

life that was forfeited by sin is safe by grace; therefore take thankfully any troubles you meet with. For why should a living man complain, especially one that deserved to die, and yet is adjudged to life?

5. *Lastly*, Walk tenderly. God pardoning a sinner, dismisseth him as Christ did the penitent adulteress, John xii. 11. 'Go, and sin no more.' Let not your broken bones be forgotten, but walk softly all your years. And if ye be pardoned, shew it by your holy and tender walk.

ADOPTION.

2 COR. VI. 18.—*And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

THESE words do hold forth the singular privilege of those that obey the call of the gospel, ver. 17.—'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.' That call is not a call to separate from a church, but from those that are out of the church, ver. 14. 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?' not only from outward visible communion with idolaters, but to separate from the unconverted to inward invisible communion with the family of God, ver. 18. In a word, it is a call to come out of the world lying in wickedness, and to join the heavenly society.

There are but two families in the world, and to one of the two every man and woman belongs. One is Satan's family, the other God's. And these are the two terms of effectual calling. (1.) The term from which sinners are called by the gospel; that is Satan's family, which they are born in, Psal. xlv. 10. And it is made up of all the unconverted world, and fallen angels. These have a dreadful communion among themselves under one head, the devil. That is the family of unbelievers, unrighteousness, and Belial. And to come out of this the gospel calls you, ver. 17. 'Wherefore come out from among them, &c. (2.) The term to which; that is God's family, made up of saints, holy angels, and Christ as the Elder Brother having dominion over the family; he their head, and the head of Christ is God, 1 Cor. xi. 3. That is the family of believers, righteousness, and Christ. And to this the gospel calls you to come.

Thus the text proposes a great privilege of those that are effect-

ally called, that is, adoption into the family of God. And here consider,

1. The family they are brought into; it is that of *the Lord Almighty*. No body needed to adopt, but he that had something to give. The family which believers are taken into is a rich family, seeing the Head thereof is the Almighty, who because he is Almighty can, and because he is a Father will, make his own perfectly happy.

2. Upon whom this privilege is conferred; that is, those who come out of the world and the family of Satan, and answer the gospel-call. (1.) They are aliens, they are by nature strangers to the family they are taken into; they are of an ill house, that is an enemy to the house of heaven. And whatever house men would pitch on, it would not readily be such an one: but free grace takes people from such a house. (2.) But they are separatists from it, they are such as are sick of their father's house, and people that are their own, and come off from it by faith to the Lord upon the gospel-call. Like Ruth, they leave their natural country and kindred, and come to incorporate with that other society.

3. The relation they are put into in God's family. It were much if they of the house of hell might be received into the house of heaven, in the quality of sojourners to lodge a while there; more, if in quality of domestic servants; and more, if in quality of friends: but they are received in quality of children of the family. And as all relation is mutual, upon the one hand, God becomes their *Father*. That is a kindly word, and that he is to them. On the other, they become *sons and daughters*. Observe, how particular this promise is, expressly made to both sexes. Whatever privileges in external things men had of old, or yet have above women; yet in respect of spiritual privileges in Christ they are alike. The one are sons, and the other daughters, both children equally dear to our heavenly Father.

4. *Lastly*, The confirmation of this privilege, and the promise thereof, *saieth the Lord*. If a man or angel had said it, it could hardly have gained credit, that there should be such an adoption. But God himself says it; and it is impious therefore to disbelieve it.

The sum of the words may be comprised in the following doctrine, viz.

Doct. 'As adoption into God's family is the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called, so whosoever will comply with the gospel-call, and come away, shall be adopted into God's family: God will be a Father to them, and they shall be his sons and daughters.'

This doctrine has two branches.

I. Adoption into God's family is the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called.

II. Whosoever will comply with the gospel call, shall be adopted into God's family; God will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters.

I shall prosecute these two in order.

I. Adoption into God's family is the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called. Adoption follows our justification; and is 'an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.'

Here I shall endeavour to shew,

1. What adoption in general is.
2. What are the parts of adoption.
3. The properties of this adoption.
4. Apply the subject.

FIRST, I shall shew what adoption in the general is.—That we may understand this, we must consider, in the first place, what adoption among men is; and that is twofold.

1. Proper adoption, much used among the ancient Romans and Greeks, was a legal act, imitating nature, introduced for the comfort of those who wanted children, whereby one that was the natural child of another man became the son of the adopter. It was a judicial action done in presence of the magistrate; among the Greeks by way of a testament, signed and sealed in his presence; among the Romans, the adopter, the natural father, and the son, appearing before the magistrate, the adopter taking hold of the son, said, 'I avouch this person to be my son, and I have bought him with this money.' The natural father judicially yielded up his right to the adopter. And the magistrate adjudged him to be the adopter's son. The party being adopted, was made free of the city, and not only taken into the adopter's family, but ascribed into the tribe or fraternity of the adopter. It had place among those that either had no children at all, by their death or otherwise had no lawful children. But the law restrained them that they might not adopt, but in a suitableness to the quality of the adopter; so that a nobleman might not adopt a commoner, lest the dignity of the adopter should be stained by the meanness of the adopted.

2. Metaphorical adoption, which is ingrafting. Thus the stock adopts the branch that is cut off another tree, and put into another branch of it. For as the adopter takes another man's child, and nourishes him as his own; so the ingrafted branch is counted among the natural branches, and partakes with them of the sap of the stock. Hence you may see, that

Divine adoption is an act of God, whereby he does judicially take (and constitute) those that are by nature strangers to him, and none of his family, members of his family, and his own children, giving them the privileges of his children, or of his house as children. And it is twofold.

1. External and federal which is common to the members of the visible church, which is a society gathered out from the rest of the world, the visible family of God on earth, enjoying peculiar privileges, beyond the rest of the world. This adoption belonged to Israel of old, Rom. ix. 4. And God owned them as his sons in the midst of Egypt, Exod. iv. 22, 23. But now it is extended to us Gentiles, Gal. iii. 26, 27. This family has always, since Cain was cast out, been a separated family in the world, chosen out from among the rest; so that they are called 'the sons of God,' Gen. vi. 2. And so it is still, and will be to the end.

This adoption, though it is really in itself a high dignity, so that, in comparison of them, the rest of the world are but as dogs to children, Matth. xv. 26. yet it is not a saving relation to God. And it may be lost, as the Jews rejected did theirs. Nay one may retain it; and yet his natural relation to the devil remain, as to his internal state, so as he may be lost for ever notwithstanding it, John. viii. 44. But this is not the adoption we inquire into; but,

2. An internal and saving adoption, which is peculiar to believers, or those effectually called and converted, which make up the invisible church and family of God on earth, enjoying spiritual privileges, beyond all others without or within the visible church. These are they that are chosen out from the unconverted world lying in wickedness, according to the decree of election, and brought and ingrafted into Christ, and made real members of his body, John i. 12, 13. These God adopts, judicially avouches them to be his sons and daughters, and Satan, their natural father, is obliged to quit his right to them; and they thereby are, and are accounted, no more of his family, but children of God, and have a right to the saving special privileges of the children of his family, Gal. iv. 5. Eph. i. 5. Hence,

(1.) Adoption is not a real change of the sinner's nature; but, as justification a relative change of his state. By nature we are in a state of condemnation, but out of that we are brought in justification; and out of the state of alienation from God, by adoption. So that we are no more aliens and foreigners to the family of heaven, but domestics of it; no more the children of Satan, but of God, Eph. ii. 19. Our names are enrolled among those of the family; and though a new nature accompanies it, yet adoption itself is a

new name, not a new nature, Rev. ii. 17. though it is not an empty title, but has vast privileges attending it.

