God magnify him? or he be righteous that is born of a woman? Job xxv. 4, 6; xv. 14, 15; and iv. 18, 19. Job was a great length in the sight of his own vileness and God's holiness, when he saw this, "Though I were perfect, yet I would not know it, but despise it; I would not answer him, though I were righteous," chap. ix. 14, 15, 21. So unspeakably pure and clean is his holiness, that all created holiness hath a spot in it before his, and evanisheth, as the stars disappear when the sun riseth, which seem something in the darkness. The angels' holiness, the heaven's glory, is nothing to him, before whom the nations are as nothing; so that it is all the wonder of the world, that ever God stooped so far below himself, even to righteous Adam, as to make such a covenant with him, to account him

righteous in obedience. “What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? When I look to the heavens, and the sun, the work of thine hands, Lord, what is man?” What is innocent man in his integrity, that thou shouldst magnify him, to give him a place to stand before thee, magnify him to be a party-contractor with thy glorious Majesty? Psalm viii. 4-6. But now, when this covenant is broken, it is become impossible to a son of Adam ever to stand before God in his perfection, for, how should man be righteous that is born of a woman? Job xv. 14. Since we once sinned, how should our righteousness ever come in remembrance? Therefore hath God chosen another way to cover man's wickedness and righteousness both, with his own righteousness, his Son's divine human righteousness, which is so suited in his infinite wisdom for us. It is a man's righteousness, that it may agree with men, and be a fit garment to cover them; it is God's righteousness, that it may be beautiful in God's eyes, for he seeth his own image in it. And it is not the created inherent righteousness of saints glorified, that shall be their upper garment, that shall be their heaven and glory-suit, so to speak. They will not glory in this, but only in the Lamb's righteousness for evermore. Saint-holiness must have a covering above, for it cannot cover our nakedness; and all the songs of those that follow the Lamb make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. The Lamb is the light and sun of the city, the Lamb is the temple of it; in a word, he is all that is beautiful and glorious. Every saint hath put on the Lord Jesus, and is perfect through his comeliness. At least, if the holiness of spirits of just men made perfect be the glorious habit above; yet all the beauty and glory of it is from Christ Jesus, whose image it is, and the Spirit whose work it is. It shall be still true, all—all our righteousness, as ours, is filthy; and all holiness, as it hath a relation to us, cannot please God. It must be spotted before his pure eyes; but only it is accepted and clean, as it is Christ's and the Spirit's, as it is his own garment put upon us, and his own comeliness making us perfect. It is not so much the inherent

cleanness of the Saints' robes that maketh them beautiful in his eyes, as this, that they are washed in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii. 14.

Now, from all this we would speak a word to two sorts of you. *First*, There is one great point of religion that is the principal and foundation of all other, even free justification by faith in Jesus, without our own righteousness; and the most part stumble here in the entry. It is the greatest obstruction of souls coming to Christ Jesus, even the ignorant and blind conceit and fancy that almost every man hath of himself and his own performances; the world will not make many believe the half of the evil of themselves that is spoken in the word. If you have a general conviction of sinfulness and misery, yet you think to help it. If you sin, you use to make amends, run to your prayers and repentance to give God a recompence, and satisfy your own consciences. Speak now, is not this the way you think to be saved? I shall do what I can, pray and mourn for sin; and what I am not able to do, God must forgive; you will do all you are able or can, and God's mercy must come in to supply the want of your righteousness. But this is to put a new piece of cloth in an old garment, to make the rent worse. Many of you have no other ground of confidence in the world, nothing to answer the challenge of conscience or satisfy justice, but this,—I repent, I am sorry, I mourn, I shall amend, I resolve never to do the like again. Now, then, from this ground we would declare unto you, in the Lord's name, you are yet unclean, both in persons and actions unjustified, because you have no other covering but your own duties and performances: and let these be examined, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and they will be found light. All your righteousness, saith the Lord, is filthiness; you are unclean, you cannot deny, both by birth and education,—you have often defiled yourselves with sins, you must confess. Now, I ask you, How will you cover that uncleanness and nakedness? How will you hide it from God's eyes and your own consciences? You know no way but this,—I

will pray, I will repent and amend. So then you cover yourself with prayer, with sorrow and tears, and a resolution of amending. This, then, is all your covering and ornament,—something done [449] by you, as many will make the wings of two good works stretch themselves out so far as to cover and hide a multitude of offences between them. Therefore I declare, in the Lord Jesus his name, unto you, whose conscience must go along in the acknowledgment and owning of your case, that you have covered yourselves with your own righteousness, that you have taken as filthy rags to cover your nakedness and sin with, as your sins are, and so you have made an addition to your uncleanness, you are more unclean by your prayers and repentance than before; and so God is of more pure eyes than to look graciously on such as you are. You have gone about to establish your own righteousness, and have not known the righteousness of God, and so you have come short of it; you are yet persons in a state of enmity,—God is your judge, you are rebels. It concerns you much to heed this well, to judge of your own actions and persons as God judgeth of them; for if God shall judge one way, and you judge another way, you may be far mistaken in the end. If you have so good an opinion of yourselves and your duties, that you can plead interest in God for them, and absolve yourselves from such grounds; and if God have not the same judgment, but rather think as evil of your prayers as of your cursing, and abhor the thing that satisfieth you, will it not be dreadful in the end? For his judgment shall stand, and you will succumb in judgment, since you crossed God's mind. Therefore we would have you solidly drink in this principle of religion;—that man is so unclean, and God so abhorreth him, that whatever he doth or can do, it cannot make him righteous; that no good action can make him acceptable, and take away the uncleanness of the evil actions; and that any sinful action taketh away all the cleanness of the good actions. Once believe this,—if I should sweat out my life in serving God, and never rise off my knees, if I should give my body to the fire for

the truth, if I should melt away in tears for sin, all this is but filthy rags, and I can never be accepted of God for all that, but the matter of my condemnation groweth,—if I justify myself my own mouth proves me perverse: God needeth no more but my good deeds to condemn me for, in all justice: and therefore it is a thing impossible,—I will never put forth a hand, or open a mouth upon that account any more. I will serve God, because it is my duty, but life I will not expect by my service; when I have done all, it is wholly mercy that I am accepted, my good works shall never come in remembrance; I resolve to be found, not having my own righteousness. I will appear among the ungodly sinners, as one that hath no righteousness, that I may be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ. I say, drink in this truth, and let it settle in your hearts, and then we would hear numbers cry, “O what shall I do to be saved?”

Now, *Secondly*, As for you who have fled unto Christ's righteousness only, and have cast away your own as dung and dross, as filthy rags; as you have done right in the point of justification, judge so likewise after it. We would exhort you to judge so of your best actions that are the fruits of the Spirit, judge so of them as you have a hand in them.

“All our righteousness.” Mark, Isaiah, a holy prophet, joineth himself in with the multitude. And the truth is, the more holiness, the more humility and self-abasing; for what is holiness, I pray you, but self-denial, the abasing of the creature, and exalting of Christ Jesus? This is the cross that the saints must all bear, “Deny yourself, and follow me.” Grace doth not swell men above others; it is gifts, such as knowledge, that puffeth up; charity or love puffeth not up. Men are naturally high-minded, for pride was the first sin of Adam, and grace cometh to level men, to make the high mountains valleys for Christ's chariot; it maketh men stoop low to enter the door of the kingdom. Therefore, if you have attained any measure beyond others, if you would prove it real grace and holiness, do not exalt yourselves above others, be not

high-minded, come down and sit among the ungodly, among the unclean, and let not grace given diminish the low estimation of yourself in yourself. There is a growing that is but a fancy, and men's conceit; when men grow above ordinances, above other Christians, and can see none or few Christians but themselves, such a growth is not real. It is but fancy, it is but swelling and wind, and must be pricked to let it out. A holy prophet came in among an unclean people; he did not say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." Such a man as can find no Christian about him, even though to the judgment of all others, they seek God more than he, such a man hath not real solid grace,—his holiness is profane holiness, and proud holiness; for true holiness is humble holiness, and in honour preferreth others. [450]

There is a great fault among those who have fled to Christ's righteousness in justification, that they use to come full from duties, as a stomach from a honeycomb. Ofttimes we make our liberty and access to God the ground of our acceptation; and according to the ebbings and flowings of our inherent righteousness, so doth the faith and confidence of justification ebb and flow. Christians, this ought not to be; in so doing, you make your own righteousness your righteousness before God; for when the unsatisfaction in the point of duty maketh you question your interest so often, is not the satisfaction of your minds in duties made the ground of your pleading interest? Give you liberty and access, you can believe anything; remove it, and you can believe nothing. Certainly this is a sandy foundation,—you ought to build nothing on performances, you should be as vile in your own eyes, and think your nakedness as open, when you come nearest God, when you have most liveliness, as when he hideth his face, and duty withereth. Will filthy rags be your ornament? No, Christians. Be more acquainted with the unspotted righteousness of the immaculate Lamb of God, and find as great necessity of covering your cleanest duties with it, as your foulest faults, and thus shall you be kept still humble and vile in your own eyes, and

have continual employment for Christ Jesus. Your best estate should not puff you up, and your worst estate should not cast you down; therefore be much in the search of the filthiness of your holy actions. This were a spiritual study, a noble discovery to unbowel your duties, to divide them, and to give unto God what is God's, and take unto yourselves what is your own. The discovery of filthiness in them needeth not hinder his praise; and the discovery of grace in them needeth not mar your shame. God hath most glory when we have most shame; these two grow in just proportion,—so much is taken from God as is given to the creature.

Thirdly, We would also press you from this ground to long much to be clothed upon with immortality, to put off the filthy rags of time and earth-righteousness, and to be clothed upon with the white robes of the righteousness of the saints. As you would dwell near the fountain here, and be still washing your garments, and offering all your sacrifices in him who sanctifieth all, so would you pant and thirst for this spotless garment of glory. Glory is nothing but perfect holiness, holiness washen and made clean in the Lamb's blood. Your rags are for the prison and for sojourning; when you come to your Father's house, your raiment shall be changed. Therefore, Christians, every one of you aspire higher. Sit not down in attainments; forget what is behind, and press forward. Let perfect holiness be in your eye and purpose, sit not behind it. All our time-duties have much filthiness,—long for the pure stream that waters the city above. Grace is not in its native place, it is corrupted and mixed here: heaven is the own element of it, and there is grace without mixture. Undervalue all your performances, till you be above, where that which is in part shall be done away, where no unclean thing entereth.

Fourthly, This likewise holdeth out to you a continual necessity of washing. You must take up house beside the fountain opened in the house of David; and never look on any piece of inherent righteousness, but see a necessity of dipping it in the

Lamb's blood. And therefore should you pray always in Christ's name, that the prayer which, of itself, would be cast as dung on our face, may have a sweet savour from him. Cover your holiness with Christ's righteousness, and make mention of it only.

