

CHRIST THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

ISAIAH ix. 6,

His name shall be called the Everlasting Father.

THIS is the fourth syllable of Christ's name. Having called him a child, a son, a child born, a son given; it is shown here, that though he is a son, he is a Father too; yea, though he is a child born, he is the Father of eternity, *i.e.* The Everlasting Father, which plainly leads us to his divine nature.

DOCTRINE. Jesus Christ, the prince presented and given to us of the Father, is himself the Everlasting Father.

In handling this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. In what respects Christ is the Everlasting Father.

II. What a Father he is.

III. *Lastly*, Improve the subject.

I. In what respects is Christ the Everlasting Father?

1st, He is the Father of all things, who was from everlasting, before all. He is, with his Father and Spirit, one God, the common Father of all by creation; 1 Cor. viii. 6, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." Hence he is called the beginning of the creation of God, Rev. iii. 14; from whom all had their beginning. So he is the Father of all men, more particularly, Mal. ii. 10; of their souls and bodies, but especially of their souls, Heb. xii. 9; all men, yea, all creatures whatsoever, owing their being to him, as a son to the father. And so being before all creatures, himself is uncreated and eternal, Prov. viii. 23.

2dly, He is the Father of all believers, in a peculiar manner, who will be to everlasting; and that in two respects.

1. As he is, with his Father and Spirit, one God, Eph. iv. 6; the one God and Father of the family of heaven, who has adopted believers for his sons and daughters, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. And thus we call him, with the Father and Spirit, our Father, Matth. vi. 9.

2. As he is Mediator, God man; Heb. ii. 13, "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me." So believers are his children, his seed, Isa. liiii. 10; standing in a peculiar relation to him as such. And of this relation there is a threefold ground.

(1.) Believers are of his flesh and of his bones, Eph. v. 30. A plain allusion to the woman's being formed of Adam's body; whereby it comes to pass, that all mankind do entirely owe their original

to Adam; all his posterity being born of the woman who was made of him. So all believers owe their original entirely to the body of Christ, cast into the sleep of death on the cross; Rom. vii. 4, "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." Isa. liii. 10, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." And herein Abraham was a type of him; of whose body, when in a sort dead, a seed innumerable as the stars did spring, Rom. iv. 18, 19; Heb. xi. 12. So from the body of Christ dead on the cross and grave, spring the innumerable company of believers that ever were, are, or shall be; John xii. 24, 32, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

(2.) They are begotten of him into their new life and nature, which they have as believers, Deut. xxxii. 6, 18. The seed is the word of the gospel, James i. 18; that incorruptible seed, 1 Pet. i. 23; quickened by his Spirit, John vi. 63; whereby being made to believe, and so united to Christ, they are made new creatures, Eph. i. 13; 2. Cor. v. 17. So that as they owe the purchase of their gracious being to his merit, they owe their actual gracious being to his Spirit, both wholly.

(3.) They do in a peculiar manner bear, and were appointed to bear Christ's image, as children of that Father, Rom. viii. 29. Believers bear not only the image of God, but the image of Christ. There is a difference betwixt these two. The latter implies all that the former does; but it takes in more also. There are two parts of it.

1. Conformity to Christ in his holiness. And in this respect believers are like him, as the wax impressed with the seal bears the like figure, Eph. i. 13. John i. 16. And here is the image of God, which all believers do bear, and which is a part of the image of Christ. This image of God believers have not at the first hand, as Adam had it; but at the second hand, viz. from Christ; as Adam's children would have had it from him, if he had stood, and as we now actually have Satan's image, impressed by Satan at the fall on Adam, and by Adam communicated to us. So God being to restore his image to fallen man, first impressed it on the man Christ, that from him it might be communicated to believers in him. The man Christ was made like God, as a son is like a father; and believers are made like the man Christ. On the man Christ that image was impressed, and from him it is expressed on us, and thence called *Christ's image*.

That is, God making the man Christ the second Adam, made him

after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. So believers being created again in Christ, he communicates to them of that knowledge, righteousness, &c. which image of Christ, begun now, will be perfected after in all believers. All this is clear from 1 Cor. xv. 49, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly;" Rom. viii. 29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Hence believers are said to be "created in Christ," Eph. ii. 10. As Eve was made in the image of God, being made in the image of Adam, Gen. ii. 18, so the church is made in the image of Christ.

2. Conformity to Christ and his sufferings. This is it that is particularly aimed at, Rom. viii. 29, compared with verse 28. Hence believers are said to be "partakers of the sufferings of Christ," 1 Pet. iv. 13. And their sufferings are called his, 2 Cor. i. 5. In his sufferings he gave us an example to follow, 1 Peter ii. 21. What can be more natural than that the members of a suffering head be suffering members? that the followers of a crucified Christ bear the cross after him?

This conformity lies in three things; for the wicked suffer too.