(2.). It is done in an instant, not carried on by degrees. For it is not capable of degrees, and there is no intermediate state betwixt sonship to God and to Satan; but as soon as ever a person believes in Christ, he is justified and adopted: as soon as the soul is married to Christ, she becomes a daughter of the house of heaven, and her relation to that of hell is extinguished, John i. 12. It is true, there will be at the great day a solemn declaration of that adoption, and the adopted will then be perfectly past their minority, and enter to the full possession of the inheritance in their whole man; in which sense the apostle says, 'We wait for the adoption,' Rom. viii. 23. 'But now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,' 1 John iii. 2.

SECONDLY, I come to shew what are the parts of adoption. These are two. 1. The receiving the sinner into the number of God's children. 2. Giving him a right to their privileges. That we may the more distinctly take up this, we shall take a view of this whole blessed transaction, from the first to the last, together with the parties concerned in it. And,

1. The adopter is God, and in respect of dispensation the Father, the first person of the blessed Trinity, the Father of our Lord Jesus. For as the work of redemption is the Son's, and the work of our sanctification the Spirit's, so our justification and adoption are the Father's, Eph. i. 3, 5. And hence the Father's love is celebrated in this benefit, 1 John iii. 1. 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God;' though not excluding that of the Son and the Holy Ghost, who are one God with him, and act their part in this blessed transaction, bringing it about. And because, God is the Sovereign of the universe, therefore he is also the Judge, who passeth the sentence, and adjudgeth the adopted sons to himself.

2. The party adopted is an elect sinner; for it is done in pursuance of God's eternal predestination, and falls on those, and only those who are elected to it from eternity, Eph. i. 5. God from all eternity foreseeing, that though Adam was to be created a son of God in his own likeness, yet he would degenerate, and all his race be born children of wrath, and of the devil, resembling Satan naturally, and prone to obey him, as children do a father, John viii. 44. decreed, not to lose the whole race, but to bring a certain number of them into his family again by the way of adoption, the way of natural (Adam's) sonship failing, leaving others to continue in their

natural father's house and family. And all these elect ones were known from eternity to God, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

3. The natural father is the devil, that enemy of God, John viii. 44. His children they are by nature as well as others. He has a great family, one part whereof dwells in the lower house; these are the damned spirits in hell. And of those that are once got thither, there is no more hope nor possibility of their ever getting out of his family. These are entered to the inheritance of their father in almost full tale already. Another part of them are sojourning in the upper house of this world, and that house is very throng with his family. It contains a people that are his, Psal. xlv. 10. Many entire nations and families are there, wherein there are none but his. Nay, there is a world of men and women he has in this house, 1 John v. 19; and himself is god and father of the family, 2 Cor. iv. 4. who all can have no hope of a better inheritance than he has given them, even the wrath and curse prepared for him and his. It is out of this part of Satan's family that the adopted are taken.

4. The suitableness of this adoption to the glory of the Adopter, and to his family. We dare not say, he needed to take this way of furnishing himself with children, as in the case of adoption among men. He was happy in himself from all eternity, in the Son by eternal generation, when there was neither man nor angel in his family. And had all been lost together, his happiness had not been one whit diminished. But we may say, that this device of adoption was a device becoming him, and very agreeable to his glory and family.

His family did originally consist of two sorts of sons, angels and men, (not to speak here of his eternal Son). Angels were the one sort, Job xxxviii. 7; man the other, Luke iii. 38; the one as well as the other created after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The one were kept in the higher house, the other in the lower. But sin entering among them, many of the family died such a death as quite dissolved the relation betwixt God and them, that they could no more call him Father, nor could he own them for his children. It seized those first of the upper house, and multitudes of them (for in one man was a legion of them) dropt down to the pit, 2 Pet. ii. 4. They infected those of the lower house, and they that received the infection from them, conveyed it to all the rest, so that death passed upon all that part of the family to a man, Rom. v. 12. So that here was an empty house made.

This evinces the suitableness of making up the family again, by the way of adoption, which by spiritual death received such a diminution. As also the suitableness of adoption from among men,

which the fallen angels have no share in. For since they were not all to be recovered that had fallen, but the justice of God was to be glorified in some of them, it was agreeable to the wisdom of God to adopt men, not fallen angels, since the whole mankind was lost, but not the whole angelic kind. Multitudes of angels stood when the rest fell, but all mankind was lost together.

5. But what shall be done for the law that forbids the staining of the Adopter's honour by the meanness of the party adopted? This was a notable impediment in the way of this device of repairing the family. The Adopter can be no higher, for he is the Sovereign King of the world, the adopted no lower, for they are not only the children of base men, but of the devil, the most miserable creature in the universe. No law could be more strict for the honour of the Adopter than the holy law of God is. And he would by no means overlook it, but magnify it, and make it honourable. What possibility then is there of God's adopting children of the devil in inconsistency with his honour?

Wisdom finds out the way, that is, that they shall be adopted in Jesus Christ, Eph. i. 5, 6. Gal. iii. 26, 27. And to let you see that this way makes it consistent with the honour of God to adopt those that by nature are children of the devil, consider three things in the mystery of Christ.

(1.) By the incarnation of the Son of God, the human nature is dignified and nobilitated, raised to a pitch of honour even above that of the angels, Heb. i. 13. So the Son of God partaking of human nature with the elect, owns them as his brethren, by virtue of their common human nature, Heb. ii. 11, 12. And for this very cause he did become man, ver. 14. which takes away the impediment arising from the meanness of the adopted, it being very agreeable to God's honour to adopt those for children who were of the same nature with his own Son, i. e. of human nature. For the Son of God, to make way for this adoption, took to himself a holy human nature, into personal union with his Godhead. Hence,

(2.) The man Christ is the Elder Brother in the repaired family of heaven, Rom. viii. 29. the first of the human nature having interest in God as a Father, after the extinguishing of the first relation by creation. So that the elect drawing to him, as one betwixt whom and them there is a natural bond of the same human nature, way is made for their adoption through him, in consistency with the honour of God.

(3.) By his obedience and satisfaction he purchased their adoption, with all other privileges to them, Gal. iv. 4, 5. And his natural bond with them gave him a direct interest to redeem them as being

their near Kinsman. So law and justice can have nothing to object against the adoption. Thus by Jesus Christ, the glorious device of repairing the family of heaven in the way of Adoption is made practicable. But how shall it be executed? Why,

6. Our Lord sends his messengers, ministers of the gospel, out into the world among those of Satan's family, to proclaim the offer of adoption unto them, that whosoever of them will leave their father's house and people, shall be adopted into the family of heaven. This is offered to them and it is pressed upon them by many arguments and intreaties to accept and come away. By their mouths the Lord cries to them, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. 'Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' Psal. xlv. 10. 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.' They expose the nakedness of their father's house to them. They tell them, that he is a cruel and deceitful father, John viii. 44. that he treats them as slaves, not as sons, 2 Tim. ii. ult. that the entertainment of his house is wretched and beggarly, that they have nothing to eat but dust with the serpent, or husks with the swine; that their work is base, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind; the wages, death; and that he has no inheritance to give them but what will make them eternally miserable. On the other hand, they commend the family of heaven, the Father of the family, the entertainment, the work, wages, inheritance, &c.

Hereupon the father of the family rages, and stirs up the children against them and their message. Sometimes he raises the family against them, and all that take part with them, and they set upon them violently, and knock them down, and despitefully use them, by persecutions, &c. so that many have lost their lives in the cause, for presuming to disturb that family. When he cannot get that done, he teaches them to stop their ears, that, if they must speak, what they say shall not get access into their hearts, Psal. lviii. 4, 5. And thus the most part of the family get a deafness that abides with them, and grows more and more to their dying day, and they are never cured of it.