Sermon XVII.

Isaiah lxiv. 6.—“And we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Here they join the punishment with the deserving cause, their uncleanness and their iniquities, and so take it upon them, and subscribe to the righteousness of God's dealing.

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We would say this much in general—*First*, Nobody needeth to quarrel God for his dealing. He will always be justified when he is judged. If the Lord deal more sharply with you than with others, you may judge there is a difference between your condition and theirs, as well as in the Lord's dispensation, even as this people do, ver. 5, 6. It is a strange saying, Lam. iii. 33. The Lord “doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” That is, as we conceive, the Lord hath not such pleasure in trampling on men, as he might do on the dust of his feet. Though he be absolute sovereign Lord of the creature, and men be but as the dust of his feet, and he may do with his own what he pleaseth, and none ask, what dost thou? yet the Lord useth not to walk according to his own absoluteness,—he hath another ordinary rule whereby he worketh, a rule of justice and equity. Especially in the punishing of men, he useth not to afflict men for his pleasure, as tyrants use to destroy their people. The Lord exerciseth his sovereignty another way, and if he be absolute and unlimited in any thing, it is in showing mercy on men. But in judgment, there may be still some reason gotten for it in the creature beside the will of God; so that, to speak with reverence of his majesty, strokes are often drawn out of his hands. He getteth so much provocation ere he strike, and holdeth off so long,—threateneth, and giveth warning thus before strokes, as if it were against his will to lay on, as if his heart were broken with us.

Secondly, If men knew themselves and their own sinfulness, they would not challenge God with unrighteousness, but put their mouth in the dust, and keep silence. And it is from this ground, that this people do not charge God. Sin is of such infinite desert and demerit, because against infinite majesty, that God cannot go beyond it in punishment; and therefore Jeremiah, when he is wading out of the deep waters of sore temptation and sad discouragement, pitcheth and casteth anchor at this solid ground, "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed," Lam. iii. 22. What! do I mean thus to charge God, as if he dealt rigorously? No, no: It is his mercy that a remnant is left,—our strokes are not pure justice, our cup is mixed, mercy is the greatest part. Whatever is behind utter destruction, whatever is below the desert of sin, which is hell and damnation, all this must be reckoned up to mercy. That I am yet alive, and so may have hope, this is mercy, "For why should a living man complain?" ver. 39. That a rod is come to awake us out of security, this is mercy, for we might have slept to death. And this wholesome counsel got Job of his friends,—to stay his murmuring and grudging at God's dispensations, Job. xi. 6. Why dost thou complain, Job? Know but thy sins, and there shall be no room for complaint. Look but unto God's secrets of wisdom, and his law, and see it is double to what you have known,—your obligation is infinitely more than you thought upon, and then how great and numberless must iniquities be? "Know, therefore," saith Zophar, "God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquities deserve." God exacteth not according to law, he craveth not according to the obligation, but bids write down fifty in his bill of affliction, when an hundred are written in our bill of deserving. So then, complain not,—it is mercy that life is saved. Are you men, and living men? Wonder at this, and wonder not that you are not wealthy, are not honourable, seeing you are sinners: all that came on Jerusalem maketh not Ezra think God out of bounds, chap. ix. 13. As we are less than the least of God's mercies, and all our goodness deserveth none of them,

so is the least sin greater than the greatest of all his judgments, and deserveth still more. Nay, if there were no more but original corruption common to men, and the filthiness that accompanieth men's good actions, yet is God righteous in punishing severely, and this people acknowledge it so. You use to inquire what sin hath such a man done, when so terrible judgments come on? Nay, inquire no more;—he is a sinner, and it is mercy there is not more, and it is strange mercy that it is not so with you also. You use to speak foolishly when God's hand is upon you: I hope I have my punishment here, I hope to suffer here for my sins. Poor souls, if God make you suffer for sins, it will be another matter. Though now your punishment be above your strength and patience, yet it is below your sin. As sin hath all evil in it, so must hell have all punishment in it. The torment of the gravel, racking with the stone, and such like, are but play to hell,—these are but drops of that ocean that you must drink out, and you shall go out of one hell into a worse; eternity is the measure of its continuance, and the degrees of itself are answerable to its duration. There is much impatience even among God's children under the rod, you vex and torment yourselves, and do well to be angry. Any piece of thwarting dispensation, that goes cross to your humour and inclination, imbitters your spirit against God and maketh you go cross to his providence; how often do your hearts say, Why am I thus? What aileth the Lord at me? But, Christians, learn to study your own deservings, and stop your mouth with that, that you may not speak against heaven. If you knew sin well, you would not wonder at judgments, you would rather wonder that you are out of hell. Know what right God hath over you, and how little use he maketh of it against you. When you repine at a little, shall it not be righteousness with God to exact more, and let you know your deserving better? He that thinketh it rigour in God to exact fifty, it is justice that God crave an hundred. If the law require forty stripes, and he give but one, will you not rather commend and proclaim his clemency, than

speak of his cruelty? Wonder that God hath spared us so long. Sin is come to great maturity. As pride is said to blossom and bud into a rod, so all sins are blossomed and budded into the very harvest, that the sickle may be put in. If we should have cities desolate, and our land consumed, if we should take up Jeremiah's lamentation, and our case be made parallel to theirs, we have then been punished less than our iniquities deserved.

There are some godless people so black mouthed as to speak against heaven when God correcteth them, they follow the counsel of Job's wife, curse God and die. If God but touch them a little in that which is dearest unto them, they kick against the pricks, and run hard heads with God. As we have known some foolish women, when their only child hath been removed, blaspheme, saying, What can God do more to me?—let him do what he can. O madness and wickedness of men! Cannot God do more when he casteth them into hell? Thou shalt acknowledge that it is more. Some have left off to seek God and turned profane, because of the Lord's correction but you should know that all that is here is but arles.³⁰⁹ If God had done his worst, you might think yourselves out of his common, nay, but he hath yet more to do, the full sum is to be paid. It were therefore wisdom yet to make supplication to thy judge.

But, *Thirdly*, Sins and iniquities have a great influence in the decay of nations and persons, and change of their outward condition, when it is joined with the wind of God's displeasure. The calamity of this people is set down in excellent terms, alluding to a tree in the fall of the leaf. We, saith he, were once in our land as a green tree busked round about with leaves and fruit; our church and state was in a flourishing condition, at least nothing was wanting to make outward splendour and glory. We were immovable in our own land, as David said in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved," so did we dream of eternity in earthly

³⁰⁹ [That is, an earnest (*arrha* Lat.).—Ed.]

Canaan. But now Lord, we are like a tree in the fall of the leaf, sin hath obstructed the influence of heaven, hath drawn away the sap of thy presence from among us, so that we did fade as a leaf before its fall, we were prepared so by our sins for judgment,—visible draughts and prognostics of it were to be read upon the condition and frame of all spirits and people, and then did our iniquities raise the storm of thy indignation, and that, like a whirlwind, hath blown the withering leaves off the tree, hath driven us out of our own land, and scattered us among strangers. Sin and uncleanness and the filthiness of our righteousness prepared us for the storm, made us light matter that could resist no judgment, made us matter combustible, and then iniquities, and sin rising up to iniquities, coming to such a degree, hath accomplished the judgment, put fire among us, made us as the birk in Yule even.³¹⁰

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First, It is familiar in the Scripture that people in a prosperous condition are compared unto a green tree flourishing, Psal.

³¹⁰ [Yule is a name that is still applied to Christmas, in the Northern parts of England as well as in Scotland. “This name was originally given to the great annual feast celebrated among the northern nations, at the time of the winter solstice in honour of the sun. Hence Odin was denominated Julvatter, or the *Father of Yule*.” (Jamieson’s Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish language.) “He praised God that he was born in such a time, as in the time of the light of the gospel—to such a place as to be king of such a kirk, the sincerest kirk of the world. The kirk of Geneva keep Pasch and *Yule*; what have they for them? They have no institution. As for our neighbour kirk in England their service is an evil sad mass in English, they want nothing of the mass but the liftings.” (Speech of King James VI, to the Central Assembly of the Church of Scotland, at Edinburgh, August 1590. Calderwood’s Hist. of the Ch. of Scot. p. 206.) What is called the birch or “birk in Yule even” was probably the *Yule clog*. On Christmas eve at no very remote period, the *Yule clog*, which was a large shapeless piece of wood, selected for the purpose, was dragged by a number of persons bearing in their hand large candles, and placed by them on the fire where it was to be burned in compliance with an ancient superstitious custom. Our author may refer to this practice or perhaps he had simply in view the old proverb, “He’s as bare as the birk at Yule.”—Henderson’s Scottish Proverbs, p. 47. Edin. 1832.—*Ed.*]

xxxvii. 35. The wicked's prospering is like a green bay tree spreading himself in power, spreading out his arms, as it were, over more lands to conquer them, over more people, to subject them. And this is often the temptation of the godly, and so doth the Lord himself witness of this people, Jer. xi. 16, "I have called thy name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit." This was once their name, though it be now changed. Now they are called a fading withering tree without both leaves and fruit. Now their place doth not so much as know them, they are removed as in a moment, Psal. xxxvii. 36. And this comparison giveth us to understand something of the nature of human glory and pomp. The fairest and most beautiful excellency in the world, the prosperity of nations and people, is but like the glory of a tree in the spring or summer. Yea, the Scripture useth to undervalue it more than so and the voice commandeth to cry, (Isa. xl. 6, 7, 8,) "All flesh is grass and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field: the one withereth, and the other fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." A tree hath some stability in it, but the flower of the field is but of a month or a week's standing, nay, of one day's standing, for in the morning the grass is green, and the sun scorseth it ere night, so that one sun's course shall see it both growing green and fading. So is the goodness, the very perfection, the quintessence, so to speak, and the abstract of creatures' perfections. Outward accommodation in a world is as fading a thing as the flower is, as smoke is, it is so vanishing that it bides but a puff of his breath to blow it to nothing. Job hath a strange expression, "Thou lookest upon me, and I am not," Job vii. 8. The Lord needeth no more but stare on the most durable creature, and look it not only out of countenance, but also look it into its first nothing—look it out of glory, out of being; and therefore you should not trust in those uncertain things, that can take wings and leave you. When you have accommodation outwardly to your mind do not build your nest in it; these leaves of prosperity will not cover you always, there is a time when they

will fall. Nations have their winter and their summer, persons have them likewise, as these must change in nature, so must they do in their lot. Heaven only is one day, one spring perpetually blossoming and bringing forth fruit. There is the tree of life that bringeth forth fruit every month, that hath both spring and harvest all the year over. Christians, sit not down under the green tree of worldly prosperity, if you do, the leaves will come down about you, the gourd you trust in may be eaten up in a night, your winter will come on so as you shall forget the former days as if they had never been. We desire you to be armed for changes; are not matters in the kingdom still going about? All things are subject to revolution and change, and every year hath its own summer and winter, so hath it pleased the Lord to set the one over against the other, that man might find nothing after him, Eccl. vii. 14. Therefore we would have you cast your accounts so as the former days of darkness may return, and the land be covered with mourning clothes.