(1) Believers' sufferings are destructive of sin; Isa. xxvii. 9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." The more Christ suffered, the more the works of the devil were brought near to ruin. The man who by his sufferings is made more holy, more loosed from the world, more pressing after God in Christ, is conformed to Christ in his sufferings. Though indeed the progress may not be sensible sometimes, more than that of the sun in the firmament, or a tree in the earth.

(2) Believers welcome their sufferings on that account, as they tend to the ruin of sin; as the sick man does a bitter drug for the sake of health, Matth. xvi. 24, 25. It is true, they may have their fits of impatience under the rod, and may be desirous to be free; but they will turn towards a resignation. Our Lord Jesus, who never in the least murmured, said, Matth. xxvi. 39, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

(3) Believers' sufferings will have a happy and glorious issue. As Christ went to the crown by the cross, so will they, 1 Tim. ii. 12. While the sufferings of others will end in eternal suffering, their present sufferings will end in glory: their longest and blackest night will have a blessed morning, an eternal day; with which their worst nights of trouble are not to be compared, Rom. viii. 17.

Thus he is the believer's Father, and he is their everlasting Father.

1. The relation is never interrupted from the first moment it is made. Once in God's family, never out of it again, for shorter or longer time. Their Father may frown on them, and chastise them, and hide his love from them; but he is their Father still, Psal. lxxxix. 30.—33. The adoption lasts, they are still of Christ's body, their new nature is never lost, and his image is never quite defaced in them.

2. The relation is never ended. He will be their Father through all eternity. Among men there is no interruption of the fatherly relation, while the father and the son live; but death dissolves it. But here death cannot dissolve the relation, Rom. viii. 38, 39. He will be, and they will be for ever; and he will be their Father for ever, and they his children, Rev. xxi. 7.

II. What a Father is Christ? He is a non-such Father.

1. He is the most honourable Father; the King of kings, and Lord of lords. None whose eyes are opened, but they value this relation to Christ more than all the fading honours of a world, 1 John iii. 1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Moses preferred it to the being called the son of the daughter of a king, Heb. xi. 24, 25.

2. The most loving and compassionate Father. His love has gone beyond that of fathers, and mothers too, even to their sucking children, Isa. xlix. 15, 16. David wished he had died for his rebellious son, but Christ really died for his.

3. The most helpful Father. Many times fathers, though they fain would, cannot help their children: but he can help his in all cases. In the greatest danger he is a refuge; in all wants, he has store for their supply; if they be held at short commons at any time, it is because he sees it best for them. In death, when neither father nor mother can help, he will, Psal. xlvi. 14, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." He is ever a present help.

4. The richest Father, that has the best inheritance to give his children; 1 Pet. i. 4, "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." He has prepared for them a better country, a glorious city, a palace for their mansion-house; and the richest treasures; and these such as shall never go from them, nor they from them.

5. The wisest Father, "God only wise." To his disposal one may securely resign himself absolutely. He ever seeks his children's welfare: and he cannot be mistaken in his measures.

6. *Lastly*, He has provided the best attendants for his children in

their life. Angels are ministering spirits to them during their life, Heb. i. 14; and at their death they carry their souls into heaven, Luke xvi. 22. Yea himself is ever with them, in life and in death.

USE. Then, sinners, take him for your everlasting Father. Come out of Satan's family: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate. Forget your father's house, and your own people." He is presented and given to you the Everlasting Father; receive him. And,

1. Ye that are fatherless. The father of your flesh is dead and gone; ye have the fewer to care for you, and see to your welfare. Here is an everlasting Father for you.

2. Ye that see yourselves in a helpless case, like orphans in the world. Created props and pillars have been taken from you, one after another; and ye see yourselves fram'd sted*. Here is a Father for you, Hos. xiv. 3, "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

3 All of you will find yourselves in such a case as none in the world will be able to relieve. Choose him now for your Father, who will be everlasting.

MOTIVE 1. He is your Father by creation, let him be your Father by choice. He has the first and best right to you; if one is to serve, will he not rather choose to serve his father than another?

MOTIVE 2. There are blessed privileges of this state. As,

(1.) You will have access to him with holy boldness, Eph iii. 12. He will be well pleased with your voice, Cant. ii. 14.

(2.) Special immunities and freedoms, as king's children; freedom from the law as a covenant of works; free from the curse; free from the hurt of everything.

(3.) Fatherly love and pity, Psalm ciii. 13. He will distinguish between weakness and wickedness. He corrects with a fatherly reluctancy; Lam. iii. 33, "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

(4.) Protection; Prov. xiv. 26, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge." Provision both for soul and body, and seasonable correction.

(5.) An inheritance and portion, according to the Father's quality. Rom. viii. 17, "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

MOTIVE 3. *Lastly*, If ye take him not for your Father, ye cannot escape him as your wrathful judge.

* i. e. In the situation of strangers.