7. But unto the elect among them God sends his Spirit, which opens their ears, awakens their conscience, and rouses them so, that they can no longer miss to hear, and understand too, what concerns themselves and both the families, Job xxxvi. 10. And then that makes deep impression on them, which the rest of the family do not at all regard; that makes them wake, while their brethren about

them are fast asleep. They see the fire of heaven ready to fall upon the house, see through the murdering designs of their father ; they see how they are entertained but with vain hopes, and deluded, in that upper house for a while, till he may get them conveyed into the lower house. And so they set off to come out from among them, and be separate, that they may be received into the family of heaven. But,

8. Then their natural father bestirs himself with all his might to stop their coming out from that family, and that separation. He will set their brethren on them, whereof some will try to mock them from it, others with serpentine wisdom gravely to advise them against the fancy ; others which is most dangerous, to entangle them in the work and entertainment of their father's house. Himself will attack them with flatteries, spread out his baits and allurements of temptation, promise them peace, allow them an indulgence, not to be so hard put to it in his work as before, change their work from the coarser to the finer, represent the family of heaven in base colours, that there is no liberty there, but they are pent up to intolerable strictness, &c. But if that will not do, he will fall on them with rage, and tell them, that there is no room now in the family of heaven for them, that they have been too long among them to come out and be separate now ; that they are his, and he will not part with them, and therefore they may give it over. And thus, by the flatteries or the rage, some are prevailed with to turn back again, and settle down again in their father's house, like Orpah returning to her gods, after she had set off from them, Ruth i. 15. But,

9. The Spirit of Christ presses forward the elect, and determines them to seek to be received into the family of God, John vi. 45. He is to them a Spirit of light and faith ; thereby they discover that there is some hope, concerning their case, that even they may be received into the family. So they that are effectually determined to leave their father's house, not to stay there, come of them what will, to come to the Lord and sue for reception, not to depart, if they should die at his door.

10. Hereupon the soul comes away to Christ, the elder brother of the family, and of our nature ; and joins himself to him by faith, and is received, John vi. 37. takes hold of the offer of the marriage-covenant, and consents to the spiritual marriage with him who is the Heir of all things, and the Son of God, and so becomes his by a marriage-tie, Cant. ii. 16. The soul drawn by the Spirit to him whose name is the Branch, is put into that branch, being cut off from the natural stock, and knits therewith by faith. Thus the

soul is united to Christ, justified, and reconciled to God, and set beyond the reach of the curse.

11. *Lastly*, Upon this follows the adoption of the believer, who now has received and is ingrafted into Christ, John i. 12. Being brought out of the state of condemnation by justification, he is further dignified by a reception as a member into the family of heaven.

(1.) The Lord Jesus presents unto the Father, the Adopter and Judge, the party to be adopted into his family, Heb. ii. 13. as Joseph did Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob. And he presents him for adoption, as one that, though by nature he be of a strange family, yet is now his own child by the spiritual birth, being born of his Spirit. As an elder brother, he presents the believer as his brother by common human nature; and as the head and husband, presents the soul as his spouse by marriage-covenant. He pleads his purchase of believers by the price of his blood, and their actual relation to him; and that therefore in fulfilment of his Father's decree, they be adopted by him, Eph. i. 5.

(2.) The natural father, the devil, upon the account of the purchase made of his child by Jesus Christ, and the child's lawful renouncing of his power and family, and coming unto Christ, is obliged to renounce and give up with him, as no member of his family any more, though sore against his will. If he appear in this judgment to defend his own interest, as Satan stood at Joshua's right hand to resist him, Zech. iii. 1. the Mediator stops his mouth, as ver. 2. 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?'

(3.) *Lastly*, The Father of our Lord Jesus, for the sake of his Son, receives the believer into the number of his children, saying in effect, As the man Christ and the angel Gabriel, ye are mine, and shall be mine; and as a Judge, he adjudges the believer to be his child, and the relation betwixt him and his natural father extinguished, Isa. xlix. 24, 25. as having purchased them with the blood of his dear Son; and farther gives them a right to the privileges of his sons.

Thus is the glorious benefit brought about, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the elect soul adopted into the family of heaven. And this consists of two parts.

FIRST, The adopted are received into the number of the sons of God. God becomes a Father to them, and they his sons and daughters. His family consists of many children, each one for holiness and happiness illustrious; all resembling, what indeed they are, the children of a king. They are taken by adoption out of the black number of the devil's family, consisting of devils, damned spirits, and an unconverted world, bearing the devil's image. And they

are taken into the blessed number of the sons of God, whereof his family consists. And who are they that make up that number?

1. Jesus Christ the Son of God by eternal generation, who has taken on our nature, and was declared the Son of God by his resurrection, Psal. ii. 7. He is one of the number they are received into, and therefore is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. ii. 7. And who can recount the dignity of being of that number, whereof he is one; he who is the brightness of his Father's glory, the luminary of heaven, Rev. xxi. 22. whose splendour is greater than sun and moon? He is the chief of that number, the eldest brother, not only in respect of men, but of angels. To him belongs the dominion, priesthood, the blessing, and the double portion. And it is fit, that while we reckon him one of the number, we notice well his pre-eminence over all the rest, remembering the dignity of the eldest brother.

(1.) The dominion is his, the supremacy and royalty belongs unto him, and our Father has solemnly invested him therewith, Psal. ii. 6. Though all his brethren are the children of the King, yet he alone is the heir of the crown. On this Lion of the tribe of Judah the kingdom is settled, and the sceptre is given him over all the glorious family of his brethren, who are in number as the sand of the sea, Col. i. 18. Him must all his brethren praise, to him must they bow down, Gen. xlix. 8. Heb. i. 6. The sceptre put into his hand shall never depart.

(2.) The priesthood is his. In him the crown and the mitre both meet together, Zech. vi. 13. 'He shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne.' God hath given him an eternal and unchangeable priesthood, confirmed by an oath, Psal. cx. 4. He hath offered his sacrifice, and gone into the holy of holies in heaven with the blood of atonement. He hath redeemed men and confirmed angels, being made their head, Eph. i. 10. Whatever sacrifices we have to offer, God saith of Christ to us, as of Job to his friends, 'Go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept,' chap. xlii. 8. For to him it belongs to offer for the family.

(3.) The blessing is his. Though all the children be blessed, yet the eldest brother had a peculiar blessing allotted to him above all the rest. Therefore said Isaac, 'Thy brother hath taken away thy blessing,' Gen. xxvii. 35. So our Lord Christ hath received the peculiar blessing of his Father, Rom. ix. 5. He is the fountain and storehouse of blessing to all the family. Others receive the blessing in the capacity of a vessel to serve themselves, he in the

capacity of a fountain, to shed abroad unto others. And they whom he blesses shall be blessed indeed.

(4.) *Lastly*, The double portion of our Father's goods is his, as that is understood, 2 Kings ii. 9. The greatest fulness that ever any had was never comparable to him, who is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, Psal. xlv. 7. Whatever portion of the Spirit men or angels are partakers of, it is still by a certain measure; but God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him, John iii. 34. For the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, Col. ii. 9. And accordingly his glory in heaven is without a parallel among his brethren, who shall all be glorious: but they receive and borrow their light from him, he gives it, Rev. xxi. 23.

2. Angels, the sons of God by creation, Job xxxviii. 7. They are of this number, and are an innumerable company of pure, and spotless, and glorious spirits, all sons of the house, with whom the adopted are fellow children of God, Heb. xii. 22. The angelical nature in itself is far more honourable than man's, seeing they are pure spirits, not clogged with bodies, as we are; therefore says the Psalmist of man, 'Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, Psal. viii. 5. And they have never been polluted with sin, as we are. Yet they own themselves the brethren of the adopted saints even in this life. Nay, they are content to be ministering spirits to them, even as the grown children of a family are employed to take care of the little children, their brothers and sisters, not capable to take care of themselves, Heb. i. ult.

3. *Lastly*, The saints in heaven and earth, sons of God by regeneration and adoption, Eph. iii. 15. The saints on earth are the excellent upon it, more excellent than their neighbours. And as soon as one is adopted of God, he has them all for brothers and sisters; and so there is a special love among them, as betwixt the children of one family, 1 John iii. 14. Nay, they are in the same relation to the saints in heaven, and incorporated with them, Heb. xii. 23. Though they are very far above us, yet we are children of God as well as they, as the little ones are as truly of the family as the sons of perfect age; and as that part of the family that dwells in the lower rooms, as well as those that are advanced to the higher.