But would you know what is the original of the creatures' vanity, what is the moth that eats up the glory and goodness of creatures' enjoyments? Here it is—sin and iniquities. It was sin that first subjected the creation to vanity, Rom. viii. 19, 20. This inferior world was to have been a durable house for an immortal soul, but sin made man mortal, and the world corruptible, and from this proceed all the tempests and disorders that seem to be in the creation. It is this still—it is sin that raiseth the storm of the Lord's wrath, which bloweth away the withered leaves of men's enjoyments. Sin drieth up all the sap and sweetness of the creature comforts,—it maketh the leaves of the tree wither, drives the sap away to the root, hindereth the influence of God's blessing to come through the veins of worldly prosperity. For what is the virtue and sap of creatures? It is even God's blessing, and therefore the bread nourisheth not, but the word and command of God, Matt. iv. 4. That is a right unto the creatures by Jesus Christ, when possession of them is entered

into by prayer and thanksgiving, for all right is sanctified by these, and it is the iniquities of men that separate between God and them, Isa. lix. 2. And when God is separated and divided from enjoyments, they must needs be empty shells and husks, no kernel in them, for God "filleth all in all," is all in all, and remove him, and you have nothing—your meat and drink is no blessing, your table is a snare, your pleasures and laughter have sadness in them. At least they are like the vanishing blaze of thorns under a pot, and therefore, when God is angry for sin, men's beauty consumeth as before the moth, Psalm xxxix. 11. When God beginneth to show himself terrible, because of sin, poor man, though of late spreading his boughs out, yet all falleth, and like ice melteth as before the sun, which just now seemed as solid as stone. O but David was sensible of this and could speak from much experience, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4. The anger of the Lord did eat him up, and dried his moisture. It might be read in his countenance,—all the world could not content him, all the showers of creatures' dropping fatness could not keep sap in him. God's displeasure scorseth so, nay, is within him, that no hiding-place is to be found in the world, no shadow of a rock among all the creatures in such a weary land. Moses and the people knew this well, Psal. xc. 5-9. The Lord's displeasure carried them away, as a flood coming down carrieth all headlong with it, it scorseth them and made them wither as grass. When God setteth iniquities before him, and that which is the soul's secret, beginneth to imprint it in visible characters on the rod, and writeth his sin on his punishment, then no wonder that days be spent in vanity and grief, since they are passed over in his wrath, Job xiii. 25. Then doth a soul loathe its dainty meat, and then doth the ox low over his fodder. Meat is laid before him, and he cannot touch it, because of the terrors of the Almighty, and that which before he would not once touch, would not enter into terms of communing with, as the Lord's threatenings, he must now sit down and eat them up as his meat, how sorrowful

soever, Job vi. 4-7.

But, *secondly*, when sin hath prepared a man for judgment, then, if iniquity be added to sin, this raiseth the storm, and kindleth the fire to consume the combustible matter. When sin hath given many blows, by preparatory corrections at the root of a man's pleasure and credit, it will at length bring on a fatal stroke that shall drive the tree to the ground. There are some preparatory judgments, and some consummatory, some wither the leaf, and some blow it quite off, some make men like the harvest, ripe to put the sickle of judgment into it. The corruption of a land, the universality of it, and formality in worshipping of God, ripeneth a land for the harvest of judgment,—exposeth it to any storm,—leaveth it open to the Lord's wrath, so that there is nothing to hold his hand and keep off the stroke, but when the wind ariseth, and iniquities have made it tempestuous, then who may stand? It will sweep away nations and people as a flood, and make their place not to know them, so that there shall be neither leaf nor branch left. There is often a great calm with great provocations, and iniquities cry, "Peace, peace!" But when once the cry of it is gone up to heaven, and hath engaged God's anger against a people or person, then it raiseth a whirlwind that taketh all away. Now, all this belongeth to you,—we told you the acknowledgment of sin was yours already, and a wonder it is, that the complaint is not ours also. Always this ought to be an admonition and example to us, on whom the ends of the world are fallen. Therefore we would declare this unto you, that sin and iniquities have judgment in the tail. Now you sit at peace, every one in his own dwelling, and spread forth your branches, but is there not much uncleanness among you? We would have you trouble your carnal peace and security, trouble your ease with thoughts of this. And we have ground to give this warning, because, if there were no more but the iniquity of our holy things—the formality of our service—the commonness of spirit in worship, this might be enough to raise the storm. You

know not for what reasons to be afraid of judgment. Look but on original corruption, look on the defilement of your religious actions, and then find ground sufficient of fading away. Though now you sit still, and seem to be so settled, as you would never be moved, you dream of an eternity here—you cleave in your hearts to your houses and lands—you stick as fast to the world, and will not part with it, as a leaf to a tree, yet behold the wind of the Lord may arise, that shall drive you away; take your soul from these things, and then whose shall they be? If you will not fear temporal judgments, yet I pray you fear eternal—fear hell. May not the Lord shake you off this tree of time, and take you out of the land of the living, to receive your portion? There is not only an universal deadness of spirit on the land, but a profane spirit,—iniquities, abominable sins, abound. Every congregation is overgrown with scandals,³¹¹ and for you, none may more justly complain. We are all unclean, sin is not in

³¹¹ [The records of the kirk session of the parish of Govan, during the incumbency of the author, after having been lost for many years, were fortunately recovered not long ago. These show the great strictness of the ecclesiastical discipline of those days. There were not fewer than twenty-two elders in the kirk session. Each of these had a ward or district assigned to him, of which it was his duty to take a particular superintendence. It was hardly possible, therefore, that any irregularity of which a parishioner was guilty could be concealed, and consequently, what is recorded in the register is to be regarded, not as a specimen, but as the gross amount of the immorality of the parish. Some may affect to ridicule the severe notice that was taken of particular instances of misconduct. But the cognizance that was taken of such things is a proof of the high tone of moral and religious feeling that prevailed at that time among the office bearers of the church. Individuals, we find, were brought before the kirk session, on account of family and domestic feuds, for quarrelling with their neighbours, for solitary instances of drunkenness, and of the use of profane language, for carrying water on the Lord's day, for sleeping in church, for resorting to taverns on the Sabbath, for calumny, and for neglecting the education of their children, &c. They who were convicted of such offences, were sometimes rebuked in private by an elder, and at other times by the minister in the presence of the eldership. It was only in the case of graver offences, the number of which was comparatively small, that a reproof

corners but men declare their sin as Sodom, sin is come to the maturity—defection and apostacy³¹² is the temper of all spirits, and, above all, the general contempt and slighting of this glorious gospel, is the iniquity of Scotland,³¹³ so that we wonder that the withered leaves yet stick to, that the storm is not yet raised, and we blown away. Now, you are like stones—your hearts as adamant, and cannot be moved with his threatening, the voice of the Lord's word doth not once move you. You sin and are not afraid, nay, but when God's anger shall join with iniquity, and the voice of his rod and displeasure roar, this shall make the mountains to tremble, the rocks to move, and how much more shall it drive away a leaf? You seem now mountains, but when God shall plead, you shall be like the chaff driven to and fro. O how easy a matter shall it be to God to blow a man out of his dwelling place! Sin hath prepared you for it, he needeth no more but blow by his Spirit, or look upon you, and you will not be. You who are now lofty and proud, and maintain yourselves against

was administered in the presence of the congregation.—*Ed.*]

³¹² [In the “Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland, agreed upon by the Commission of the General Assembly,” 1650, “Backsliding and defection from the covenants and our solemn vows and engagements,” is specified (p. 46) to be “one of the greatest and most comprehensive and provoking sins in the land.” *Printed in the year 1653.*—*Ed.*]

³¹³ [This is the language of a man who did not use “at any time flattering words,” or utter to his people “smooth things.” From what he says here, however, and in some other sermons, and from corresponding evidence which might be adduced, we are forced to conclude that the well-known description which Kirkton has given of the state of religion in Scotland in those days, (*Hist. of Ch. of Scot.* pp. 48, 54, 64) must be too highly coloured. The presence of a large military force and a state of civil warfare could not but be prejudicial, in various ways, to the religion and morality of a country. I am perfectly aware that the authority of Lord Clarendon, Bishop Burnet, Milton, and others, may be brought forward to prove that the parliamentary soldiers were kept under the strictest discipline, and were remarkable for their grave deportment. But I know likewise that the characters of not a few of those soldiers are seriously affected by the offensive details of the ecclesiastical records of the parish with which Binning was connected.—*Ed.*]

the word, when you come to reckon with God, and he entereth into judgment, you shall not stand—you will consume as before the moth; your hearts will fail you—“who may abide the day of his coming?” It will be so terrible, and so much the more terrible, that you never dreamed of it. If the example of this people will not move you, do but cast your eyes on Ireland,³¹⁴ who all do fade as a leaf, and their iniquities have taken them away out of their own land. Shall not the seeing of the eye, nor the hearing of the ear teach you? What security do you promise to yourselves? Have not we sinned as much as they? Were not they his people as well as we? Certainly, since God waiteth longer on you, the stroke must be the greater: provoked patience must turn fury. If you would then prevent this people's complaint, go about such a serious acknowledgment of your sins. “Search your ways, and turn again to the Lord.” And let not every man sit down in a general notion of sin, but unbowel it until you see uncleanness, go up to the fountain head, original corruption, go down to all the streams, even the iniquity of holy things. Let every man be particular in the search of his own provocations personal, and every one be public in the general sins of the land, that you may confess out of knowledge and sense, “We are all unclean,” &c.

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³¹⁴ [See Note, p. 368.—*Ed.*]

Sermon XVIII.

Isaiah lxiv. 7.—“And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee,” &c.

They go on in the confession of their sins. Many a man hath soon done with that a general notion of sin is the highest advancement in repentance that many attain to. You may see here sin and judgment mixed in thorough other³¹⁵ in their complaint. They do not so fix their eyes upon their desolate estate of captivity, as to forget their provocations. Many a man would spend more affection, and be more pathetic in the expression of his misery, when it is pungent, nor he can do when he speaketh of his sins. We would observe, from the nature of this confession, something to be a pattern of your repentance. And it is this. When the Spirit convinceth, and men are serious in repentance, then the soul is more searching, more universal, more particular in acknowledgment of sins. These are characters of the Spirit's work.

First, The Spirit discovereth unto men, not only sin, but the loathsomeness of sin, its heinous nature, how offensive it is to God's holy eye. Many of you know abundance of evil deeds, and call them sins, but you have never taken up sin's ugly face, never seen it in the glass of the holy law, uncleanness itself, because you do not abhor yourselves. Poor and low thoughts of God make mean and shallow thoughts of sin. You should be as Job, vile, chap. xl. 4, and abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, chap. xlii. 6. As God's holiness grew great in your eyes, sins uncleanness would grow proportionably, Isa. vi. 3, 5. And here your repentance halteth in the very entry.

But, *secondly*, The Spirit discovereth not only the uncleanness of men's natures, and leadeth them up to original corruption,

³¹⁵ [Or together.—*Ed.*]

but the Spirit also leadeth men along all the streams, not only those that break out, but those which go under ground, and have a more secret and subtile conveyance. It concludeth not only open breaches of the command under filthiness, but also all a man's own righteousness, though never so refined, it concludeth it also a defiled garment, so that the soul can look no where but see sin and uncleanness in its ornaments and duties. And thus it appeareth before God without such a covering, openeth up its soul, hideth not sin with the covering of duties, but seeth a necessity of another covering for all. Now, therefore, let the most part of you conclude, that you have never yet gotten your eyes open to see sin or confess it, because when you sit down to count your sins, there are many things that you call not sin,—you use not to reckon your praying and repentance among sins. Nay, because you have so much confidence in your repentance and confession, you have never repented. You must see a necessity of a covering of Christ's righteousness above all, faith in Jesus must cover repentance and itself both, with the glorious object of it. But, alas! how soon are many at an end of confession! some particular gross actions may come in remembrance, but no more. Sum up all your confessions, they have never yet pitched on the thousandth part of your guiltiness, no, not in kinds, let be in number.

But, *thirdly*, The spirit convinceth spiritually and particularly both, it convinceth of spiritual sins, as we last said, of the iniquity of holy things, and especially of the most substantial duties, faith and prayer, John xvi. 8, 9. There are not many of you have come this length, to see your want of prayer. No, your own words do witness against you, for you use to say, I pray day and night, I believe in God with all my heart. Now therefore, out of your own mouth shall you be condemned. When the Spirit convinceth you of sin, you will see no faith, no prayer at the first opening of the eyes. But I add, there is no true confession but it is particular: the Spirit useth not to bewilder men's spirits in a general notion only, [457]

and a wide field of unknown sins. And such are many of your convictions. You mourn for sin, as you say, and yet you cannot condescend on a particular that burdeneth your conscience; you grant you have many sins, but sit down to count them, and there is a short count of them. Now, do you not reflect back upon former humiliations in public, and former acknowledgments of sins in private? Do you not yet return upon your own hearts to lay home this sad challenge, I have never repented, I do not yet repent? Must not all your solemn approaches be iniquity and abomination, while your souls are not afflicted for sin, while you can see so few sins? The fasting days of Scotland will be numbered in the roll of the greatest provocations, because there is no real and spiritual conviction of sin among us, custom hath now taken away the solemnity, and there remaineth nothing but the very name. Is this the fast that the Lord chooseth? No, believe it, this shall add to your provocation, and rather hasten lingering judgment than keep it off. We would beseech you this day, pray for pardon of former abused fasts. If you had no more to mourn for, this might spend the day and our spirits both, and exhaust all our present supplications—even the wall of partition that stands between God and Scotland, which all our former solemn humiliations hath built up, a great deal higher than other sins could reach.

“There is none that calleth upon thy name.” Did not this people make many prayers (Isa. i. 15), before the captivity? And did they not cry, which noteth some fervency in it, and fast, a little before it in Jeremiah's time, (chap. xi. 11, and xiv. 12,) and in the time of it, Ezek. vii. 18, Mic. iii. 4, Zech. vii. 3? How, then, is it that the prophet, now on the watch tower, looking round about him to take up the people's condition, and being led by the Spirit so far as to the case of the captives in Babel, can find no prayer, no calling? And was not Daniel so too? Dan. ix. 13. Lo, then, here is the construction that the Spirit of God putteth on many prayers and fastings in a land, “There is none calleth

on thy name," there is none that prayeth faithfully and fervently, few to count upon that prayeth any. It may be there are many public prayers, but who prayeth in secret, and mourneth to God alone? There are many prayers, but the inscription is, "To the unknown God," to a nameless God; your praying is not a calling on his name, as a known God and revealed in the word.

This, then, we would say unto you, that there may be many prayers in your account, and none in God's. There are many prayers of men that God counteth no more of than the howling of a dog.

First, The cry of men's practices is often louder than their prayers, and goeth up to heaven, that the cry of prayer cannot be heard. When men's conversation is flat contrary to their supplications, supplication is no calling on his name, but charming rather. Sodom's abominations had a cry up to God, Gen. xviii. 21. So Abel's blood had a cry for vengeance, which Cain's prayers could not outcry. Thus the Lord would not hear many prayers, Isa. i. 15, because hands and practices were polluted. You that know no worship of God, but in such a solemn duty, your religion is summed up and confined within the limits of temple worship, family exercise, and prayer, certainly the rest of your conversation must speak more. God will not hear but such as worship him and do his will, John iv. 23. Your prayer is a dark parable, if your conversation expone³¹⁶ it not. This I speak for this end, to put many of you out of your false ground of confidence. You have nothing but your prayers to trust unto, and for your conversation, you never go about it effectually to reform it, but go on in that which you pray against. We declare unto you the truth, your prayers are abomination, Prov. xxviii. 9. The wicked may have prayers, and therefore think not to please God and flatter him with your mouths, when your conversation is rebellion. Since you hear not him in his commands, God will

³¹⁶ [That is, explain.—*Ed.*]

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not hear you in your petitions, Prov. i. 24, 28. You stopped your ear at his reproof, God will stop his ear at your request. If you will go to heaven by your own righteousness, I pray you follow more after it, make the garment more to cover your nakedness: the skirt of a duty is not sufficient.

Secondly, When iniquity is regarded in the heart, and idols set up in God's place, God will not own such a worship, but sendeth a man to the idols he serveth, Psal. lxvi. 18; Ezek. xiv. 9, 4. Do you not often pray to God against a corruption, when your heart cleaveth unto it, and what your mouth saith, your heart contradicteth? Light and conscience often extort a confession of beloved sins, while the temper of the heart hath this language, Lord, grant not my request. And therefore, if there be a prayer for pardon of guilt, yet there is no thorough resolution to quit the sin; and as long as a soul is not resolved to quit the sin, there can be no ingenuous confession of it, and no prayer for removing the guilt can be heard. You cannot employ Christ in his office of mediatorship as a Priest to intercede and offer sacrifice for sin, unless you as sincerely employ him as a Sanctifier and Redeemer; and therefore prayer that separateth Christ's offices, and calleth not on whole Christ, calleth not on his name, for his name is Lord Jesus Christ. How can the Lord be inquired of by such a one who cometh to mock him, putteth up an idol in the heart, and yet prayeth against it, or some other sin, while he is not resolved to quit it? Shall God be resolute to help, when we are not earnest in seeking it? No wonder God answer you according to the idol; no wonder you be given up to serve idols, and your sin grow upon you as a plague for your hypocrisy. When you engage your heart too much to any creature, and come to pray and inquire of the Lord in your necessity, shall it not be righteousness with him, to send you to your god? "When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee," Isa. lvii. 13. O man, cry unto thy bosom-idol, and let it help thee, since thou trustest to it, and spendest thy heart upon it! Deut. xxxii. 37, 38, "Where

is the God that drank the wine of your offerings, and did eat the fat of your sacrifices?" Where is the creature that you have made your heart an altar to, to send up the flames of your choicest thoughts and affections to it? Let this rise up, and help you now, saith the Lord. Therefore we exhort you, if you would have your prayers a delight, be upright in the thing you seek, and see that you entertain no known sin, give it no heart-allowance.

Thirdly, There are many prayers not heard, not known, because the mouth out-crieth the heart. It is the sacrifice of the contrite heart that God despiseth not. The prayers of this people were such, (Isa. xxix. 13,)—they drew near with the mouth, but the heart was far away. It is worship in spirit and truth that God loveth, John iv. 23. Since prayer is a communion of God with the creature, a meeting of one with God, and speaking face to face, God, who is a Spirit and immortal, must have a spirit to meet with, a soul to speak to him. Now, do you not find your hearts gadding abroad even in duty? Is it not most about your corns and lands in the time of solemn worship? Therefore God getteth no more but a carcase to keep communion with: he may have as much fellowship with the stones of the wall, and timber of the house, as he can have with your ears and mouths, while you remove your hearts to attend other things. And I would say more,—if your mind be present, yet your heart is gone; sometimes, yea often, both are gone abroad. Sometimes the mind and thought stayeth, but the affection and heart is not with it, and so the mind's residence is not constant. Your thought may come in as a wayfaring man, but tarrieth not all night, dwelleth not. Now speak to it, even Christians, may not your prayers often have a contrary interpretation to what they pretend? You pray so coldrifely³¹⁷ and formally, as God will interpret, you have no mind to it: we ask as we seemed indifferent whether our petition be granted or not. Should the Lord be affected with your

³¹⁷ [Coldly or indifferently.—*Ed.*]

petitions, when you yourselves are not affected much? Should his bowels of zeal sound within him, when yours are silent? It is fervent prayer availeth much, James v. 16. A heart sent out with the petition, and gone up to heaven, cannot but bring back an answer. If prayer carry not the seal of the heart and soul in it, God cannot own it, or send it back with his seal of acceptation.

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Fourthly, Many prayers are not calling on God's name; and no wonder that when people pray, yet the Spirit says, "None calleth on thy name;" for prayer is made, as to an unknown God, and God is not taken up according to his "name," which are his glorious attributes, whereby he manifesteth himself in his word. To call on God's name, is so to pray to God as to take him up as he hath revealed himself. And what is the Lord's name? Hear himself speak to Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 19, and xxxiv. 6, 7, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands: forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Now, to call on this name is for the soul, in prayer, to have a suitable stamp on it: every attribute of God taking deep impression in the heart, and so God's name to be written on the very petitions; and shortly, we may say, the spirit should have the impression of God's greatness and majesty, of his goodness and mercy, of his terribleness and justice. This is the order in which God proclaimeth his name. In the entry, the supplicant should behold the glorious sovereignty and infinite distance between God and the creature, that he may have the stamp of reverence and abasement upon his spirit, and may speak out of the dust, as it becometh the dust of the balance and footstool to do to him who sitteth on the circle of the heaven as his throne. And this I must say, there is little religion and godliness among us, because every man is ignorant of God. Even God's children do more study themselves, and their condition, than God's greatness and absoluteness. Who searches God's infiniteness in his word and works till he behold a wonder, and be drowned in a mystery?