This is that glorious number the adopted are received into; with these they are counted. All these have one and the same Father, God, John xx. 17; the same elder brother, Christ; and do all make up one family, whereof the elder brother is the head, whose head is God.

USE. Sue for this adoption, and for being received into this number; and for this cause come out from among the world lying in

wickedness, and be ye separate. There is a feast before us made for the children. It is a sad token for people never to partake of the childrens' bread, but ever to stand at a distance as strangers to the family : and what concern can there be in the spirits of these for the privileges of God's invisible family, that have no concern for the privileges of his visible family on earth ? On the other hand, it is dangerous to intrude among the children, while one is not of the family ; to come in among the children of God at the Lord's table, while they are not come out from among the children of Satan.

This adoption is in your offer. Ye that are of the black number this day, may be received into this number so honourable and glorious. If ye believe these things, they cannot but move you to come away, and join yourselves to the household of God.

SECONDLY, They get a right to the privileges of the sons of God. These are great privileges, even agreeable to the dignity of the family they are taken into. I shall lay these before you, to move you to seek to partake of this benefit.

1. A new name, Rev. ii. 17. and iii. 12. God's name is put upon them ; and what is that, but, as it is in the text, their old name is for ever laid aside : they are no more called children of the devil, but the sons and daughters of God. They are called of God sons and daughters, Heb. xii. 5. Let the world call them what names of contempt they will, God will call them by most endearing and honourable names, as his treasure, Exod. xix. 5 ; his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. See the whole Song of Solomon.

2. The Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15. That is the spirit of the family of heaven, a noble and generous spirit, a spirit of love to God, and confidence in him as a Father. Hereby they are enabled to call God Father, and that is more worth than a thousand worlds. The rest of the world call him Lord, the hypocrite Master ; but the believer may call him Father, at all times, in all the changes of his dispensations ; for Abba is a word that, read it backward or forward, is still the same. He disowns others' pretences to this, John viii. 41, 44 ; but he presses it on and teaches it his own, Jer. iii. 4. ' Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father ?'

3. Access to God and communion with him. They may come farther in than others, come forward with holy boldness, when others must stand back, Eph. iii. 12. God as a Father is familiar with his children, allows them a holy confidence with him, as children to pour their complaints into his bosom, and tell him all their wants. And never did a father take so much delight in his child's talking to him, as God, in the prayers of his people poured out, by virtue of the Spirit of adoption, Prov. xv. 8. Cant. ii. 14.

4. Special immunities and freedoms. King's children have great immunities, Matth. xvii. 26. but God's children the greatest of all. While others are condemned men, slaves, servants at best; the children are free. They are freed from the law as a covenant of works, the yoke wreathed about all others' necks. Others must work for their living, and must die, if they cannot gain life thereby: but their life is given them without it, as children. They are free from the curse, which is clapt on others, upon every breach of the law, Gal. iii. 10; but their breaches may bring on them a cross, but by no means a curse, ver. 13. They are free from the hurt of every thing in the issue, Luke x. 19; while others are liable to be worsted by the best things, they shall not be so, Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39; but bettered by the worst things that befall them, ver. 28.

5. God's fatherly love and pity. The little children, while in this world are liable to many infirmities, and he distinguishes their weakness from wickedness and pities them, Psal. ciii. 13. And the elder brother is touched with a feeling of them, Heb. iv. 15. No bowels are so tender and lasting as God's towards his children; no mother so tender of the fruit of her womb as God is of his children, Isa. xlix. 15. When he corrects them, he does it with a fatherly reluctance, Lam. iii. 33. When he gives them a frown or a rough word, his bowels yearn towards them, and their relentings go near his heart, Jer. xxx. 20. His anger is soon over, in comparison of the cloud of wrath that abides on others, though they are ready to look on it as a kind of eternity; but his returning mercies are lasting, Isa. liv. 8. And from this pity many times he spares them, when otherwise they would heavily smart, Mal. iii. 17.

6. Protection, Prov. xiv. 26. They are in danger while they are here, from the devil, the world and the flesh; in danger by temptations to sin, by calamities; but God sets a hedge about them, which neither devils nor their agents can break over, but as he opens a gap by his permission for their trial, Job i. 10. In all cases they have a Father to run to, both able and willing to protect them, Psal. xc. 1. When they fall into the hand of their enemies, they are mercifully delivered, and never left with them, Psal. xxxvii. 14. And at length he will set them beyond all danger, Rev. xxi. 25.

7. Provision, 1 Pet. v. 7. He provides for their souls, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. And since he is the God of the whole man, he provides for their bodies too, both food and raiment, Isa. xxxiii. 16. Matth. vi. 30, 32. Come what will, God's children shall be provided for; for he that feeds his birds, the ravens that cry, will not starve his children. Though he will not make provision for their lusts, he will make provision for their necessities, Psal. xxxvii. 3.

8. Seasonable and sanctified correction. What is a proper punishment and a sign of wrath on others, is a privilege to them, Heb. xii. 6. It is a special benefit of the covenant of grace, proceeding from God's fatherly love, Psal. lxxxix. 30—32. Some smart more for a whorish look after an idol, than others for giving themselves a full swing in their evil way; some more for deadness and indisposition in prayer, than others for neglecting it altogether, &c. For a small fault in a child whose education the father has a peculiar concern for, will be more severely checked than a greater in a stranger.

9. *Lastly*, An inheritance and portion, according to their Father's quality. They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. So all is theirs, grace and glory. Their portion will never fail, but tell out through eternity, when the portion of worldly men shall be at an end, 1 Pet. i. 4. Their Father gives them of his moveables, as he sees meet; but their inheritance is not moveable, Heb. xii. 28.

THIRDLY, The next thing is to shew the properties of this adoption.

1. It is a precious and costly relation. There was a price, a great one, paid to instate the sinner in this privilege. What the chief captain said to Paul in another case, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom,' Acts xxii. 28. a child of God may say concerning himself, though he paid not that sum himself, Gal. iv. 4, 5. The Son of God, Christ, bought them by his obedience and death. That is the price of our adoption.

2. It is a high and honourable one, John i. 12. As low as we naturally are, adopting grace raiseth us to the highest pitch of honour we are capable of; to be brethren of angels, yea, of Christ, and the children of God. 'Seemeth it a small thing to you to be son-in-law to the king?' said David; but how much more to be the sons and daughters of the King of heaven.

3. It is freely bestowed, Eph. i. 5. There is nothing in the adopted naturally, more than in the rest of their natural father's house, to move God to pitch on them rather than others, so that it is free grace merely that makes the difference. Neither birth, nor beauty, nor parts, can be here alleged, Ezek. xvi. Neither was it from indigence, as among men, that God adopted any of the children of men, but from his own bountiful nature: not to bring any additional pleasure or comfort to himself, for he needs none, but to make them partakers of his goodness.

4. *Lastly*, It is a never-failing relation. Once a child of God, ever so, 1 John viii. 35. If a child wander from his father's house, he will be sought and brought back again; so the children of God

shall persevere in the state of grace. A servant of the house of heaven may be turned out of doors, and quite leave their master, 2 Pet. ii. 1. yea, a natural son may also perish or be lost. So Adam was turned out, so the fallen angels never recovered. But God's adopted children can never fall totally away, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—34.

USE 1. Of information. Is adoption into God's family the peculiar privilege of those that are effectually called? Then,

1. The gospel-calling is the highest calling men are capable of, Phil. iii. 14. It calls men to the dignity of the sons of God. And they that undervalue it shew themselves sons of earth, that know not the things of God. It might draw tears of pity from the eyes God has enlightened, to think how the gospel-call is slighted, as idle tales, how men value themselves on trifles and baubles of this world, and think the compliance with the gospel-call a vain thing: and all this by men whose eyes the god of this world has blinded, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. who trample on the pearl, because they know not the value of it.

2. The unconverted man is of Satan's family still, a child of the devil, for he is not adopted into God's family, John viii. 44. Many a gospel-call has sounded in your ears, sinner, hast thou not come away on the call? then thou art yet a child of the devil, Acts xiii. 10. and therefore an heir of hell and of wrath. Perhaps thou wilt not believe this, and never couldst: but that is agreeable enough to the blindness of the children of the family of darkness, Rev. iii. 17. Whose image dost thou bear? Holiness is God's image, unholiness the devil's. Thy dark heart and unholy life plainly tell the family thou art of.

3. The unconverted man has no right before the Lord to sit down at the Lord's table. It is children's bread, and not to be cast to the dogs, Matt. xv. 26. It is true, men that make a credible profession of their repentance have a right before the church; for of the heart in that case men cannot judge. But a token from an angel will not bear out a child of the devil, at God's table before the Lord. God makes this feast for his children; and if God had not children to feed here, it would not be prepared: but wo to those that come in among them, not having sincerely forsaken their natural father's house, and their own people. Will he welcome the children of his grand enemy among his own? No surely. Therefore first comply with the gospel-call, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' Come to Christ, that ye may be entered into God's family by adoption, and then come to his table.

4. Compliance with the gospel-call brings with it a right to the table of the Lord. This do, and ye shall be adopted into his fa-

mily, and have a right to the privileges thereof. This answers the question, How may we be fitted for the Lord's table? The gospel calls you to come away, forget your own people, and your father's house, the entertainment, work, and business thereof. Give up with all your lusts and idols, receive Christ for your Prophet, Priest, and King; enter into the covenant sincerely. And Christ's Father shall be your Father, and then ye shall be fitted to come to his table, and have the children's portion.

5. A true Christian is more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. xii. 26. A godly man is more preferable to a wicked man, than a king's son is to the son of a slave, though in external things the latter may have the pre-eminence. A saint in rags is a child of God, while the wicked laded with honours and wealth is a child of the devil. The former has privileges as far above those of the other, as the heavens are above the earth. O! if this were believed, people would more eagerly pursue after grace than gold, and seek the state of grace more than all the world can afford.

6. See hence the spring of the hatred of the world against the people of God, that has vented itself in all the abuses they have met with from the wicked. They are of opposite families, that will never agree, John xv. 19. Hence it is that the love of the brethren is made a sign of a child of God, 1 John iii. 14. And to be haters and despisers of them, is a black mark. But look abroad through the world, and ye will see, that if there be persons who hate to be restrained, but can take a latitude to themselves, these are the men. But as for others that dare not go into the same excess of riot, who tremble at the Lord's word, and carry at a distance from the appearance of evil, these are ready to be maligned, mocked, and despised, as men of no spirit, because not of the spirit of the devil's family. Nay, not only is the world's contempt and spite against the children, but against the very servants, whom the world despise oft-times for no other reason, but because they are servants, and concerned in the church, which is God's family on earth. Unlike the disposition of God's children, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. who say, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.'

7. *Lastly*, The people of God are brethren, and should live together in peace and unity and love, as brethren. O how unnatural are the jarrings and discords among those that profess to be of the same family of heaven! Our heavenly Father setting his children on their way home together, says, as Joseph said to his brethren, 'See that ye fall not out by the way,' Gen. xlv. 24. Lay by all

feuds and discords among yourselves, forgive as ye would be forgiven. And especially I warn all against approaching to the table of the Lord, in the leaven of bitterness, malice, and revenge, keeping up their quarrels. It is a feast for the children of the family, sealing our communion with one another; a seal of the pardon of sin, and reconciliation with God, which we cannot have unless we forgive others from the heart, Mat. vi. 15. Therefore remember, that 'if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,' chap. v. 23, 24.

USE II. Try whether ye be the children of God, adopted into God's family or not. To quicken you hereto, consider,

Mot. 1. Ye were born children of the devil's family; he was your natural father, and there is no middle state betwixt the two families. Still ye belong either to the one or the other. Does it not concern you then to search which of the two ye are now of; whether ye be come out from among them, or are still living with them, among whom ye were born?

2. This matter is of the strictest weight. Upon the one hand, are the most excellent privileges which it is sad to lose; and on the other, the most dreadful disadvantages, which it is terrible to lie under. They differ as heaven and hell; and indeed your eternal state turns upon this point. If ye be children of God, heaven shall be your mansion; if not, hell your everlasting abode.

3. Many deceive themselves in this point. They call God Father, whom he will never own for his children, John viii. 41, 44. They look for the privileges of his children, who will be disowned, as children of Satan. And O what a terrible surprise will that be, to be cast down from the highest hopes to the lowest pitch of despair!

4. *Lastly*, This trial is at all times necessary, but especially on occasion of the sacrament, 1 Cor. xi. 28. 'Wherefore let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' To clear this, is to clear your right to that holy ordinance. The children whom God has taken into his family by adoption, he has prepared that table for, and for none else. Others are debarred as none of his family, but of the family of Satan. They are bid welcome as his own children, for whose nourishment, growth, and comfort, he has prepared it. Ye may know this by the following marks.

Mark 1. The image ye bear. Children are like their father, and all God's children father themselves. I allude to Judges viii. 18. They each one resemble the children of a king. Look to thy own

soul, and say as Christ of the tribute-money, 'Whose image and superscription is this?' The image of God may shine more brightly in one than another, in one person at one time more than another; but his image is on all his children, 2 Cor. iii. 18. If thou bearest his image, thou wilt be like him.

1. In the head, for there will be spiritual and saving knowledge, Col. iii. 10. He is 'the Father of lights,' and his children are 'children of light,' Eph. v. 8. Ye that are yet living in your natural darkness, with whom there has been no morning to put an end to the darkness of a natural state, are yet of the family of Satan; and particularly grossly ignorant ones are so, Isa. xxvii. 11. For though some of God's children may not be book-learned, they are all Spirit-learned, John vi. 45. But if God has enlightened your darkness and ye are renewed in knowledge, it is a good sign if ye are let into the knowledge of God and spiritual things, by the working of the Spirit of the Lord on you.

It is true, there is a false light, and a vain knowledge of spiritual things, even in the devil's family; but saving knowledge is, (1.) Solid and humbling, Job xlii. 5, 6; and the more a man has of it, he is the more vile in his own eyes: the other is airy and windy, 1 Cor. viii. 1. Knowledge puffeth up, and makes a man think himself something, when he is nothing. (2.) Lively and sanctifying, John xiii. 17. When the Spirit came on the primitive Church, Acts ii. 3. there appeared tongues like fire: so true knowledge has a heat with it, to burn up known sin, and to burn toward known duty. They know and desire to know, in order to practise. The other is a sort of wild fire, that has light with it, but no heat; meet enough to lead people to the pit, where there is a burning heat but no light, 1 Cor. viii. 1. Unholy ministers and professors, that have knowledge, they are like gentlemen skilled in architecture; all the use they have for it, is to tell how a house should be built, and draw the draughts, but they never lay a stone. The child of God is like the mason that learns the trade, to the end he may work in it daily. The former may have more of the theory than the latter, and can talk more rationally about it; but they are not called masons: the latter have more of the practice, so the name is theirs. Even so in spirituals, men not enlightened in the knowledge of God, so as to practise it in works of holiness, are not called of God Christians. (3.) *Lastly*, Experimental and savoury, Phil. iii. 9. The child of God feels the power of truth on his soul. He sees the glory of Christ and religion, and he loves them, and is touched with the overcoming beauty. He feels the ill of sin, and he is put in horror with the deformity of it, 1 Peter ii. 3. The other is speculative, un-

felt, untried, 1 Cor. xiii. 1.—3. They speak of religion as a parrot, without the sense or knowledge of the things themselves, as a man does of war that was never at a battle, or one of sweet spices that he never saw, 1 Tim. i. 7.