O but the saints of old did take up God at a greater distance from the creatures; they waded far into this boundless ocean of God's Majesty, till they were over head and ears, and were forced to cry out, "Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" All these are but parts of him, his back-parts. There is more real divinity and knowledge of God in one of Job's friends' discourses, one of David's prayers, than now in twenty sermons of gracious men, or many prayers or conferences of saints. But withal you must study his goodness and mercy, and this maketh up the most part of his name. The definition of God hath most of this, so that it may be said truly, that mercy is his delight. Mercy, as it were, swelleth over the rest: God were not accessible, unless mercy did temper it. Behold then greatness to humble, and goodness to make bold, that you may have access. As greatness should leave the stamp of reverence on your petitions, so should mercy and goodness imprint them with faith and confidence; and that the rather, because as Christ is said to be the Father's face, and the image of his person, (2 Cor. iv. 6. and Heb. i. 3,) so may he be called the Father's name, and so doth God himself call him, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, The angel that went before them in the wilderness, whose voice they ought to obey, his "name is in him;" and this angel is Christ Jesus, Acts vii. 37, 38. So then Christ Jesus is God's name. God, as he revealeth himself in the word, is "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. And therefore, Christians, you ought to pray always in Christ's name, and this is to call on his name. Not only encourage yourselves to come to God, because of a mediator, because he is God in Christ, but also offer up all your prayers in the name of Jesus, that his name called on them may sanctify them, otherwise your affectionate prayers cannot be acceptable to God, for he loveth nothing but what cometh through the Son. Prayer must have an evil savour, when it is not put in the golden censer that this angel hath to offer up incense with the prayers of the saints. And likewise you would know God's justice and wrath, that you may

serve in fear and trembling: and when trembling is joined with the rejoicing of faith, this is acceptable service. You ought to fear to offend his holiness, while you are before him. Let God's terribleness have a deep impression on your spirit, both to make sin bitter, and to make mercy more sweet. Thus should prayer ascend with the seal of God's attributes, and then it is a calling on his name. Now, is there any calling on his name among us? Who maketh it his study to take up God in his glorious names? Therefore you call not on a known God, and cannot name him. Now, all of you take this rule to judge your prayers by. Think you not that you make many prayers? You both think it and say it, as you use to say, I pray both day and night. Nay, but count after this rule, and there will be found few prayers in Scotland, albeit you reckon up both private and public. Once scrape out of the count the prayers of the profane and scandalous, whose practice defileth their prayers; and again, blot out the prayers of men's tongues and mouths when hearts are absent, and again, set aside the formal, *dwyning*,³¹⁸ *coldrife*, indifferent supplications of saints, and the prayers that carry no seal of God's name and attributes on them, prayers made to an unknown God, and will you find many behind? No, certainly,—any of you may take up the complaint in behalf of the land, “There is none that calleth on thy name,” or few to count upon. You may say so of yourselves, if you judge thus,—I have almost never prayed, God hath never heard my voice; and you may say so of the land. This would be a well-spent day, if this were but our exercise, to find out the sins of our duties in former humiliations; if the Spirit did so convince you as to blot out of the roll of fasts all the former. If you come this length, as to be convinced solidly that you have never yet prayed and mourned for sin,—I have lived thus long, and been babbling all this while, I have never once spoken to God, but worshipped I know not what, fancied a God like myself,

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³¹⁸ [Languishing.—*Ed.*]

that would be as soon pleased with me as I was with myself,—if the Lord wrought thus on your hearts, to put you off your own righteousness, you should have more advantage in this, than in all your sabbaths and fasts hitherto.

Although the Lord's hand be upon them, and they “fade as a leaf,” and are driven into another land, yet none calleth on his name. This maketh the complaint more lamentable, and no doubt is looked upon as a dreadful sign and token of God's displeasure, and of sorer strokes. Daniel, an eye witness, confirmeth this foretold truth, chap. ix. 13, “All this is come upon us, yet have we not made our prayers to the Lord our God.” Well may the Lord make a supposition and doubt of it, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. After so many plagues are come on, seven added to seven, and again seven times more, and yet they will not be humbled, and when it is even at the door next to utter destruction and consumption, he addeth, “If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they take with the punishment of sin,” &c. We need ask no reason of this, for “bray a fool in a mortar, his folly will not depart from him,” Prov. xxvii. 22. Poor foolish man is a foolish man, folly is born with him, folly is his name, and so is he. He hath not so much wisdom as to “hear the voice of the rod, and him that appointeth it.” Poor Ephraim is an undaunted heifer. Nature is a “bullock unaccustomed with the yoke,” and so it is chastised more and more, Jer. xxxi. 18. Man is like an untamed beast, as the horse, or as the mule. Threatenings will not do it, “God speaketh once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not,” Job xxxiii. 14. God instructeth by the word, and men receive no instruction; all the warnings to flee from the wrath to come are as so many tales to make children afraid. He saith in his heart, “I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart.” Since, therefore, he will not incline his ear to the word, God sendeth his rod to seal the word, and yet men are so wild that they fight with God's rods, and will not submit to him; a yoke must be put on Ephraim, a bridle in men's mouth, Psal. xxxii. 9. They

will put God to more pains than speaking, and it shall cost them more pain; for he that will not be drawn with the cords of a man, love and entreaties, must be drawn with the cords of a beast, and yoked in a heavy yoke. Yet men are unruly, and the yoke groweth the heavier and sorer that they strive to shake it off. An uncircumcised heart cannot be humbled,—“How can the leopard change his spots? no more can my people return to me,” Jer. xiii. 23. It is strange that a people so afflicted will not take with the punishment of their iniquity, but will say in their heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? But here it is, how can an uncircumcised heart be humbled? God may beat on men with rods as on a dog, but he will run away from him still the more, Isa. ix. 13. Nay, it may be there will be more stirring after God, and more awaking by the first stroke of affliction, than when they are continued and multiplied. The uncouthness of rods may affect people something, but when his hand lieth on but a little, custom breedeth hardness, and more and more alienateth spirits from him.

Now we need no more to seal this truth, but our own experience. I think never people might speak more sensibly of it. It hath been the manner of the Lord's dealing with us, to use fair means to gain us, to threaten before he laid on, to give a proclamation before his stroke, and yet it hath been our manner from our youth up to harden ourselves against him, and go on in our own way. Therefore hath the Lord, after long patience, laid on sad strokes, and smitten us, yet have we not turned to him. It may be, when the chastisement was fresh and green, some poured out a prayer, and in trouble visited God, (Isa. xxvi. 16,) but the body of the land hath not known him that smote them, and never ran into their hiding place, but the temptation of the time, like a flood, hath carried them away with it. And for the Lord's children, how soon doth the custom of a rod eat out the sense of it, and prayer doth not grow proportionably to the Lord's rods. The Lord hath expected that some might stand in the gap and intercede, yet few

or none called on his name. General corrections of the land hath made general apostacy from God, not a turning in to God; so that we may say, we never entered a furnace, but we have come out with more dross, contracted dross in the fire. Men's zeal and tenderness hath been burnt up, reprobate silver may God call us. We have had so much experience of the unprofitableness of former afflictions, that we know not what the Lord shall do with us. We think it may be the Lord's complaint of Scotland, "Why should you be afflicted any more? you will revolt more and more," Isa. i. 5. What needeth another rod? You are now all secure, it is true, because you are not stricken; nay, but what needeth a rod? For it cannot awake you,—all the fruit of it would be, not to purge away sin, but to increase it. General judgments will prove general temptations, and will alienate you more from me, and make you curse God and the covenant. And indeed, the truth is, we know not what outward dispensation can fall on that can affect this generation, we know not what the Lord can have behind that can work on us. Judgment hath had as much terror, mercies as much sweetness, and as much of God in the one and the other, as readily hath been since the beginning of the world. Only this we know, all things are possible to him which are impossible to us, and if the Spirit work to sanctify the rod, a more gentle rod shall work more effectually; his word shall do as much as his rod.

The case we are now into is just this—"None calleth on thee." It is a terrible one, whether our condition be good or bad outwardly. Our peace hath put us asleep, and the word cannot put men to prayers. Now, the Lord hath begun to threaten, as you have been still in fear of new troubles, and a revolution of affairs again, yet I challenge your own consciences, and appeal to them,—whom hath the word prevailed with to put to prayer? Whom hath the rumour of approaching trouble put to their prayers? Whose spirit hath been affected with God's frowning on the land? And this yet more aggravateth your laziness, in the time that God doth

show terrible things to his people in Ireland, giveth them a cup of wormwood, and to drink the wine of astonishment, are not you yet at ease? When your brethren and fellow-saints are scattered amongst you as strangers,³¹⁹ yet your hearts bleed not.

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Well, behold the end of it,—your case is a sad prognostic of the Lord's hiding his face and consuming us; nay, it is a sure token that his face is hid already. When Job's friends would aggravate his misery, they sum it up in this, “thou restrainest prayer from God.” It is more wrath to be kept from much praying, not to be scattered, from your own houses. Therefore, if you would have the cloud of God's anger, that covereth the land with blackness, go over you, and pour out itself on others; if you would prevent the rod, hearken to the word, and stir up yourselves to much prayer, that you may be called his remembrancers. O how long shall prayer be banished this kingdom! The Lord's controversy must be great with us, for since the days of our first love there

staid in the country, though they could not exercise their ministry orderly as formerly, and though their stipends were sequestered, yet they, changing their apparel to the habit of countrymen, travelled in their own parishes frequently, and sometimes in other places, taking what opportunities they could to preach in the fields, or in barns and glens, and were seldom in their own houses. They persuaded the people to constancy in the received doctrines, in opposition to the wild heresies which were then spreading, and reminding them of their duty to their lawful magistrates, the king and parliament, in opposition to the usurpation of the times, and in their public prayers always mentioning the lawful magistrate. This continued throughout the summer of 1651, at which time there was diligent search made anew for them. Some were again taken, others fled, and those who were taken were imprisoned first, for a time, in Carrickfergus, in lodgings where they quartered; and thereafter, Colonel Venables not gaining any ground upon them, they were sent to Scotland.” Adair's MS. apud Dr. Reid's Hist. vol. ii. p. 246-248. See also a narrative of the sufferings of the Irish Presbyterians, for their religion and loyalty, in the “Sample of Jet-Black Calumny,” p. 214.—*Ed.*

³¹⁹ [“Upon Sunday, the 27th of February [1642], a declaration was read out of the old town pulpit [Aberdeen] by our minister, Mr William Strahan, showing the state of the Protestants in Ireland, and how their wives and bairns were miserably banished, and forced to flee into the west parts of Scotland for

has been great decay of the spirit of prayer. The children of God should be so much in it, as they might be one with it. David was so much in prayer, as he in a manner defined himself by it, Psal. cix. 4, "I give myself unto prayer." In the original, there is no more but "I prayer." I was all prayer. It was my work, my element, my affection, my action. Nay, to speak the truth, it is the decay of prayer that hath made all this defection in the land. Would you know the original of many a public man's apostacy and backsliding in the cause of God, what maketh them so soon forget their solemn engagements, and grow particular, seeking their own things, untender in seeking the things of God?—would you trace back the desertion up to the fountain-head? Then come and see. Look upon such a man's walking with God in private, such a man's praying, and you shall find matters have been first wrong there. Alienation and estrangement from God himself, in immediate duties and secret approaches, hath made men's affections cool to his interest in public duties. And believe it, the reason why so few great men or none are so cordial, constant, and thorough in God's matters is this,—they pray not in secret; they

refuge, and the land not able to sustain them. It was found expedient that ilk parish within the kingdom should receive a collection of ilk man's charity for their help and support, whereupon was collected of this poor parish fourscore pounds." (Spalding's "History of the Troubles in Scotland," vol. i. p. 34. Aberdeen, 1792.) "As a body, the presbyterians [in Ireland] suffered less by the ravages of the rebellion than any other class. The more influential of their ministers, and the principal part of their gentry, had previously retired to Scotland to escape the tyranny of Strafford and the severities of the bishops and were thus providentially preserved." (Dr. Reid's "History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland," vol. i, p. 339.) After the execution of Charles I, an oath called the *Engagement*, was framed by the English parliament, requiring all persons to be "faithful to the commonwealth of England as now established, without a king or house of lords." The Irish ministers refused to take this oath. The republicans were irritated by this refusal, and by the loyalty of the ministers, who publicly preached against them. They therefore imprisoned some of the ministers, while others fled to the woods, and some to Scotland. At length, at a council of war held at Carrickfergus in March, 1651, a formal act of banishment from the kingdom was passed against them. "Those that

come to parliament or council where public matters concerning the honour of God are to be debated, as any statesmen of Venice would come to the senate. They have no dependence on God to be guided in these matters; they are much in public duties, but little in secret with God. Believe it, any man's private walking with God shall be read upon his public carriage, whether he be minister or ruler.

There is yet another thing we would have you consider, to endear this duty unto you, and bind upon your consciences an absolute necessity of being much in it, and it is this. Prayer and calling on his name is often put for all immediate worship of God, especially the more substantial and moral part of service. This people was much in ceremonials, and they made these their righteousness; nay, but there was little secret conversing with God, walking humbly with him, loving him, believing in him. Well, then, prayer is, as it were, a compend and sum of all duties; it contains in it, faith, love, repentance; all these should breathe out in prayer. In a word, if we say to you, be much in prayer, we have said all, and it is more than all the rest, because it is a more near and immediate approach to God, having more solid religion in it. If you be lively in this, you are thriving Christians; and if you wither here, all must decay, for prayer sappeth and watereth all other duties with the influence of heaven.

“That stirreth up himself to take hold on thee.” This expreseth more of their condition under the rod, and while God was threatening to depart and leave them. None took so much notice of it, as to awake out of his dream, to take a fast hold of God. It was but like the grip a man taketh in his slumbering, that he soon quitteth in his sleep; none awaketh himself, as a bird stirreth up itself with its wings to flight; none do so spread out their sails to meet the wind. This importeth a great security and negligence, a careless stupidity. To take hold, to grip strongly and violently, importeth both faith acted on God, and communion with God; so that the sense is, nobody careth whither thou go,—there is none

that stirreth up himself to take violent hold of thee. Men lying loose in their interest, and indifferent in the one thing necessary, do not strongly grip to it. Nobody keepeth thee by prayer and intercession; so that there is no diligence added to diligence, there is no stirring up of ourselves in security. [463]

First, When the Lord seemeth to withdraw, and when he is angry, it is our duty to take hold the more on him; and not only to act faith, and call on him by prayer, but to add to ordinary diligence,—it should be extraordinary.

I. Then, I say, when the Lord is withdrawing and seemeth angry, we ought not to withdraw from him by unbelief, but to draw near, and take hold on him. And the Lord giveth a reason of this himself, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, “because fury is not in me.” It is but a moment's anger, it is not hatred of your persons but sins, it is not fury that hath no discretion in it, no difference between a friend and an enemy; it is but at least a father's anger, that is not for destruction but correction. The Lord is not implacable. Come to him and win him,—“Let him take hold of me, and let him make peace with me, if he will make peace.” He is a God whose compassions fail not; and so he is never so angry, but there is room left for manifestation of mercy on those that come to him. God's anger is not an humour and passion as ours is, he can take the poor child in his arms, admit it into his bosom, when outward dispensations frown. Men's anger is like the sons of Belial, briers and thorns, that none may come near to, lest they be hurt; but God angry, is accessible, because his anger is still tempered and mixed with clemency and mercy; and that mixture of mercy is so great and so predominant in all his dispensations here, that they being rightly understood, might rather invite to come, than scare from it. There is more mercy to welcome, than anger to drive away. Look upon the very end and purpose of God's hiding himself, and withdrawing,—it is this; that we may come and seek him early, Hosea v. 15. When God is angry, mercy and compassion principleth it, for anger is sent out to

bring in wanderers. His anger is not humour, but resolute and deliberate, walketh upon good grounds, because David in his prosperity missed not God. When all things went according to his mind, then he let God of where he will; therefore, the Lord in mercy must hide his own heart with a frowning countenance, and cover himself with a cloud, that David may be troubled, and so take hold on God, Psalm xxx. 7, 8. Since, then, this is God's purpose, that you may come nearer to him, and since he goeth away that you may pursue; certainly he will never so run away as you may not find him out, nor will he run farther nor he strengtheneth thee to pursue him; thus, Psalm lxiii. 8, God was flying and David pursuing; nay, but the flyer giveth legs to the pursuer, he upholdeth him, as it were against himself: so did the angel strengthen Jacob to overcome himself. Now, shall it not be pleasant to God, that you lay hold on him as your own, even when he seemeth to be clothed with vengeance, seeing he changeth his outward countenance for this very end? He seemeth to go, that you may hold; because when you think he stayeth, you hold not; as the child, while the nurse is near, will look about it, and take hold of any thing; but when she withdraweth, the child cleaveth the faster to her.

But, II. We ought to stir up ourselves more now than any other time: times of God's withdrawing calleth for extraordinary and doubled approaches. So Hos. v. 15, "They will seek me early." And therefore the Lord's children in Scripture have made great advantage of such dispensations. The truth is, as long as we are well dealt with, security creepeth on, and religion is but in a decaying condition. Duties are done through our sleep; we are not as men awaking and knowing what we do, and whither we go. But when the Lord beginneth to trouble us, and hides his face, then it is time to awake out of sleep, before all be gone: and there ought to be, 1. More diligence in duties and approaching to God, because your case furnisheth more matter of supplication; and as matter of supplication groweth, prayer should grow. If necessity

grow, and the cry be not according to necessity, it is ominous. And therefore David useth to make his cry go up according to his trouble. In a prosperous condition, though every thing might call a tender-hearted loving Christian to some nearness to God; yet ordinarily, if necessity press not, prayer languisheth and groweth formal. Sense of need putteth an edge on supplication, whereas prosperity blunteth it. The heart missing nothing, cannot go above sublunary things; but let it not have its will here, and the need of heaven will be the greater. Now I say, if you sit so many calls, both from a command, and from your own necessities, you do so much the more sin. Affliction will make even a hypocrite seek him, and pour out a prayer and visit him, Psalm lxxviii. and Isa. xxvi. And if you do not take advantage of all these pressures, you must be so much the more guilty; and therefore God, as it were, wondereth at their obstinacy, "They return not to him that smiteth them!" All this is come upon us, yet have we not prayed. And, 2. It is sent for that end, that you may be more serious; and therefore you ought so much the more to awake, to lay hold on him. This is the way the Lord useth with his secure and wandering children, Psalm cxix. 67. For the Lord findeth us often gripping too strongly to a present world, and taking it in our arms, as if we were never to part with it. Men's souls cleave to outward accommodations; therefore the Lord useth to part us and our idol, that we may take hold of him the faster. It is union with himself that is our felicity, and it is that which God most endeavoureth. When he removeth beloved jewels, it is because they were a stumbling-block, and divorced the soul from God: when he seemeth to withdraw himself his going proclaimeth so much, oh! follow, or perish.

III. It is a very dangerous thing when he withdraweth and you follow not, when he is angry and you care not, do not fly in to make peace with him. Certainly his anger must wax hotter, and desertion will become a spiritual plague; rods must be tempered with much bitterness. What mixture of mercy can be in such a

dispensation, where the fruit of it is to harden? But if the Lord's hardest dealing wrought you to more nearness and communion with himself; then certainly you have a fair advantage against the present trouble, and you have your cup mixed. You shall at length bless God for such dispensations; they may be reckoned for good to you.

Next, there ought to be more exercise of faith, and laying hold of the grounds of consolation in God in such a time. 1. For as difficulties grow, faith should fortify itself against them so much the more. The greater the storm be, it should fly the more into the chambers. Faith in the time of a calm day getteth no trial; faith bulketh much³²⁰ because it hath not much to do. But except there be some fresh and new supplies, it cannot hold out in a temptation. But it is a singular proof of a noble and divine faith,—that it can lay hold on him and keep him when he would go,—that can challenge kindness on a miskenning Jesus,³²¹ —that can stand on the ground of the promises when there is not a foot-breadth of a dispensation to build on. While all things go with you ye have no difficulty to maintain your faith; nay, but when the Lord seemeth to look angry, then awake and gather strength, and take hold on his strength. Look what is in your condition or his dispensation, what is good or ominous, then take hold on the other hand on him, and look what is in him to answer it, and swallow it up. Ye ought to be well acquainted with the grounds of consolation that are in God, in the worst case, and then ye might lay hold on him though he seemed a consuming fire. It is then a time that calleth most for securing your interest in him, a time when there is no external advantage to beguile you, a time when the only happiness is to be one with God. Therefore the man who, in such calamities and judgments, is not awakened to put his eternal estate out of question, he is in a dangerous case. For, do

³²⁰ [What is perhaps meant is, it *swelleth* much.—*Ed.*]

³²¹ [That is, *that can lay claim to the favour of his Saviour even when his Saviour turns away his face from him.*—*Ed.*]

not most part drive over their days, and have no assurance of salvation, they dare not say either *pro* or *contra*. It may be, and it may not be. And this is the length that the most part come,—a negative peace; no positive confidence; no clear concluding, on sure grounds, an interest. Always ye are most called to this, when God afflicteth the land or you: if ye do not then make peace it is most dangerous. 2. The Lord loveth faith in a difficulty best,—it is the singlest and the cleanliest, it is that which most honoureth him, and glorifieth his truth and faithfulness, and sufficiency and mercy; for then it is most purely elevated above creatures, and pitcheth most on God; and therefore bringeth men to this, “No help for my soul, but thou art my portion.” And this commendeth God most when he is set alone. Prosperity bringeth him down among creatures, and secure faith maketh little distinction; but awakening faith grippeth strongly and singly, putteth God alone.