2. In heart. Children readily partake of the disposition of their parents; so that as they are like them in the face, they are like them in their manners too. The child of God gets a new heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. So righteousness and holiness are parts of the image of God, Eph. iv. 24. Every child of God is in some measure like David, a man after God's own heart. The heart that was bent to evil, gets a set to the right side; the heart that was enmity against God, is turned to him. So that the soul loves what God loves, hates what he hates, sorrows for what grieves his Spirit, rejoices in what is acceptable to him. These are the upright and pure in heart in a gospel sense, Matth. v. 8.

But some will say, Well, I keep always a good heart to God. Others, Alas! the heart is the worst bit in me, where I can see the least likeness to God. *Ans.* Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. The heart is both the best and worst bit in man. The best, Prov. iv. 23; the worst, Jer. xvii. 9. And therefore I conclude, that the former sort are none of the children of God, because they are blind, and mistake the worst part of them for the best, the chambers of imagery for the temple of God, Rev. iii. 17. Prov. xxx. 12. The latter sort may be God's children; for that which makes the heart to be both the best and worst part, is, that in every heart of God's family on earth, there is a renewed part, the spirit; and an unrenewed part, the flesh, Gal. v. 17; the one the best part, the other the worst. So that this holds of the children of God; for the best part of an unrenewed man is his life, be it never so bad, his heart is always worse, as the fountain is worse than the stream, Mark vii. 21. Now, the child of God, looking on the unrenewed part of the heart, sees the worst bit in him: but if he look to the renewed part, it is the best for all that, better than his life, Psal. xlv. 13; be it never so good, Matth. xxvi. 41.

The heart of a child of God is a roomy house; and grace and corruption in that heart are like two flitters, one going out of the house, the other coming into it. The outgoing tenant is loath to leave the house, makes no speed to lift his plenshing, but as the incomer lifts it for him to make room for his own. So here lies the one's furniture, there the other's in and about the same house. Even so God's good things that he has in a saint, and the devil's evil things that he has in him, are both to be found in the house of the heart, and standing about the door in the life. In the heart of

a child of God, upon the one hand lies God's plenishing, faith, humility, meekness, &c. on the other, Satan's, unbelief, pride, passion, &c.; with this difference, that the latter is nearest the door, and all lifted out of their place, which they sometimes stood in, when they had the house there alone.

But what the differencing mark here of a heart on which God's likeness is, is, that the law of God is written on that heart, Heb. viii. 10. This is the peculiar privilege of a child of God. And it speaks three things.

(1.) A heart-approbation of the law. The law of God is holy and pure, condemning all impurity wherever it is found. But a child of God heartily approves of it, even though it strike against his most beloved idols. He approves of it in his judgment, as just and righteous; and not only so, but in his practical judgment, as good as well as just, Rom. vii. 12; which evidences the natural enmity to be broken, and the heart new moulded, Rom. viii. 7.

(2.) A heart-inclination to the holy law. There is a principle within the man lying the same way with the law, and bending towards what it directs to, and away from what it forbids, Rom. vii. 22. And though there be a contrary principle to this, which thwarts and crosses it, yet the child of God takes part with the former against the latter, and is striving and longing to be rid of it, Rom. vii. 24. This is the new set of the heart, given in the new birth, consisting not in bare wishes to be conformed to that law, but in a resolute bent of the heart for it, which will never leave its struggling, till it overcome at last. And,

(3.) An universality in both, Psal. cxix. 6. It is not some shreds and pieces of the law that the heart approves of and inclines to, but the whole law, in every part thereof to them known, ver. 128. The holy law in all the parts thereof is a copy of the holy divine nature, and it is transcribed into the heart of the child of God, in so far as there are gracious inclinations wrought in the soul answerable to the several points of the law, as the wax bears the impress of the seal, John i. 16. So that try the child of God in his weakest side, this approbation and inclination will be found, Psal. xviii. 23.

3. In their walk, Eph. v. 1. As children follow their father's footsteps, the children of God follow their heavenly Father. We have had the way of our Father, God, chalked out to us in the way our Lord took, and we must prove our sonship by following his steps, 1 John ii. 6. He walked in the way of humility, meekness, self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness; and if we be following his steps in sincerity, conscientiously aiming at these things, it is an evidence we are the children of God.

Particularly, the way of love to men was a notable road of his, which we must follow, Eph. v. 2. A spirit of bitterness, fieryness, and selfishness, whatever men profess, is a black mark, it is so very unlike Christ's way. And although the loving and seeking the good of our friends is so very rare in the world, and people generally hesitate not to return evil for evil, nay, many times working mischief to them that never wronged them; yet the loving of our enemies, as Christ loved his, and doing them good as we have opportunity, is absolutely necessary to evidence us to be the children of God, Matth. v. 44, 45.

Mark 2. By your affections to the family of God. A child of God has child-like affections to the family of heaven. Nature teaches us a special affection to our relations; and the new nature and state teaches the same to the heavenly family, betwixt whom there is a spiritual bond. Try the pulse of your affections, thereby to see your state.

1. A child of God has a child-like love and affection to God as his Father, and to Christ as his Elder Brother. This is a sure mark, 1 John iv. 19. They bear a superlative, transcendent love to God and Christ, loving him above all persons, and all things. He is dearer to them than lawful or unlawful enjoyments, Psalm lxxiii. 25. And this love will manifest itself.

(1.) In honouring him as a father, Mal. i. 6. A child of God has an honour for him, which the rest of the world have not. He sees a glory, loveliness, and majesty in him above all other, 1 Pet. ii. 7. which produces a love mixed with reverence, that makes up the child-like disposition.—These are separated in others. The presumptuous hypocrite seems to have a love to him, but they want reverence, and their pretended familiarity breeds contempt. The unrenewed heart, under convictions of sin and duty, has a slavish fear of him, but no love to him. But the child of God has love mixed with reverence.

(2.) A conscientious obedience to his commands, 1 John v. 3. The father's command is a sufficient bond of obedience on a kindly child; and so is God's on those that are his.—It is lamentable to think of the horrid untenderness and woful latitude that many take to themselves, whose conscience can witness, that God's command, though known, has not the weight of a feather on their consciences, in many things; especially where their own interest is concerned, or in things that are thought light of by the world. But a child of God has weighty thoughts of God's authority, smiles, and frowns, and will rather venture the displeasing of any than his Father.

(3.) In submitting to his chastisements, Micah vii. 9. 'I bear the

indignation of the Lord,' says the prophet, 'because I have sinned against him.' It is the disposition of a child of God, to justify God under the rebukes of providence, to condemn himself, and turn to the hand that smiteth.

(4.) In his absence from them, and displeasure against them, it is the disposition of a child of God, (1.) To take his absence heavily; so the spouse is heart-sick when her beloved is gone, a thing that many are very little acquainted with, Cant. v. 8. (2.) To justify him in his withdrawals; the soul leaves its complaint on itself, Psal. xxii. 1, 3. (3.) To long for his return and countenance, with a holy impatience, as Sisera's mother, Judges v. 28. 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' Psal. lxiii. 1. 'O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.' (4.) To take rest in nothing while he hides his face. Worldly comforts, yea, gospel-ordinances, are sapless without him. Still they say with Job, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' Job xxiii. 3. *Lastly*, To use all endeavours to find him, as the spouse did, Cant. v.

(5.) *Lastly*, In his presence with them, and the outlettings of himself to them. (1.) To be well content in the enjoyment of himself instead of all things, Psal. iv. 6, 7. (2.) To be inflamed with love to him, Luke xxiv. 32. (3.) To be desiring more and more of his presence, Cant. viii. 6. (4.) To like well the full enjoyment in heaven, Phil. i. 23. (5.) To be loath to part, Cant. iii. 5.