Secondly, Oftentimes, when God is departing, none stirreth up himself to lay hold on him. Although there may be praying and doing of many duties, yet there is nothing beyond ordinary. [465] The varieties and accessions of new grounds of supplications doth neither make greater frequency nor more fervency. This our experience may clear unto us both in duties and faith.

I. There is very little diligence in seeking of God in the way and means appointed, even when God seemeth to bid farewell to the land, and go away. Nobody cometh in as an intercessor. Men keep on their old way of praying, and never add to it, come what like. Who is it that riseth above his ordinary, as the tide of God's dispensation is? There ought to be such an impression made by the changes of God's countenance as might be read on the duties of his people. There should be such a distance between your ordinary and such times as between a sleeping man and a waking man, that whatever your attainment of access to God be, ye might stir up and go beyond it according as matters call. Will God count your public fasts a performance of this duty? Alas, we fast sleeping, and none stirreth up himself to these things!

Is there any difference betwixt your solemn humiliation and another Sabbath? And is there any difference between a Sabbath and a week-day, save the external duty? Is not this palpably our case? Is there any wakening among us? No, security is both the universal disease and complaint; and it is become an incurable disease since it became a complaint. Doth any of you pray more in private than he used? Or what edge is on your prayers? Alas! the Lord will get good leave to go from us; it feareth me that we would give Christ a testimonial to go over seas. Hold him, hold him! Nay, the multitude would be gladly quit of him,—they cannot abide his yoke, his work is a burden, his word is a torment, his discipline is bands and cords; and what heart can ye then have to keep Christ? What violence can ye offer to him to hold him still? All your entreaties may be fair compliments, but they would never rend his garment.

II. There is no up-stirring to faith among us, and laying hold on Jesus Christ, albeit all his dispensations warn us that it is now high time. There are not many who are about this point, effectually to stir up their faith or to secure their interest. Think ye that conjectures will carry you through difficulties? The multitude think they believe much, but any temptation proveth their mistake. The most part of Scotland would deny God and his Son Jesus Christ, if they were put to it. Always it is a time ye would not lie out from your stronghold,—faith only uniteth you to Christ, and if ye would be kept in any trial, stir up faith.

Thirdly, Prayer and faith, diligence and laying hold on God, must go together and help one another. Not calling on his name, and not laying hold on him go together, and have influence one upon another.

I. Faith hath influence on prayer. Laying hold on God in Christ will make right calling on his name, it learneth men how to call God, to call him Abba, Father. Faith useth to vent itself in prayer. I say, much consideration of God, and claiming into him, and to the grounds of confidence in him, must both make

prayer acceptable, and carry the stamp and impression of God's name, or Christ's name, on it, and also make much prayer: for when a soul hath pitched on God as its only felicity, and thus made choice of him, it findeth in him all sufficiency, all things for all things. There is no necessity, but it findeth a supply in his fulness for it; and therefore it applieth a man to the fountain, to draw out of the wells of salvation. There is nothing can be so sweet and refreshing as for such a soul to pour out itself every day in him, to talk with him face to face. Faith engageth the heart to come to God with all things; whereas many difficulties would have been, and the secure or unsettled heart would have gone as many different ways to help them. Faith layeth hold on God, knoweth but one, and bringeth all here; and therefore access to God is a fruit of it, access unto the grace wherein we stand by faith. And again, how can prayer be acceptable as long as faith doth not principle it? It is but like a beast's groaning under a burden. Laying hold on God himself makes a man's duties acceptable, because he speaks and asks; believing that he shall receive, he trusteth God and doth not tempt him. Where lively faith is not entertained there cannot be much affection which is the oil of the wheels. There may be in some bitterness of spirit much vehemency; but that is not a pure flame of divine love that burneth upward to him; and it is soon extinguished, and lasteth no longer nor present sense, and then the soul groweth harder, as iron that had been in the fire.

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II. When there is not much prayer and calling, faith cannot lie strong and violent; for prayer is even the exercise of faith, if you wear out of that, faith rusteth. There may be much quietness with little prayer, but there cannot be much, and strong and lively faith, for where it getteth not continual employment it fags. And indeed prayer is a special point of holding God fast, and keeping him, therefore join these, if ye would thrive in any one of them. Your unbelieving complaints are not prayers and calling on his name, because they are not mixed with faith. As the apostle said

of the word, so may it be said of prayer,—your prayers are not profitable, are not heard, because not mixed with faith. Ye use to doubt, that ye may be fervent, to question your interest, that ye may stir up your spirits to prayer. But alas! what a simple gross mistake is that? Poor soul, though thou get more liberty, shall it be counted access to God? Though you have more grief, and your bitterness doth indite more eloquence, shall God be moved with it? Know ye not that you should ask without wavering, and lift up pure hands without wrath and doubting? And yet both are there.

Fourthly, The duty we are called to in such a time when God is angry, is to lay hold on him. We would speak a word more of it. We ought to hold a departing Lord, by wrestling with him in supplication, not to let him depart till he bless, Hos. xii. 3, 4. The application of Jacob's victory over the angel is thus, “Turn ye to the Lord, and wait on him,” &c. How had Jacob power over the angel? By supplication and weeping, so that prayer is a victory over God, even the Lord God of hosts. We ought, as it were, to strive against outward dispensation, when it saith, He is gone, when our condition saith, He is gone, or going, we ought to wrestle with it. No submission to such a departing, I mean, no submission that sitteth down with it, and is not careful how it be. Now this time calleth you to such an exercise. The Lord seemeth to be angry with us. There is a strong cloud over the land, and like to pour down upon us—the Lord is drawing a sword again, and beginning now to lay on. Many threatenings would not put us to supplication. Now, what will the laying on of the rod do? If the former days be returning wherein ye saw much sorrow, is it not then high time for the Lord's remembrancers, and for the Lord's children to wrestle with God? As Esau was coming on Jacob, so hath God armed men, and such desperate men, as he hath made a rod to us before. If we be twice beaten with it, it is very just, for before we did not seek in to him who smote us.³²²

³²² [What is here said would seem to fix the date of this sermon. It appears to

You would know this, that the Lord is but seeking employment, and if ye would deal with him, ye may make advantage of the present and future calamities. And look to this laying hold on him, this is the chief thing ye should now heed. It is God himself that should be your principal object. Praying should be a laying hold on God, it should meet with himself. For the most part in the time of prosperity, we cannot meet with God singly, we have so much to do with creatures, we keep trysts so punctually with them, so that we cannot keep with God. We have so many things in our affections and thoughts, that God cannot get place, he cannot get us at leisure for the throng of our business, we lose God by catching at shadows. Well then, we are called in such a time of difficulty to come in to God himself, to draw by the vail of ordinances, that we may have communion with God himself. And this is right praying, when the soul getteth such immediate access to God, as it were, to handle him, and see him, and taste him, to exercise its senses on him. Ordinances have been of a long time a covering of his face, and he useth not now to unvail himself in the sanctuary, and let us see his glory God is departed from preaching and praying, and the solemn meeting, so that we meet not with God,—we lay hold on a shadow of an outward ordinance, but not on God himself. Therefore, Christians, make advantage of this time. You may be brought to want ordinances, then lay hold on himself who is the substance and marrow of them. You may be denuded of outward comforts and accommodation here, then lay hold on himself in much prayer. If affliction would blow away the cloud on his face, or would scatter our idols from us, and make us single alone with God, as Jacob was, it were well sent.

II. Your exercise should be to take hold on God by faith.

1. Ye would make peace with God, be much in direct acts of apprehending God himself in Jesus Christ. And this is according [467] as ye take up yourselves with your own misery and necessity. Do

have been preached before the battle of Dunbar.—*Ed.*]

but travel continually between your own misery and something answerable in God.

The first thing we would have you do, now when God frowns upon us, is to find out your own lost condition, and how great strangers you have been to him, even when ye have approached in many ordinances, and find a necessity of making peace with God and atonement. Now from this day hold on Christ, as the hope set before you. Look upon that in him which will answer all your necessities, and be suitable to them. It is not matters of outward lot that should go nearest your heart. Let the world go where it will, that which concerneth you most in such a time, is the securing of your soul, for if you lose it, what gain you? what keep you? Your houses, and lands, and lives may be in hazard, nay, but one thing is more worth than all these, and in more hazard. Begin at spiritual things, and ask how matters stand between God and thee.

2. Not only would ye be much in immediate application unto Jesus Christ, but ye would so take hold of him, as ye may be sure ye have him. Make peace, and know that ye have made it, and then shall ye be kept in perfect peace. You would never rest until you can on solid grounds answer the question. And this duty is called for from you at such a time, for “the just shall live by faith,” in a troublesome time, Hab. ii. 4. And as ye ought to keep and hold fast confidence and not cast it away in such a time, so should ye all seek after it. Do not only rest in this,—I know not but I may belong to Christ, I dare not say against it. O no, Christians, you should have positive clear grounds of assurance “I am his, and he is mine,” “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” “God is my portion.” And if ye conclude this solidly, I defy all the world to shake and trouble your peace this is perfect peace, “peace, peace,” double peace. How can ye choose but be shaken at every blast of temptation, when you are not thus solidly grounded, when you hold not at your anchor?

And, 3. Having thus laid hold on Christ as your own, lay hold

on all in him as yours, and for your use. Whatever difficulty the present time or your own condition afford, search but as much in God as may counterbalance it. Answer all objections, from his mercy, goodness, power, wisdom, unchangeableness, and this shall be more nor the trouble. God himself laid hold upon, and made ours, is more nor removing a temporal calamity. It is an eternal weight, to weigh down all crosses and disappointments. For what can present things be? Is there not in the favour of his countenance that which may drown them in oblivion? Are ye like to sink here? Is not God a sure anchor to hold by? And if ye do not this, your trouble is nothing in respect of the danger of your soul. Secure and loose lying out of God, not putting this matter to a full point, is worse nor all your outward fading. Therefore, we exhort you in the Lord's name, to fly into this name of the Lord, as a strong tower to run to and be safe. When the Lord seemeth now to be angry with us, run not away from him, though he should yet clothe himself with vengeance as a garment.

But, *first*, O ye poor people, who have never asked this question, whether have I any interest in Jesus? ask it now, and resolve it in time. If trouble come on, if scattering and desolation come on, and our land fade as a leaf, certainly the Lord's anger will drive you away, What will ye do in the time of his indignation? All of you, put this to the trial,—how matters stand between God and you.

And, *secondly*, If ye find all wrong, do not sink in discouragement, all may be amended, while it is seen wrong in time. Nay, God taketh away outward accommodation, to make you more serious in this. And it is the very voice of rods,—every one fly into your hold, every one make peace with me. You may take hold, and do it feckfully.³²³

Thirdly, You who have fled to Jesus, take more hold of him, you are called also to renew your faith, and begin again. Make

³²³ [That is, strongly.—*Ed.*]

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peace with God, let your confidence be kept fast, and thus shall ye be immoveable, because he changeth not. God will not go from you if ye believe—hold him by faith. Christ could not do great things in Galilee because of their unbelief, and so he departed from them. As unbelief maketh an evil heart to depart from the God of all life and consolation, so doth it make God depart from us. But faith casteth a knot upon him (to speak with reverence), it fasteneth him by his own word and promise, and he cannot go by it. It is a violent hand laid on God. “I will not let thee go till thou bless me.”

Fourthly, Faith and prayer, or holding of God, by believing in him, and much employing him needeth much stirring up unto, and awaking. “That stirreth up himself to take hold on thee.” Security is the moth of both these, and eateth out the life of faith and supplication; it maketh prayer so coldrife that it cannot prevail, and faith so weak that it cannot use violence.

I. Security apprehendeth no evil, no need. A secure condition is a dream that one is eating and yet his soul is empty. Look how the people of Laish were quiet and secure, apprehending no evil; destruction cometh then on as an armed man. Always it is much necessity that administers fuel to a man's faith and supplication. David says, (Psal. xxx. 7,) “I said in my prosperity, I shall not be moved.” Nay, but many say in adversity, and cry Peace, peace, where no peace is. Security pleadeth innocency, and then believeth immunity. “I am innocent, therefore shall his anger turn away,” Jer. ii. 31. Security applieth not sin, and so refuseth the curse of sin and wages of it. And thus is a man in his own eyes a lord, and then he will come no more to God, Jer. ii. 31. It is almost impossible to awake men, by general judgments, to apprehend personal danger, and men never stir out of their nest till it be on fire. We can behold, or hear of our neighbours, spoiling and violence done to them, but till the voice of a cry be heard in our own streets and fields, nobody will take the judgment to themselves. It is well said, that which is spoken

to all, is spoken to none, so what is done to all in general, is done to none. The voice of a general rod speaketh not particularly, and maketh not men apprehensive of sad things, and thus men are not pressed unto prayer—are not put out of themselves, it is only necessity that saps the roots of it, and makes it green.

II. Security is lazy and not active, putteth not forth its hand to work, and so dieth a beggar, for only the hand of the diligent maketh rich. Laying hold on God is a duty that requireth much spirit in it; men do not grip things well in their slumbering. There is no duty that needeth so spiritual and lively principles. If a man do not put on such a piece of resolution and edge upon him, he cannot come to the wrestling of prayer and violence of faith. Although the exercise and acting of grace dependeth more upon the Spirit of God's present influence, than upon the soul of man, yet this is the way the Lord communicateth his influence, by stirring up and exciting the creature to its duty, as if it could do it alone. Grace is one thing, and the stirring up of it is another thing. For when we lie by and sleep over our time, and go not about the matter so seriously as it were life and death, it is but a weak hold we can take of God. According to the measure of a man's apprehending necessity, and according to the measure of his seriousness in these things, so will the hand of faith grip, and lay hold with more or less violence. As a man drowning will be put from sleeping, and when one is in extreme hazard all his strength will unite together in one to do that which at any ordinary time it could not do, so ought it to be here. A Christian assaulted with many temptations should unite his strength, and try the yondmost.³²⁴ O but your whole spirits would run together, to the saving of yourselves, if ye were very apprehensive of necessity! The exercise of faith is a dead grip, that cannot part with what it grippeth. Therefore, 1. We must say to you, it is not so easy a thing as you believe, to lay hold on God,—there must be stirring

³²⁴ [That is, his utmost.—*Ed.*]

up to it. And when the Lord speaketh of our stirring ourselves, certainly he meaneth this likewise, that he must stir us, ere we stir ourselves. 2. Above all, be afraid of a secure condition: it is the enemy of communion with God and spiritual life. Therefore, look about you, and apprehend more your necessity, and then give no rest and quietness to yourself, till you have employed and engaged him, be as men flying to lay hold on the refuge set before you. 3. It must be a time of little access to God, and little faith, when we are all secure, and nobody goeth about religion as their work and business. We allow ourselves in it, therefore, we do exhort you, *first*, To purpose this as your end to aim at, and purpose by God's grace to take more hold of God. There is little minding of duty, and that maketh little doing of it. Once engage your hearts to a love and desire of more of this, come to a point of resolution, I must know him more, and trust more in him, be more acquaint with him. And, *secondly*, Put yourselves in the way of duty. It is God that only can stir you up, or apply your hearts to the using of violence to God, but ye would be found in the outward means much, and in these ways God will meet with you, if you wait on him in them.

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“For thou hast hid thy face from us.” Here is the greatest plague, a spiritual plague. The last verse was but the beginning of sorrows, “We all do fade,” &c. But lo, here the accomplishment of misery, God hiding his face, and consuming them in the hand of their sins.

First, The Lord's hiding of his face, and giving up a people to melt away in their sins, punishing with judicial blindness and security, is the worst judgment, it filleth the cup full. This complaint goeth on still worse, and certainly it is worse nor their fading as a leaf and exile out of their land. It is not without reason, that great troubles and afflictions are so expressed, “Thou didst hide thy face,” as David said, “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,” importing as much, as it is not trouble that doth trouble, but God's hiding of his face that maketh trouble.

It is in so far trouble, as it is a sign of his displeasure, and as the frowns of his countenance are upon it, therefore, the saints, aggravating their affliction, say, "Thou hidest thy face." You know the face is the place wherein either kindness or unkindness appeareth. The Lord's countenance, on face, is a refreshful sweet manifestation of himself to a soul, it is the Lord using familiarity with a spirit, and this made David more glad than corn and wine. Now, the hiding of the face, the withdrawing of his countenance, is, when the Lord in his dispensation and dealing doth withhold the manifestation of himself, either in life or consolation, when he covereth himself with clouds round about, that neither can a soul see into the backside of it—into his own warm heart, nor can the sun beams shine through to quicken and refresh the soul. The Lord draweth over his face a veil of a crossing dispensation, or such like.

There is a desertion of the soul in the point of life and spiritual action, and there is a desertion in regard of consolation. The varieties of the Lord's desertions run upon these two. As a Christian's life is action or consolation, and the Lord's influence is either quickening or comforting, so his withdrawing is either a prejudice to the one or the other. Sometimes he goeth "mourning all the day," nay, but he is "sick of love," sometimes he is a bottle dried in the smoke, and his moisture dried up. The Christian's consolation may be subtracted, and his life abide, but he cannot have spiritual consolation, if he be not lively. This life is more substantial,—comfort is more refreshful,—life is more solid,—comfort sweet, that is true growing solid meat, this but sauce to eat it with.

The hiding here meant is certainly a spiritual punishment. The Lord denying unto this people grace to understand the voice of the rod,—he appearing as a party against them,—leaving them to their own carnal and lazy temper, and thus they lay still under God's displeasure. Now, there is nothing like this.

I. Because it is a spiritual punishment, and estates are not to

be valued and laid in the balance with the soul. Albeit men are become so brutish as to abase their souls, and prostitute them to any thing, yet all a man hath is not considerable to it.

II. It is a more excellent thing that is removed by it,—“In his favour is life,”—all felicity and happiness is in God's countenance. If a man have not this, what hath he else? Losses are according as the thing is. Nay, but here is more,—“My Lord is taken from me, my God hath forgotten me.” And indeed, if man's true happiness be in communion with God, certainly, any interruption coming in must be sad, and make a man more miserable than the world knoweth. There is a greater emphasis in that word, “Thou hast hid thy face,” than if he had said, all the world hideth their face and maketh a scorn of us.

Therefore, *first*, Know what is the worst thing of the times. Many of you think sword and pestilence, and the burdens of the time, the worst things, and if you were now to complain, the saddest complaint would be,—affliction is laid on our loins. But know this, if your cities were desolate, if your land were made a wilderness, and we captives in another land, there is yet a worse thing than all these, and think you not this strange? Nay, I say, there is something worse already in us, that we know not of, and it is this—“Make the hearts of this people hard.” A spirit of slumber and deadness from the Lord upon the land, there are multitudes he will never show his face unto, it is still veiled from them, and they know him not. Ye that think all were well if ye had peace and prosperity, and know no hiding of God's countenance—no anger but when he striketh; certainly you know not what his countenance is by all these things men neither know love nor hatred. 2. Whatever calamity come upon you outwardly, deprecate most spiritual plagues and God's deserting. If you have God's countenance, it may make you glad in much sadness. You would be most careful lest any partition-wall came in lest his countenance change on you, if you grieve his Spirit and break his heart. Seek to have his face to shine, and this shall be a sun with

healing under his wings. O but Christ's countenance is comely, when it is seen without clouds! but often it is overclouded with much provocation.

Secondly, The Lord's hiding of his face hath influence on the temper of spirits and disposition in duties. The truth is in general, "In him we live, and move, and have our being," and more especially, in many things that are spiritual, we are of our selves able to do nothing. The creature's holiness, and especially our life, is but as the rays that the Sun of righteousness sendeth forth round about him, and if any thing come between it evanisheth. As the marygold that openeth its leaves when the sun riseth, and closeth when it goeth down again, so exactly doth our spiritual constitution follow the motions of his countenance, and depend wholly on them. "Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled," Psal. xxx 7. The Lord needeth no more but discountenance us, and we are gone.

Always, I. Be more dependent creatures. We use to act as from habits within, without any subordination to the Lord's grace without us, but we find that our sufficiency is not of ourself. How often doth your spiritual condition change on you in an hour? You cannot command one thought of God, or act from any habit of grace, even then when you can bring forth other gifts in exercise. Ye find that grace findeth more difficulties, more interruptions,—therefore learn to attend the changes and motions of his countenance.

II. When you find your heart dead, and you concluded under an impossibility of taking hold of God in a lively manner, then, I pray you, look unto the Lord's suspending of his influence, and let your whole endeavours be at the throne of grace to help it. It will not be your own provoking of yourself to your duty, but you must put yourself upon God, that he may cause his face to shine.

III. Though the Lord's hiding his face be often a cause of our deadness, and his desertion maketh all to wither, yet we have often a culpable hand in it, and he hides his face being provoked

so to do. One thing we may mention, grieving of the Holy Ghost whereby we are sealed, quenching the motions of the Spirit, maketh the Spirit cover his face with a vail and hide it. There is here ordinarily a reciprocal or mutual influence. Our grieving him makes him withdraw his countenance, and his withdrawing his countenance maketh us to wither and grow barren.

IV. The most sure and infallible token of the Lord's hiding his face, is security, and a spirit of deadness and laziness, when folk go about duties dreaming, and do all as it were through their sleep. Therefore we may conclude sad things on this land, that the Lord hideth his face from us. And therefore arise, and do not settle and quiet yourself in such a condition. The Lord is angry, needeth any more be said? No more needeth to kind children, but the rod must follow this to make anger sensible.