And to clear yet more this mark of love to God,

[1.] It is love to God for himself; not only for what he has to give us, as the hypocrite's servile love is; but also for what he is in himself, Psal. xlv. 2. 'Thou art fairer than the sons of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever, Psal. lxxiii. 25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee.' They love him in all his perfections, particularly for his holiness and spotless purity, Psal. xevii. 12. 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.'

[2.] They love what is his for his sake. His stamp and image on any thing makes it lovely to them, Psal. xxvi. 8. 'Lord,' says David, 'I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.' Hence they love his truths, ordinances, and people. Which brings to a second particular.

2. He has a love to the brethren of the family, 1 John iii. 14. For clearing this mark, consider,

(1.) It is a love to them as such, for the image of God appearing in them. When we love the godly for their godliness, the saints for

their sanctity, we love God in them, and so may conclude, 'that every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,' 1 John v. 1. Hypocrites may love saints, because of natural relation to them, their obliging conversation, their being of their way or opinion, and the like: but happy those who love them for naked grace in them, that pick the pearl out of the dunghill of many unpleasing things about them, and kindly love them for that.

(2.) It is an universal love, to all the saints, Eph. i. 15. A child of God will love all who to his discerning bear God's image: not only the saints in gay clothing, but going in rags; not only those that are of our way, but of whatever party they be, if they agree with him in bearing God's image.

(3.) *Lastly*, The more grace any have, they will have the more of the love of the child of God. The more like our heavenly Father, the more we will love them, since that likeness is the cause of the love.

Mark ult. By your spirit. A child of God has the spirit of the family of heaven; the Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15. Now, the Spirit of adoption is,

1. A Spirit of prayer, *ib.* This casts all prayerless persons that are come to years of discretion, as none of God's children. As it also casts all those, who, though they have a gift of prayer, and use it too, yet are strangers to the spirit of prayer. Now, the spirit of prayer makes spiritual worship, John iv. 24; that is, by the Spirit he is helped to praying affections, seeking the enjoyment of God himself in the duty, and has his love, faith, humility, dependence on the Lord's word through Christ, his sense of wants, sincere desire of supply, &c. stirred up in him by the Spirit, Rom. viii. 26.

2. A spirit of liberty, not of bondage, *ib.* The Spirit of adoption carries a man out from the influence of the covenant of works, so that he does not serve God as a slave, merely or mainly for fear of punishment, or hope of reward; but as a son does a father, out of love.

3. *Lastly*, A noble spirit, that raiseth a man's thoughts, aims, and designs, beyond the little mean things of this world; making him resolute for the enjoyment of God at any rate, and the land that is afar off, Num. xiv. 24. Those that are of noble families scorn to pursue the mean designs of the inferior sort, having a spirit suitable to their quality.—None are of such a noble extract as the saints are, by their new state: and their spirit is in some measure agreeable thereto.

II. I proceed to the second branch of the doctrine, which is, 'Whosoever will comply with the gospel-call, shall be adopted into

God's family. God will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters.'

Here I shall shew,

1. What is the call of the gospel, on compliance with which men shall be adopted into God's family.

2. Confirm the doctrine.

3. Lay before you further the nature of this relation to the family of heaven.

4. Apply the subject.

FIRST, I shall show what is the call of the gospel, on compliance with which we shall be adopted into the family of God. It consists of two parts. It is a call,

1. To leave the devil's family: 'Come out from among them,' Psal. xlv. 10. Come away from the family ye were born in: leave your natural father, his house, work, and way. Sinners, ye have remained too long at home. Repent now, and be converted. Give up with your old way of sin and sloth: bestir yourselves like true Israelites, and come forth from the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage, from the iron furnace. This is the gospel-call to you.

2. To come away to Jesus Christ, the head of the blessed society, and so put yourselves into the family of heaven, Matth. xi. 28. 1 Pet. ii. 4. A father, a master, ye must have; and ye are called to change fathers and masters, to take the Lord himself instead of Satan. Join yourselves to the Lord in the covenant of grace. Offer yourselves into the family of heaven, and for that cause accept the offer of the elder brother of that family, taking him for your all, in all his offices. He is saying to you as he did to the spouse, Cant. iv. 8. 'Come with me from Lebanon,' &c. He offers to introduce you into his father's house and family, and to get you admitted among the children.

SECONDLY, I shall confirm this doctrine, 'That whosoever will comply with the gospel-call, shall be adopted into God's family.'

1. This is the plain gospel-promise, held out to sinners to engage them to come away, as in the text expressly. It is the Lord's own word, who is truth itself, and whose deeds of mercy and grace are always equal to his word; and ye may with all security venture on it. And it is no more than what was prophesied before to be the effect of the preaching of the gospel, among those that comply with it, Hos. i. 10.—'Ye are the sons of the living God.'

2. All that have complied, and come away, have met with no worse entertainment, than the promise put them in hope of, John i. 12. 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' They were of sundry sorts that received him,

some high, some low, some of the greatest sinners, that were grown sinners in the devil's family. But they all met with this entertainment. The apostle John, 1 Epist. iii. 1. speaks of this honour as common to all that have believed. And the entertainment they have got before us, was designed for the encouraging of those in after generations to come away, Eph. ii. 7.

3. This was the very end and design of the incarnation of the Son of God, his obedience, death, and sufferings, to bring in sinners as children into his Father's family, John xi. 51, 52. The repairing of the breach made therein by the fall of angels and men, was laid upon him, as the fittest person: forasmuch as he was by nature the Son of God, he was the fittest to make others sons by grace. Hence he is represented,

(1.) As the first born among many brethren, a first-born in a positive sense, whom other sons were to follow, Rom. viii. 29. The man Christ was designed to be God's first-born; and therefore there must of necessity be other men to be his brethren, as children of the same family. Else where is his pre-eminence, dominion, priesthood, &c. if there be no brethren added to him? Now these must be of men taken out of the devil's family, or not at all; for there are none other of Adam's posterity, whose nature he took.

(2.) As a Captain upon the head of the children bringing them home to their Father's house, Heb. ii. 10. The glory the saints receive at last, is given them as children and heirs, Matth. xxv. 34. And Christ is appointed the Captain of those heirs of glory, leading them to their inheritance. Now, these must draw to his standard out of Satan's family, and list themselves under his banner, his army being gathered together by the gospel.

(3.) As one lowering himself to exalt our nature, that we might be capable of adoption into his Father's family, Heb. ii. 14. For this cause he took our nature into personal union with his divine nature, that the meanness of the adopted might not be such as to stain the honour of the Adopter.—And now, since the Son of God is also the Son of man, the way is opened for the children of men to become the children of God.

(4.) *Lastly*, As travailing and bringing forth children unto God. Christ's death-pains were birth-pangs, Acts ii. 24.—Well may he call believers *Benoni* and *Nahptali*; for his pangs for bringing forth these children put him to strong crying and tears, Heb. v. 7; into an agony and bloody sweat, Luke xxii. 44; and in the end he died of them. But only they were not in vain, he will have issue by all his labour and toil, as that word signifies, Isa. liii. 11. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul.'

What ground then remains to doubt of this adoption, which Christ has been so employed for, and upon which so much of his honour depends ?

4. The design of the ministry of the gospel is to bring sinners out of Satan's family into God's by adoption. And therefore they are sent out with that message in the name of the Lord, 2 Cor. vi. 17. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.' They are sent to travel betwixt the two families, and persuade sinners to forget their father's house. The Lord does not send out his ambassadors to mock you, but as really as the word of God is truth, if ye comply with their call, ye shall be God's sons and daughters.

5. *Lastly*, Whosoever shall comply with the gospel-call shall be espoused and married to Christ, and therefore cannot miss to be a child of his Father's family, Hos. ii. 19. The gospel-call is the carrying on a treaty betwixt the elder brother of the house of heaven and a child of the house of hell. It is offered to all to whom the gospel comes, and to you in particular, amongst whom the feast of the espousals is providing, Matth. xxii. 4. It is his Father's good will that this match be made. And therefore whom Christ takes for his spouse, the Father will never refuse for a child of his family.

THIRDLY, I will lay before you farther the nature of this relation unto the family of heaven. The text tells us, that the issue of this adoption is, that God will be a Father to the adopted, and they his children. Now, this may be considered in two respects. (1.) In point of privilege, and this privilege is exceedingly great; but of that we have spoken already. (2.) In point of duty, which the privilege brings along with it; and that I will now lay before you. If ye mind to join yourselves to the family of heaven, remember ye are to be there under the character of sons and daughters of the house, and must resolve to carry yourselves as such; otherwise ye do but mock God, and will ruin your own souls. Lay then your account with this, that God must be a Father to you, and ye his sons and daughters. And this in point of duty implies,

1. Ye must join interests with God's family. As the father's interest is the interest of all the children, so God's interest must be yours, on all hazards, Matth. xvi. 24. 'If any man will come after me (says Christ), let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' There is a continued battle betwixt Christ and his angels, and the devil and his; the peace will never be made. Now chuse what side you will fall in with. Christ is carrying all the family of God on earth away to heaven, in the ship of the covenant, with a design to weather all the storms they may meet with by the way; never to yield to go back to the devil's ground. Are ye con-

tent to embark with him on these terms? If so, then say now as Ruth did to Naomi, Ruth i. 16. 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' If not, better not to put your hand to the plough, than to look back.

2. God must command, and ye must obey without disputing your Father's orders. God says to children, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right,' Eph. vi. 1. 'Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord,' Col. iii. 20. The same are the laws of the family of heaven, 1 Pet. i. 14. 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.' If ye will come in here, leave your own corrupt will behind you, for your Father's will must be yours, Psal. xlv. 10. and ye must resolve to submit to all the laws of the house. If there be therefore any known duty ye have no mind to comply with, or known sin ye have no mind to part with, venture not in among the children, for ye cannot have the portion or welcome of a child.

3. Ye must give him internal as well as external obedience. Filial affections are due to a father; love, reverence, delight in him, and fear to offend him, Rom. viii. 15. A slave or servant will give God the hand, when they do not give him the heart. But if thou be a son, thou must have child-like affections towards him. If thou hast no heart for him, no kindly zeal and concern on thy spirit to please him, thou canst be no child of his. And if thou dost not mind to ply internal as well as external obedience, thou art not for that family.

4. Ye must resolve to imitate your Father, Eph. v. 1. 'Be followers of God, as dear children.' Conform yourselves no more to the world, to follow the way of the multitude, Rom. xii. 2. but set yourselves to write after Christ's copy, to follow his example, and to 'walk as he walked,' 1 John ii. 6. for 'he has left us an example that we should follow his steps.' Consider if ye be so minded, ye are welcome to the children's table; if not, ye are not fit to come there.

5. Ye and your lot must be at God's disposal, Psal. xlvii. 4. Ye must take what place, and act what part, in the family the Father shall think meet to dispose of you to. The soul that comes to Christ lays his all down at the Lord's feet, Acts ix. 6; and if ye mind to come into the family, lay your account with this; for God will not allow his children to carve for themselves, but leave that to him.

6. Ye must submit to correction, Heb. xii. 6, 7. The discipline of the house they must submit to who will come into it. The cross ye must be content to take up, if ever ye mind to put on the crown. Lay your account with the ilk-day's cross, and the holy-day's cross : for all the children of God are brought up under it. And they that will refuse the cross, will refuse their part in the family of heaven, since there is no part there without it.

7. *Lastly*, Ye must resolve to persevere to the end, John viii. 35. Ye must take an everlasting farewell of Satan's family, never to go back to your former lusts and idols; but to be the Lord's only, wholly, and for evermore. Never enter the threshold of the house unless ye mind to stay for ever. Be contented to have your ears nailed to the door-posts; for God has said, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,' Heb. x. 38.

Use, Of exhortation. Comply with the gospel-call. Come to Christ out from among them, and partake of this adoption into God's family. Now ye may have God to be your Father, and ye may be his children. Secure this blessed bargain for yourselves now; and put a close to that transaction by sincerely closing with Christ, and giving up yourselves wholly to be the Lord's. I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Consider the wretched case of the family thou art of. Whilst thou art not a child of God, thou art a member of Satan's family, John viii. 44; and they are a miserable society. They are miserable now, and will be miserable for evermore; for God has sworn that he will have war with them for ever. See the great stroke that will be the decisive one. Matth. xxv. 41. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' Every unconverted man and woman is a child of wrath; that is their heritage from the Lord, which will make judgment their food, and everlasting sorrow their bed. None of them have a garment to cover their nakedness, nor wherewith to pay their debt to divine justice, so wretchedly poor are they; and therefore Christ says, 'Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear,' Rev. iii. 18.

Mot. 2. Consider what a Father God will be to you, the best of fathers. No children are so happy as God's children are.

1. The most honourable Father; he is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. And there are none whose eyes God has opened, but they will value this adoption more than all the fading honours of a world, 1 John iii. 1. Moses preferred it to being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Heb. xi. 24, 25.

2. The most loving and compassionate Father. It goes beyond the love of fathers and mothers too to their sucking children, Isa. xlix. 15, 16. 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.' What father's love would have made him to do what he has done for his children, even when they were enemies? John iii. 16. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

3. The most helpful Father, he is able to help in all cases that his children can be in. Are they pursued? he has a refuge for them. Whatever they want, he can give them, for all is his. And if they be held at short commons at any time, it is because he sees it is best for them. When death comes, and neither father nor mother can help, he can; as Psalm xlviii. ult. 'For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.'

4. The richest Father, that has the best inheritance to give to his children, 'an inheritance incorrupted and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,' 1 Pet. i. 4. He has prepared for them a better country, a glorious city, a palace for their mansion-place; richest treasures of glory. And all these are such as shall never go from them, nor they from them.

5. The wisest Father, 'God only wise.' He is one to whose disposal one may securely resign himself absolutely. He cannot be mistaken in his measures for his children's welfare; and he ever seeks it.

6. *Lastly*, His children have the best attendants, in their life, Heb. i. ult. 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?' and at their death, angels to convoy them to Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22. Yea, himself is ever with them in life and in death, till he bring them where they shall be beyond hazard, Psal. xxiii. 4. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.'

Mot. 3. Consider the mighty price paid for the redemption of sinners, to make way for them into God's family, Gal. iv. 4, 5. 'When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' There was no hope of this till the Son of God undertook the work of redemption. And by his precious blood he purchased it for us. O! trample not on the price and purchase of blood.

Mot. 4. Consider what a wonderful thing it is, that there is a possibility of it, that children of Satan may become the children of God. Whoso considers their own vileness and God's greatness, must cry out with wonder, 'Is this the manner of men!'

Mot. ult. It is this day in your offer. The Lord says to you, even to all of you, as in the text, *I will be a Father unto you, &c.* And ye may have it, and have it sealed to you. But it will not always be so. The day of grace will come to an end.

Case 1. But will ever God set such a sinful and vile wretch as me among his children? *Ans.* Yes, if ye make not yourselves more vile, by rejecting Jesus Christ. I know nothing can hinder you from adoption, but that, John iii. 19. 'And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' The greatness of your sin will not do it, Isa. i. 18. 'Come now and let us reason together saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' The multitude of them, Isa. lv. 7. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Your frequent backslidings, Jer. iii. 1, 4. 'They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me saith the Lord. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?' Come to Christ, unite with him by faith, in the way of the covenant, and God will pardon and adopt you.

Case 2. But I fear I never will be able to carry as a child of God. *Ans.* Is it thy sincere purpose to labour to conform thyself to the manners of God's house? then he bids thee welcome into his family. He can do for his children, what no other father can do, even transform them into his own image and likeness, and preserve them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation.