

THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE DELINEATED,
IN SEVERAL PRACTICAL DISCOURSES.

CHRIST TO BE FOUND IN THE ORDINANCES, WITH THE IMPORT
AND HAPPY EFFECTS OF FINDING HIM.*

PROVERBS viii. 35,

For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

THIS chapter represents to us Wisdom speaking openly and most earnestly to her hearers. The discourse begins, ver. 4, and goes on to the end of the chapter.

It may here be enquired, 1. Who or what is this wisdom that speaks? I answer, Jesus Christ, the personal Wisdom of God; Luke xi. 49; 1 Cor. i. 24, in both which passages Christ is expressly called "the Wisdom of God." This appears from the personal properties ascribed to this Wisdom, as, (1.) Subsistence, ver. 30, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight." Compare John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (2.) The manner of subsistence, namely, eternal generation: vers. 22—24, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there was no depths, I was brought forth; when there was no fountains abounding with water." (3.) Personal attributes and effects; vers. 14—17, &c., "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength," &c.

It may be inquired, 2. To whom he speaks? I answer, "To men," ver. 4, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men;" sinful and ruined men, who stand in need of salvation.

3. It may be inquired, What he speaks? I answer, The sum of it all is to commend itself to their souls, from their eternal happi-

* The substance of several sermons preached at Eitrick, in the year 1721.

ness, ver. 11, and downwards, "for wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired, are not to be compared to it," &c.

4. What is the application of this discourse? It is an exhortation to hear his voice, comply with it, and close with him, ver. 32, and downwards, "Now therefore hearken unto me," &c.

In the two last verses is the conclusion of the whole matter.

(1.) Happiness is wrapt up in the enjoyment of him; ver. 35, "For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

(2.) Ruin is inevitable in the rejecting of him; ver. 36, "But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death."

The former is the subject of our text; in which consider,

1. The connection with the preceding words, "For;" shewing them to be the reason of the blessedness pronounced on those that "hear him, watching daily at his gates," &c. These gates are the ordinances. It is supposed that he comes out at these gates, and so men being found watching at them, find him when he is pleased to come forth. It is a metaphor, which may be taken either, (1.) From scholars, whose hearts being set on learning, wait on at the school-door, till they can get in; or, (2.) From courtiers: Esth. ii. 21, or others waiting for access to their prince. (3.) Or from clients waiting on their advocates, or their judges late and early. Or, (4.) From lovers, who will hang on, watching for a meeting; Job xxxi. 9. They that thus watch and wait at Christ's gates, till he come forth, for getting their errand, are made up for ever. Which is the import of,

2. The words themselves; describing the happiness of those that find Christ. Wherein there are two things:—

1st, The happy man in heaven's account, "Whoso findeth me." It imports, that it is not every one that comes to his gates that finds him; many go as they came; but some do find him. The world counts him the happy man that finds riches, honours, pleasures, &c., like Ephraim, who said, "I am become rich, I have found me out substance;" Hos. xii. 8; and therefore they watch and wait greedily where they may have them, saying, "Who will shew us any good?" Psalm iv. 6. But when they have found what they were seeking, it often appears, that they have been seeking and have found their own ruin. But he is happy indeed that finds Christ, for he finds an upmaking treasure.

2dly, The happiness of that man; which lies in two things,

(1.) He that finds Christ "finds life." Without him we are dead

men; but falling on Christ the fountain of life, as the man's dead body on the bones of Elisha; 2 Kings xiii. 21, the soul gets life, eternal life, that will never die out any more. [*Heb.* hath found;] in finding me, he hath found life; 1 John v. 12, "He that hath the Son, hath life."

(2.) He "shall obtain favour of the Lord;" for the Father is well pleased with Christ, and with all who are in him. He shall be accepted with the Lord; Eph. i. 6. The sky shall clear on him, which was lowring before. Heaven shall smile on him. Yea, he shall bring forth favour from the Lord, as out of a treasure now opened to him; so the word intimates.

From the connection of the text with the preceding context, we may observe the two following doctrines, viz:—

DOCTRINE I. The ordinances are the place where Christ is to be found of poor sinners.

DOCT. II. People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ.

I shall discuss these two doctrines before I enter on the words themselves.

DOCT. I. The ordinances are the place where Christ is to be found of poor sinners.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what are the ordinances in which Christ is to be found.

II. Confirm the doctrine.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I am to shew what are the ordinances wherein, especially, Christ is to be found. If any of you have Job's desire; Job xxiii. 3, "O that I knew where I might find him!" I would direct you to "go out by the footsteps of the flock;" Cant. i. 8, where to find him. These ordinances are,

1. The divine ordinance of meditation; Hag. i. 5, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways." Here is the first sight oft-times that a sinner gets of Christ; as did the prodigal son; Luke xv. 17, "When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Therefore David adviseth his enemies to this; Psalm iv. 4, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed." And here the saints have often got renewed sights of him, to their soul's satisfaction; Psalm lxiii. 5, 6, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." What is it that keeps Christ and many sinners

asunder, but that really they will not come near this gate of wisdom? They will not think on their case.

2. Christian conference about spiritual matters. Hence we read of this being practised in a very declining time; Mal. iii. 16, "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another. This was the gate at which the two disciples found and met with Christ; Luke xxiv. 32, "Did not our hearts burn within us," say they, "while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" As two cold flint stones struck one upon another produce fire; so doth spiritual conference sometimes warm cold hearts; Cant. v. 8, 9, and vi. 1. Meetings for Christian fellowship have been meeting-places with Christ to many; the due consideration whereof might well encourage and stir up Christians to a more frequent attendance upon them.

3. Singing of the Lord's praises. This is a commanded duty; Eph. v. 18, 19—"Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." What made David so frequently to wait on about this gate, but that he knew the King used to come forth that way? Here Paul and Silas got a joyful meeting with Christ even in a prison; Acts xvi. 25, 26. It is pity, that people should treat it as a blind gate, at which they never look for the Lord to come forth. But in the experience of the Lord's people he is to be found there. The heavenly melody sometimes melts hard hearts, elevates drooping souls, and fills them with glowing affection to Christ.

4. Prayer. It is called seeking of God, and is the highway to find him. It has a large promise; Matth. vii. 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" and it has been the gate of heaven to many a soul. It is a four-leaved gate, and at every one of the leaves the King has shewn himself to poor sinners. (1.) Public prayer, at which Lydia got her heart opened; Acts xvi. 13, 14. (2.) Private prayer, whether in one's family; Acts x. 30, or otherwise in society with others privately; Acts xii. 12. This social prayer has a large promise made to it; Matth. xviii. 19, "I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (3.) Secret prayer. Many a soul has found Christ there. There Jacob got the blessing; Gen. xxxii. 24. There Daniel beheld the King in his glory, and obtained favour; Dan. ix. 22. This has many a time made the corner of a barn, byre, or dyke-side, a Bethel, a Peniel; and these are more esteemed than a king's palace, by the children of God. (4.)

Ejaculatory prayer. This has many times suddenly opened, to the soul's finding of Christ. So it did with Moses; Exod. xiv. 15, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;" and with Nehemiah, chap. ii. 4. No wonder they do not find him, that watch not at this gate.

5. The word. This is the most patent door of heaven, at which the King usually comes forth to his attendants, that come to wait on him there. It is a two-leaved gate. (1.) The word read, Rev. i. 3, "Blessed is he that readeth." Augustine hearing a voice, Take up and read, opened Rom. xiii. 12, 13, and was converted. Junius was brought to Christ by reading John i. (2.) The word preached, 1 Cor. i. 21,—“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. This is a well of salvation at which three thousand persons at a time drank and lived, Acts ii. 41. The eunuch met with Christ at this gate, where the one, viz. hearing the word, opened after the other, viz. reading the word; and he found favour with the Lord.

6. *Lastly*, The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. These are sealing ordinances, in which many have had sensible communion with Jesus Christ. It is true, the first finding of him is not to be expected here; but though they are not converting, they are confirming ordinances; and as such, happy means of strengthening the believer's faith and love, and increasing his acquaintance with Christ.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, consider,

1. The ordinances are by Christ's own appointment the trysting-places, wherein he has promised to be found of those that seek him; Exod. xx. 24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." So that coming thither to wait on him, they may expect to find him there. It is the divine appointment put upon them, which is accompanied with a blessing, that gives ground of hope in the case. By this they are,

(1.) Trysting places for sinners; where they may be convinced, converted, and regenerated; James i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." These are the pools where the Spirit troubles the water for the cure of sinners of their deadly soul diseases. And there Christ and the sinner meet, for making up the spiritual match. (2.) Trysting places for saints; where they may receive life more abundantly, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. In them he keeps his jower table for the feeding of those to whom he has given life. They are the inns in the way to Immanuel's land; the pools in the way to Zion, the wells of salvation.

2. They are the places wherein his people seek him, who know best where he is to be found. When the spouse had lost sight of her

beloved, she goes to the ordinances to seek him; Cant. iii. 2, "I will rise now," says she, "and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth." And they are the places where his people have found him, and do find him; Cant. vii. 5, "The king is held in the galleries." So it is even as natural to them to go to these duties and ordinances when they would see him, as for a child to seek out the mother, in the place where she is wont to be. And when they find him not in one duty, they go to another, till going the little further they find him.

3. They are what the Lord has allowed his people to supply the want of heaven, until they come there; the tabernacle set up in the wilderness, till they get the temple in Canaan. And therefore they must last till then and no longer; Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13, "And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." When John saw the new Jerusalem, he made that observe on it; Rev. xxi. 22, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it." But they could not supply that place, unless Christ were there; but he is there; Matth. xxviii. ult., "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Cant. iv. 6, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

III. *Lastly*, I come now to apply this doctrine.

USE I. Of reproof. It reproofs,

1. Those who slight attendance on ordinances, public, private, or secret. It is much to be lamented that there are so many who do so, and that so little prevails with many to do it. Ah! sirs, if ye look on this practice in its true colours, it is a slighting of Christ, and an opportunity of meeting with him. It is a breaking of the appointment which the Son of God has made with you; and if the appointment be broken must not the business you have with him stick?

2. Those who will come to ordinances to meet with some that they have worldly business with. They will come to the church on the Lord's day, because they have somebody to meet there, perhaps a servant to bespeak, &c. This is a grossly profane abuse of the ordinances of the Lord; a turning of that which Christ appointed for the service of your souls, to the service of your lusts; a turning of that which is appointed for your eternal interest into your carnal interests. What will these say, when Christ rises up to plead with them at the

great day? when they shall hear, that his being to be found there, could not bring them there; but they would go for fellow-worms, to transact business with them?

3. Those who come to ordinances, but seek not to find Christ there; of such the Lord speaks; Isa. xxix. 13, "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do they honour me, but have removed their heart far from me." How many go to prayers, sermons, &c., who have it not in their view to meet with Christ in them? So they come away without him, and they do not mourn because they find him not; and how can they be so affected, since it was not their errand to meet with him?

4. Those who stand in the way of others attending on ordinances. The effect of this is to keep them out of Christ's way, and to hinder their keeping appointment with the Son of God; by which they become answerable for all the damage that thereupon ensues to the souls of such; Luke xi. 52, "Wo unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered..

USE II. Seek Christ in ordinances, and come to them with a design to find Christ there. When ye go to read the word, to secret duties, or family duties, or public ordinances, think with yourselves, "I am going to wisdom's gates, O shall I not see the King's face? find the smell of his garments, get some communion with Christ?" When Mary missed him in his grave, she could not be satisfied with a vision of angels, but wept on, till she found him, John xx. 11—16. O that there were such a heart in us! For motives to enforce this exhortation, consider,

1. He is well worth the seeking. "He that findeth Christ, findeth life." If his transcendent beauty and peerless excellencies were known, we could not but seek him till we had found him; John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God," says Christ to the woman of Samaria, "and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." They that find him are made up for time and eternity. When ye come to ordinances, know ye where ye are? Ye are upon a beautiful field, and it may be your own. Ye see the surface of it, but know ye what is in the bowels of it? A treasure, and Christ is that treasure, Matth. xiii. 44. The ordinances are the earthen vessels, but there is a treasure in them, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

2. That is what the people of God have been seeking, and are intent upon in ordinances, in all ages, however careless the blind world has been about it. And they sought always again, because they had once found; they still desired to drink of that fountain,

after they had once tasted of it. Hence says David; Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. Psalm lxiii. 2, "My flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. When Jacob found himself engaged with Christ, how intent was he? Gen. xxxii. 24, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This has made them follow ordinances to the fields and the mountains, at the hazard of their lives by persecutors; and they thought all hardships little enough, to find Christ in them.

3. What avail ordinances, if ye do not find Christ in them? Upon this consideration, we should take Moses' protestation before we go to them; Exod. xxxiii. 15, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." They are but empty husks without him, and cannot feed the soul; he is the marrow and sap of them; John vi. 63, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Mary met with a disappointment, when she saw two angels in the sepulchre, but Christ himself was away. Should the man that has a petition for life, be brought before the chair of state, but his prince not in; would he not say, "Alas! it is the king alone himself that can do my business;" so here, when the soul seeks Christ, ordinances alone will not satisfy it; no, the man wants to enjoy Christ in them, as he alone is suited to his case.

4. *Lastly*, It is a great pity ye should not meet, when the parties have come so far on the appointment. And,

(1.) Most of you come hither from a considerable distance; it is pity you should forget your errand when ye are come. Ye come too far for nothing; the pains and toil of waiting on ordinances, I think, should even stir you up to think with yourselves, "What am I at this pains for? what am I seeking? shall I make nothing for my soul by it?"

(2.) But Christ came farther for it than any of you to keep this appointment, and it cost him infinitely dearer than it does any of you. It cost him a long journey from heaven to earth; to sweat drops of blood, and to lose his precious life on a cross, ere there could be a possibility of your meeting with him in ordinances. And now when he is come, shall the meeting misgive betwixt him and your souls? But I must proceed to consider,

Doct. II. People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ. One may be found at Christ's palace gates, and yet never see the King come forth; as Absalom did in another case.

Here I shall give the reasons why it is so, and then apply the point.

I. I am to offer some reasons why sinners may come to ordinances, and not find Christ. And these are all on the sinner's side.

1. Some have no design of finding Christ in ordinances at all; they have no such thing as a meeting with Christ before their eyes. But the Sabbath-day is an idle day, and they will go to the church, and see and be seen, Isa. i. 12. May be they like to hear the preaching, as they would like a lovely song to divert them. But for a Christ in the preaching, a Saviour for their lost souls, manifested therein; that is what never comes in their head. They are like Ezekiel's hearers, of whom the Lord says, chap. xxxiii. 31, 32, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play very well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

2. Many are indifferent whether they find Christ in ordinances or not. And by their indifferency they even court a denial from the King. They are not at pains to tryst with him, in earnest, before they come to public ordinances. They do not prepare for the meeting, by casting down the idols of jealousy, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Their spirits are very flat, and their desires languid when at ordinances; they are not fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. They stand at the palace-gate, but they do not ask, seek, and knock, Matth. vii. 7, and go their way contented, though they do not find him.

3. Some desire not to see him at all; Job xxi. 14, "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; they are well content he shew not himself to them. If his harbingers which go before him, namely, convictions of guilt and danger, once begin to appear, they quickly shut their eyes, and will be very desirous to get out of their way. They have no heart for the match with the Lord of glory, and so care not for coming to a treaty about it.

4. *Lastly*, Some who may have desires of meeting with Christ, yet cannot away with on-waiting at the gates, and going about from one gate to another, till they find him. We are naturally addicted to unbelieving haste, John vii. 6. If the Lord do not keep our time which we set, we conclude he will never come, Psalm cxvi. 11. But faith is a waiting grace, and sets no time, but persists in that exercise, Isa. xxviii. 16, Lam. iii. 49, 50. Now the King, to try of what metal people's desires after him are, delays long his coming forth; and by the time that he comes, as it were, the throng is away from about the palace-gate, and there remains only here and there

one whom the grace of God has endued with a principle of awaiting. And O how heavy is it to think, that some who have gone far to find Christ, have lost him for not going a little farther! Some have waited long, and have lost him for not waiting but a little longer. The Israelites waited for Moses till the thirty-ninth day; had they but waited the fortieth day, they would not have made and worshipped the golden calf, *Exod. xxxii. 5.* Saul waited for Samuel till the seventh day; had he waited a few hours longer, he had not offered sacrifices unwarrantably, and been stript of his kingdom, *1 Sam. xiii. 8, &c.*

I shall now make some short improvement of this point.

Seek Christ so in ordinances, as ye may find him. 'That is,

1. Seek him sincerely and uprightly with all your heart, *Dent. iv. 29.* They are blessed that so seek him, *Psalm cxix. 2.* Seeking from the teeth outward, may prevail with those who know not men's hearts; but not with him, who knows the language of the heart, without an interpreter. It is true, in a way of sovereignty, he may be found of those that seek him not, *Isa. lrv. 1,* and love may make a net for a false heart; but who can promise on that?

2. Seek him honestly and generously for himself, *Psalm cv. 4.* Ye hear of his glorious matchless excellencies, let your hearts be caught in the net of his love. And let not his benefits be your only or main inducement, like those mentioned, *John vi. 26,* of whom our Lord says, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled;" for that casts contempt on his person. Sovereignty sometimes comes over this indeed, as in the case of *Zaccheus.*

3. Seek him fervently, *Rom. xii. 11.* How fervent was the Psalmist's heart, *Psalm xliii. 1,* "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." *Psalm lxiii. 1, 2,* "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; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Drowsy desires and lazy wishes will not find him out, *Cant. iii. 1, 2.* Be warm and importunate in your addresses, and the King will come forth at length, *Luke xviii. 7.*

4. Seek him humbly, *Psalm x. 17.* The woman of Canaan is a noble instance of a humble seeker, *Matth. xv. 23, &c.* Beggars must not be choosers. Humility teaches to be thankful for a crumb, for a passing view of the King.

5. Seek him diligently, *Heb. xi. 6.* Careless seekers can hardly look to be finders. Seek diligently, as the spouse on considering her case did, leaving no corner of the city untouched, that she might

find him, Cant. iii. 2 ; as those who are searching for hidden treasure Prov. ii. 4, 5.

6. Seek him mournfully, Luke ii. 48. Mary did so, and found him, John xx. 11, &c., and Jacob also, Hos. xii. 4. When he withdraws, were one mourning for the want, it would be a hopeful sign. Lament after the Lord ; there is good reason for it at this day.

7. *Lastly*, Seek him constantly, till ye find him, therein intimating the example of the church ; Lam. iii. 49, 50, " Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not, without any intermission : till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." Be resolute not to give over till ye have met with him, and be sure ye will not be disappointed in the end.

I come now to the words themselves. The happy man is he that findeth Christ. Finding of Christ is the upmaking of the soul, it is man's happiness ; no wonder it be a big thing, comprehending much. I take it up in these two. (1.) A saving discovery of Christ made to the soul ; so the word is used, Matth. xiii. 46, in the case of finding the pearl. (2.) An interest in him, yea, actual possession of him, as one's own obtained. So in our text, findeth life, *i. e.* really gets life. So they find him, who get such a discovery of him, as terminates in their closing with him, whereby he is theirs, and they are his.

The following doctrines offer themselves from the words now and formerly explained.

Doctr. I. Then do people find Christ, when, upon a saving discovery of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith.

Doctr. II. Sinners finding Christ, find life.

I shall handle each doctrine in order.

Doctr. I. Then do people find Christ, when, upon a saving discovery of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith. This I shall explain and apply.

In explaining the doctrine, I shall,

- I. Offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ.
- II. More particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ.

I. I am to offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ. And,

1. There is a twofold finding of him ; initial, and progressive.

1st, There is an initial finding of Christ, which is the soul's first finding of him, the first meeting betwixt Christ and the soul, Matth. xiii. 45, 46, when the dead soul meets with the life-giving Saviour. Upon this our salvation depends.

2dly, There is a progressive finding of him, which is a child of

God's finding of him in the progress of his state of grace, Matth. vii. 7. Thus the spouse found him, Cant. iii. 4, after some partial withdrawing from her.

The difference betwixt these two lies in this, that the immediate effect of the former is union, of the other, actual communion with Christ. The one is the marriage with Christ, the other the return of the husband to his deserted spouse. The text, I think, comprehends both; but the first mainly; compare ver. ult. And both consist of a discovery of Christ, and a receiving him; the latter as well as the former; the one initial, the other progressive. It is the first of these I intend.

2. There are some things to be observed touching this finding of Christ.

1st, Sinners in their natural state have lost God, Eph. ii. 12. God is not their God, they have no saving interest in him. There was a covenant of friendship betwixt God and innocent man; but, alas! that covenant was broken, and man quite lost his friend, his God. So he goes up and down the world, in his natural state, a poor friendless creature.

2dly, Man is a seeking creature; for he cannot miss to know that he wants, nor to desire to have his wants supplied; Matth. xiii. 45. He goes through the creation, seeking something to satisfy his heart. And when one will not do, he goes to another. The soul of man, though in its blindness it knows not what it would be at, is still seeking; like a nest of young birds still gaping for meat from the dam.

3dly, There is no rest for, nor satisfying of the soul till it come to God. This is not from any desire the soul has of God while in its natural state, but ariseth from the natural state of it, whereby it comes to pass, that nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy it. Therefore the natural man is represented as one ever labouring, but never able to get rest; Matth. xi. 28, Isa. lv. 1, 2. And its life is a wandering and seeking without intermission; Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

4thly, God is in Christ, to be found in him, and in him only; 2 Cor. v. 19, Col. ii. 9. As the Israelites, who wandered forty years in the wilderness, had a tabernacle set up among them, where they might find God, which was called (Heb.) the tabernacle of meeting; so Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle of meeting betwixt God and sinners; and he is no where else to be found. So that till the soul fall on Christ in its weary search, it can never come to God, nor to true rest.

II. I shall more particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ. There are two things in it.

First, The soul savingly discovers and discerns Jesus Christ, by a new light let into it; John xvii. 3. There is a twofold discovery of Christ. (1.) An objective discovery of him in the gospel, given to all who hear it. Thus the sun's light discovers all things in the presence of the blind man, but alas! he cannot perceive them for all that. (2.) A subjective discovery, when the eyes of the understanding are opened to see what is so discovered; Acts xxvi. 18, Isa. xxxiii. 17. This is the finding of Christ, in respect of which the sinner is like Hagar near the well; Gen. xxi. 19. Jesus Christ is near the man; Rom. x. 8, but he sees him not, so still he wants him, till, the Lord opening his eyes, he discerns Christ, and so finds him. The soul then beholds him in a twofold glory.

1. The glory of his person, as God-man: an admirable person, a nonsuch, the chief among ten thousand, Cant. v. 10. The soul finding Christ, beholds him as the Father's fellow, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; Heb i. 3, in respect of his divine nature; and as our kinsman, and the glory of mankind, in respect of his human nature; the flower of Adam's posterity, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

2. The glory of his mediatory office, 1 Tim. ii. 5. The soul gets a sight of him, as the great Daysman betwixt God and sinners, fit to lay his hand on both parties. It beholds him as the tabernacle of meeting, where God meets with the sinner to make up the peace; as that noble Personage appointed of the Father the repairer of the breach made by sin; the great Surety and Cautioner for sinners' debt and God's glory. And there are six things the soul now sees in Christ.

(1) A transcendent excellency, beauty, and loveliness in him; Isa. xxxiii. 17, Cant. v. *ult.* It sees him lovely in his natures, in his offices, in his holy life, and in his bloody death; lovely in himself, and in his purchase. It is a too common question that the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse; Cant. v. 9. What is thy beloved more than another beloved? The world sees no beauty in him, for which he is to be desired; they see more beauty in carnal worldly objects, than in the Plant of Renown. But no sooner does the soul find him, but it sees him lovely above all persons and things. His discovered excellency darkens all created glory, as the sun arising darkens the candle-light, and makes the stars hide their heads; Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

(2.) A fulness in him for the supply of all its wants; Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. There is, (1.) A fulness of the Godhead in him, Col. ii. 9. The soul that has lost God, finding him, finds God in him, John xiv. 11. (2.) A

fulness of merit, for our justification, and a title to heaven. (3.) A fulness of Spirit, for our sanctification, and making us meet for heaven. Finding Christ, the soul finds a treasure, for preciousness, abundance, and variety.

(3.) A suitableness in him ; and that is twofold.

[1.] A suitableness in Christ to their own case, as when a hungry man finds meat, or a naked man clothes, Rev. iii. 18. The soul of man goes through the creation, seeking a match in whom it may rest ; but it never finds a suitable one till it find Christ. Still the bed is shorter than that it can stretch itself upon it, and the cover narrower than that it can wrap itself in it ; but coming to Christ, the soul finds him completely suited to its case ; suited to still and quiet the conscience by his atoning blood, and to satisfy its craving desires by his all-fulness. There appears, then, a suitableness in everything in and about him ; in his natures, in his offices, in his life and death, resurrection, ascension, &c.

[2.] A suitableness in him to the glory of God. The sinner whose eyes are opened can never expect salvation but in a way suitable to God's perfections, his holiness and justice ; and the mystery of Christ appears thus suited, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Here at once appears how justice is satisfied, and the sinner saved ; and God has his glory and the sinner his salvation together.

(4.) The wisdom of God in him, 1 Cor. i. 24. The wisdom of God eminently appeared in the creation, and appears every day in the works of providence ; but the master-piece of divine wisdom is the mystery of Christ, wherein is the greatest display of the divine perfections, his power, justice, holiness, mercy, love, goodness, and truth, all woven together by infinite wisdom. And there is none that finds Christ, but must say that that device is one becoming infinite wisdom.

(5.) An ability to save, Heb. vii. 25. When sin appears in its native colours to the awakened conscience, the soul is apt to question, if there be any balm in Gilead for such wounds ; if there be any hope of such a case. But when Christ is discovered to the soul, he appears as the Lord of hosts, mighty to save ; there is merit enough in his blood to wash away the deepest guilt, and efficacy enough in his Spirit to subdue the strongest corruptions.

(6.) *Lastly*, Willingness to save, and to communicate of his fulness to the needy soul, Heb. iv. 15, 16. The discovery of this was what brought the prodigal son home, Luke xv. 17, and the utter want of it must make the starving soul die in despondency. This is that which of all things awakened sinners have most ado to discern in Christ, if he be willing to save them, to bestow his precious blood

to wash such vile wretches as they. But it is discovered in lesser or greater measure to all that find Christ.

Secondly, Upon this discovery of Christ made unto and by the soul, the soul closes with Christ by faith. There is such a connection betwixt these two, that (1.) None can close with Christ without it, Cant. v. 9. People may love an unseen Christ, but not an unknown Christ. (2.) All that get it close with him, Psalm ix. 10, John iv. 10. For,

1. Such a discovery of Christ is not made to the soul till it be hunger-bitten, lost in its own eyes, and would be content with a Saviour on any terms, Acts ix. 6, Prov. xxiv. 7. A starving person needs no other invitation to eat but to see meat; and when Christ is discovered to the soul lost in its own eyes, it will embrace him.

2. The nature of the object speaks for itself, John iv. 10. Christ discovered to the soul is precious, 1 Pet. ii. 7, and he who once finds the pearl, will gripe at it to make it his own. He is suitable to its case, which likewise insures the soul's closing with him, as the sick man with the physician, or the captive with the deliverer.

3. It is always attended with a heart-conquering power, Psalm cx. 3. When the Lord opens the eyes in saving illumination, he looses the heart by renewing the will, and so brings the soul to embrace Christ.

I shall now apply this branch of the subject.

USE I. Of information. This shews us,

1. They have never found Christ, nor seen his glory, who have not closed with him, Psalm ix. 10. They who have not matched with Christ, have never yet seen nor known the glorious Bridegroom, John i. 10, 11. For all they have heard of him in the word, or seen of him in the sacraments, they are still unacquainted with him, and he has ever been a veiled beauty to them. A look of him with an illuminated eye of the mind, would have conquered their souls to his love, Isa. xlv. 22.

2. They who reject Christ and his way, and think they have reason for so doing, must know that their judgment is not to be regarded; for they are blind men judging of colours. (1.) There are some who never made so much as a shew of trial of Christ and his way. They were estranged from God from the womb, and they held even forward in their course of sin to this day, without changing; and they are making lies of Christ to themselves and others, Psalm lviii. 3. Poor souls, they know no better, they are under soul-ruining delusion. If their eyes were opened, they would hate what they now love, and love what they now hate, Tit. iii. 3. (2.) There are others, who, after a seeming trial made of Christ and his

way, have cast them behind their back, 2 Pet. ii. 22. But neither have they ever got a discovery of him, for as long as they have hung on about Wisdom's gates, 1 Cor. ii. 8. They have got into the outer court, of prayer, the communion-table, a fair blooming profession; but they never got into the inner court, to see the King in his beauty. Let both know, that there is something in religion which they never knew to this day; and while they despise it, they despise what they know not. And if they knew what they know not, they would as soon embrace death and hell, and throw away their own life, as do what they do.

3. Ye who have got such a discovery of Christ as has determined you to close with him, ye have found Christ, and happy are ye. All the people of God have not alike sensible enjoyment of Christ, Matth. xvii. 1, 2, nor alike measure of manifestations of him. Neither are their comforts of alike height, more than their downcastings are of alike depth. But that discovery of Christ which terminates in the soul's closing with him, is saving.

USE II. Of trial. Hereby ye may try whether ever ye have found Christ or not. We have been long making the fashion of seeking, let us try whether we have come speed or not. If ye have got such a discovery of him, as has terminated in your souls' closing with him, ye have found him. And ye may know it by these marks,

MARK 1. If ye have found Christ, ye will value the discovery as a matchless favour, and display of free grace, Matth. xiii. 44. Like as a poor man, travelling through a desert, in want of all things, would value his finding a covered table and all necessaries; so will the soul that has been seeking rest through the empty creation, and is still disappointed, value the discovery of a full Christ made to it, Psalm cxix. 162. Ye will admire free grace in it, and not impute it to your own pains and diligence, that ever ye had any acquaintance with him.

MARK 2. A found Christ will engage your esteem above all other persons and things, 1 Pet. ii. 7. He will be in your eyes the chief among ten thousand. The world, and all that is in it will be but loss and dung in comparison of him, Psalm lxxiii. 25. However low thoughts ye had of him before, the market will be raised now, and the rate ye will put on him will be so high, as the compass of the whole world, nay, the compass of men's desires will not be able to afford an equivalent, and as good, Prov. viii. 11.

MARK 3. The discovery of Christ in his glory, will shew sin in ugly colours, and fill a soul with self-loathing and abhorrence, Job xlii. 5, 6; Isa. vi. 5. Delusion puffeth up, but real manifestations of Christ are humbling. As in the balances, one scale goes up when

the other goes down ; so the more Christ is exalted in the eyes of a sinner, the more sin and self are depressed. Doves' dung and asses' heads gave a great price in Samaria, when bread was not to be had, but when it came they were no more valued. That light will discover the worthlessness even of one's duties, and shew one's own righteousness like a moth-eaten garment, held up before the sun, Isa. lxiv. 6 ; and leave one poor in spirit before the Lord.

MARK 4. A found Christ will engage the sinner's heart and affections, loosing the bond betwixt them and other lovers, and dispose the soul to say, as Isa. xxvi. 13, " O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us ; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." There is an overcoming glory in him, which being discerned does infallibly give him the preference in the heart to all competitors, Tit. ii. 11. A believing view of his glory fills the heart with desire after him, and love to him above and beyond all other things, Isa. xxvi. 9 ; Cant. i. 3. Many a stroke the law, perhaps, has given to break the bonds of iniquity ; but still they hold the sinner fast. But when the gospel fire is set on in the soul, and thereby Christ is discovered in his matchless excellency to the soul, these bonds are burnt and melted down.

MARK 5. Christ being found, the sinner parts with all for him, without reserve ; and when he has quitted all for him, he thinks he has a good bargain, Matth. xiii. 46. Where any reserve is made, there is no saving discovery of Christ made there, who in his first appearance in the soul saith effectually, " If ye take me, let these go their way." The soul parts with all sin ; (1.) In respect of affliction, Rom. vii. 19. (2.) Of voluntary subjection, Rom. vi. 14. (3.) Of allowed residence, Rom. vii. 24. It parts with self too. (1.) Civil self, friends, credit, ease, &c., Luke xvi. 26 ; Heb. xi. 24, 25 ; Deut xxxiii. 9. (2.) Natural self, even life itself is at his disposal. All that a man hath will he give for his life ; but one will not give a found Christ for it, Luke xiv. 26. And (3.) Religious self is parted with, whereby the soul " counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," Phil. iii.

MARK 6. A saving discovery of Christ transforms the soul into his image. The sight of the most beautiful object on earth cannot work a likeness to it on the beholders ; but a manifestation of Christ does it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Love breeds likeness, and likeness nourishes love, and none see Christ in his glory, but they love him, and therefore do put on Christ, Rom xiii. ult. ; labouring to walk as he walked, 1 John ii. 6. From that moment the soul finds Christ, it commences nonconformist to the world, being transformed, cast into another mould, in respect of nature and actions, Rom. xii. 2. And when at

death the discovery shall be perfect, so will holiness be, 1 John iii. 2.

MARK 7. They that have once had a saving discovery of Christ, will always desire further discoveries of him, till they see him as he is, Exod. xxxiii. 18, "Shew me thy glory," will be the language of their hearts. Here we have the bridegroom's picture as it were in ordinances, in the word; and they who have once seen the beauty of it, will always be desiring more. Paul knew much of Christ, but his eye was not satisfied with seeing, Phil. iii. 10. Christ was the sum of his life, Phil. i. 21; the body of divinity to which he desired to confine his studies, 1 Cor. ii. 2; for in the knowledge of Christ all religion lies; therefore the learning of Christianity is the learning of Christ, Eph. iv. 20, 21.

DOCTRINE II. Sinners finding Christ, find life.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall;

I. Unfold that life which sinners find, finding Christ.

II. Confirm the point,

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I shall unfold that life which sinners find finding Christ. They find a treasure who find Christ, a treasure of life. To open it up, I will shew,

1. What life they find who find Christ.

2. What are the qualities of this life.

First, I will shew what life they find who find Christ. It is a life that goes as wide as the death they found in Adam; Rom. v. 11, "For if through the offence of any one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." It is a salve proportioned to that sore. The sinner's finding life in Christ implies, that without Christ, he is under death, which therefore we shall take along with us. And always the more of Christ, the more life; and the less of Christ, the less life. The sinner then finding Christ, finds,

1. A life of grace, in regeneration, which is a spiritual quickening of the soul; Eph. ii. 5, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Man in his natural unconverted state, is spiritually dead, Eph. ii. 1. Adam eating the forbidden fruit, poisoned himself and all his offspring, for it brought immediate death to them; it separated them from God the fountain of life; and so they lie in their natural state, as buried in the grave of sin, void of all life and sense in spiritual things.

But in the day of the soul's finding Christ, the Spirit of Christ enters into it, and quickens it, as Lazarus's soul entering into his body, while Christ stood by his grave. So the dead soul is raised,

the dry bones come together, and are made to live. The man is endowed with a new vital principle, putting him in a capacity to move and act graciously, Gal. ii. 20. He is a new creature, as one raised from the dead. There is a new light let into his mind, a new set given to his will, a new regulation made on his affections; all is new, as by a first resurrection.

2. A life of favour with God; Psalm xxx. 5, "In his favour is life." God is Lord of life and death, and we have forfeited our life to him by our rebellions. May not one say then, he is a dead man, who is out of God's favour; and he is secured for life, who enjoys it? A sinner out of Christ is a dead man, in so far as he is dead in law, and the broken law has doomed him to die eternally, Gal. iii. 10. All the fearful threats and curses of the first covenant, are twisted about him as so many cords of death, binding him as a condemned criminal, till the day of execution.

But the sinner finding Christ, the sentence of condemnation is reversed, he is no more a condemned man, Rom. viii. 1. Christ comes into the iron-house, makes a discovery of himself to the sinner in chains, and there the match is made betwixt the Bridegroom and the captive daughter of Zion. The prison-garments are taken off, and the marriage-robe is put on the believer, Phil. iii. 9. Then God says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. So the chains of guilt drop off, and the prison-doors are set open to Christ to hand out his spouse by, and the face-covering that was on the condemned is destroyed. Now, who has anything to say, why the prisoner may not go forth free with her Lord and Husband? Rom. viii. 33. Justice is satisfied, who had the claim against her; the law that laid her up, and kept her bound, has no more to demand, Gal. ii. 20. The debt is paid, the bond is got up, and torn in pieces, Col. ii. 14. The jailor therefore cannot keep her longer, and death which stood before her with a devouring mouth, is swallowed up in victory, Isa. xxv. 8.

3. A life of new obedience; Rom. vi. 4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." By nature we are quite void of this life, John xv. 5. The soul in its natural state is never idle indeed, but ever working; but then all its works are dead works, Heb. ix. 14, which can never please the living God. The old man has his deeds in them that are out of Christ, and all their deeds are so; their very religious duties are dead works, and in them they are but as walking ghosts. They cannot perform one vital action in a spiritual sense; Gen. vi. 5, Psalm xiv. 3, Tit. i. 15.

But the sinner finding Christ finds newness of life. He is not the man he was. Christ not only brings him out of the grave of his natural state but he looses all his grave-clothes of reigning lusts, and sets him a-pulling them off, and casting them from him; Col. iii. 8. He gives them change of raiment. The man puts on Christ, personates him, walking as he also walked. Now his obedience is universal, Psalm cxix. 6; his heart is shaped out in breadth and length to the whole law of Christ. It is spiritual; it is a cluster of vital actions, whereof Christ is the principle; Gal. ii. 20, and the end Phil. i. 21.

4. A life of comfort. *Non vivere valere sed est vita*; 1 Sam. xxv. 6. 1 Thess. iii. 8. The natural man has the most uncomfortable life in the world. He has no solid ground of comfort, because matters are quite wrong betwixt Heaven and him; he has no actual comfort, but as it were in a dream, when he drinks of the broken cisterns, so as to forget his misery: Job xv. 21.

But the sinner finding Christ finds a life of comfort. He is put into a comfortable state, as reconciled to God, and having his sin pardoned; Psalm xxxii. 1. And if at any time he want comfort, it is not because the ground of it is rased, for that can never be while the everlasting covenant remains, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, but because his eyes are held that he cannot perceive it, like Hagar at the well. And in his deepest sorrows and distress, there is a seed of comfort that will spring up; Psalm xcvii. 11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

5. *Lastly*, Eternal life; John xvii. 3. Man in his natural state is a dead man, liable to eternal death in hell. And whosoever lives and dies in that state, cannot miss to perish for ever; Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore whenever God opens the sinner's eyes to see his own case, he sees he is eternally lost if he get not help; Acts ii. 37.

But the sinner finding Christ finds eternal life; John iii. *ult.* The second death can have no power over him, from that happy moment. He commences an heir of glory, and heaven's happiness is secured to him. Come death when it will, come judgment when it will, his happy state is already determined by the word, and can never be reversed.

Secondly, I shall shew what are the qualities of the life which they find who find Christ.

1. It is a divine life; Eph. iv. 18. So it is the most excellent life. The vegetative life, by which our bodies grow, is common to us with the plants of the earth; the life of sense, with brutes; the life of reason, with infidels; but this life exalts one to a rank of beings superior to the rest of mankind, namely, into the rank of saints partakers of the divine nature.

2. It is a life of the whole man. Sinners out of Christ are but half alive, and that in the worst half too, while their bodies are alive, their souls are dead within them; 1 Tim. v. 6. But on the soul's finding Christ, the soul is made alive too, and so the whole man lives; the better part is quickened. And as the dead souls of the wicked will secure the eternal death of their bodies too, death spreading itself from their souls to their bodies; so the life of the soul will secure the eternal life of the body, life spreading in like manner from the soul to the body; Rom. viii. 11.

3. It is a pleasant life; Prov. iii. 17. Sinners are generally prejudiced in the case, as if it were an unpleasant and uncomfortable life; but that is the opinion only of those who are unacquainted with it; for David could say, Psalm iv. 7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." It is true, the pleasure of it is not expressed in the noisy way in which the world expresses theirs; it is a water that runs deeper than to make such a noise as the shallow brooks and muddy streams of the world's pleasures do. But all the pleasures of the men of the world, are light as a feather in comparison of the pleasure found in communion with God, the sense of his favour, and the serenity of conscience; by this good token, that these will bear up a man in the greatest distresses, where those others vanish at the blast; Hab. iii. 17.

4. It is a persevering life, that can never be lost; Hab. ii. 4, "The just shall live by his faith." Compare Heb. x. 38. It is a life that, from the moment it is given, shall never die out for ever; John iv. 14. The life of inherent grace may be very low, but can never be lost; one may lose the sense of the life of favour with God, but can never lose the thing itself; John v. 24. They that now lead the most honourable and wealthy life in the world, death will put an end to it; but this life will make its way through death itself, unhurt.

5. *Lastly*, It is a growing life; John x. 10. It is true, the Christian life is not always growing, more than the trees in winter. But it is a life that grows universally, regularly, and proportionably, till it come to its perfection in glory; Prov. iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It buds in regeneration, begins to open in progressive sanctification, and is full spread in glory; but it shall never wither, but be fresh and fragrant through eternity.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, That sinners finding Christ find life, consider,

1. The Mediator, by the Father's appointment, is the immediate

receptacle of life for all to whom life is designed by the Father, Col. i. 19; as the bowl in Zechariah's candlestick received the oil from the two olive-trees, and communicated the same by the pipes to the lamps; Zech. iv. 2, 3. God seeing all mankind dead in Adam, but having destined the elect number to life, has put life for them all in the Mediator, as in a sure repository, where it cannot be lost; 1 John v. 11, hence the apostle draws the conclusion of our text; ver. 12, "He that hath the Son, hath life;" even as he who hath a woman in marriage, hath all that is hers; so he that hath Christ, not only hath a right to, but actually hath life, even everlasting life; ver. 13; John v. 24. He that buys the field hath the treasure in it.

2. As Adam lost his life, and that of all his posterity, by his losing of God, who is the life and soul of the soul of man; Psalm xxx. 5, in separation of the soul from whom its death lies; so the sinner finding Christ finds God again, and therefore must needs find life. God is in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead is in him; Col. ii. 9, and by him the believer comes to God; Heb. vii. 25, for that was the end of his death, "that he might bring us to God;" 1 Pet. iii. 18. The Father becomes his Father, the Son his Saviour, the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier; for a whole Trinity is made over to the sinner in the covenant "I am thy God." So finding Christ, the sinner finds the whole Trinity of persons; how then can he but find life?

3. The sinner finding Christ finds the Spirit of life. This is so certain, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. Not only do the graces of the Spirit dwell in them who have found Christ, but the person of the Spirit, the cause of the other; Rom. viii. 11. This is that which gives them life, preserves it that it cannot be lost, increaseth it, and at length perfects it; John iv. 14. We see many who getting some light touches and common operations of the Spirit, seem to live for a while; but their seeming life wears away by degrees, and they never recover it; why? because not having found Christ, they have not found life, nor the Spirit either. But believers are recovered from their decays, because the Spirit of life still remains with them.

4. The sinner finding Christ, is united to him as a member of his body; Eph. iii. 17. Hence his life secures theirs; John xiv. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." They cannot die, as long as he lives, and therefore their life is everlasting. As members of Christ, the Spirit of Christ dwells in them, as the principle of their life; and they derive spiritual nourishment from him, as the branches from the vine-stock. Hence it is that the resurrection of their mortal bodies is secured to them, according to Rom. viii. 11, "But if the

Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." So that finding Christ, they find everlasting life of soul and body.

5. The sinner finding Christ, finds all the promises of the everlasting covenant, which are all promises of life, as the threatenings of the law are of death; Tit. i. 2; 2 Cor. i. 20; for the promises are immediately made to Christ; Gal. iii. 16, and in right of him they become ours. Hence "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. Some would reckon themselves made up all their life, if they did find a parcel of bank-bills; but he that finds Christ, finds heaven's bank-bills, which being presented to God, will get payment of them to the bearer, be who he will, and that such as will make him live happily through the ages of eternity.

6. The sinner finding Christ, finds a satisfactory answer to all the law's demands, which staves him off from life till they be satisfied. (1.) The law demands the debt of perfect obedience, if the sinner will have life; Matth. xix. 17. In Christ this is answered; for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" Rom. x. 4. (2.) It demands the debt of punishment, for satisfaction of justice for sin done. The answer is, "I am crucified with Christ;" Gal. ii. 20. Thus he has found a complete righteousness, in which the law itself can find no blemish nor defect. Thus the current of death towards the believer is stopped, and the waters of the curse are dried up; and life flows into the soul, and the blessing comes in room of the curse.

7. *Lastly*, To sum up all in a word, The sinner finding Christ, finds all things necessary to make him happy. See the believer's possessions, what he gets with Christ when he gets him; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" There is a treasure in him, or he is a treasure, and the treasure becomes the believer's; Matth. xiii. 44. There are unsearchable riches in him, and they are all made over to the believer; Eph. iii. 8. Look to the whole of Christ's purchase, what he bought for poor sinners with his blood, and the soul finding Christ finds it all, and may say, It is all mine.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this branch of the text.

USE I. Of information. This informs us,

1. That the best way for one's security in an evil day, is to have found Christ. This is a day of impending wrath, wherein God is threatening to cause death overflow the nation.* The true way to answer God's call in the dispensation of the day, is to seek Christ, that ye may find him ; so shall ye find life.

1st, God is threatening to take away men's substance, the means of life, making the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron.† He has locked up in great measure the pastures of the field, so that the beasts groan under the sins of men. And no wonder, considering the sinful improvement that has been made of their prosperity. But if all should go together, it cannot break the true Christian, who finding Christ has found life, and may say as Hab. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

2dly, God is threatening to make death ride in triumph among men. He has been sweeping away multitudes abroad ; and how can these nations think to escape, nations lying under the fearful guilt of former times, and who have been long busied in filling up their cup to the brim ? All ranks in church and in state have corrupted their ways ; and when we consider the unnatural marriages, and unnatural murders, that have fallen out more than at any time ever I remember, I cannot but take them for presages, that the things which concern this generation are making haste, the hearing of which will make men's ears to tingle. Well, Sirs, happy are they that find Christ ; for they shall find life, when death in its most frightful aspect shall seize a God-provoking generation, and make all their courage fail in one moment, never to recover.

2. There is no way to attain to holiness, and acceptable obedience in good works, without finding of Christ, or closing with him upon a saving discovery of him made to the soul. Find what we will, if we find not Christ, we will remain in a state of death ; and all the reasons and motives that can be fetched from heaven or hell, will not quicken us ; and therefore cannot put us upon the doing of the least good work ; for, says Christ, "without me ye can do nothing," John xxv. 5. It is true, that, as, in an earthquake, dead bodies may fly from one place to another, by the force of commotion, yet still

* Referring to the plague which had then broke out in France, and proved very mortal in several places, particularly at Marseilles.

† This refers to a great drought in spring, 1721.

void of life ; so an unbeliever, by the fear of punishment and hope of reward, may work, as one for his life ; but alas ! his works are but dead works still.

3. The true way to holiness is the finding of Jesus Christ ; John vi. 28, 29, " Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God ? Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." If ever ye would be holy, believe ; if ye would reach the highway called the way of holiness, betake yourselves to him who is the way, and the truth, and the life ; John xiv. 6. As the dead man (2 Kings xiii. 21,) let down into Elisha's grave, as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha, revived, and stood up on his feet ; so the dead soul meeting with Christ by participation of his Spirit is quickened. And as a wick put to a burning lamb is lighted, so as immediately they join flames, and burn on ; so the soul finding Christ finds life, embraces him, and lives by him and to him.

4. Christ does not set his people to work for life, to procure life to themselves by their own working ; he has given them life, a life that will never end, in their union with them, and bids them work from that life. The law or covenant of works says to them who are under it, Do this, and live ; if ye will have life, work and win it ; Matth. xix. 17. But Christ says to the poor tired creature, busy at labour in vain, Come to me that you may have life. And having come and received life, he sets it to work.

5. Faith and obedience are inseparable ; John xv. 5, " He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Rom. vi. 14, " Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The life that sinners find, finding Christ is without question, for the kind of it, a holy life ; and the manner of one's working must needs be of a piece with the manner of one's being. When Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men to herd with the beasts of the field, he lived like the beasts. Men living in sin, walk in it ; Col. iii. 7. And those who are blessed with a life that is holy in the nature of it, must needs be holy in their walk ; and if that life were perfected, they would be perfectly holy. So where there is no holiness, there is no life, no faith, no union with the holy Jesus. Unholy professors are dead sinners, and will be buried out of sight in the pit ; Heb. xii. 14, " Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

6. *Lastly*, The one thing we have to seek above all things, for time and eternity, is to find Christ. For whoso findeth him findeth life, for time and eternity. And this is not the work only of the time

of our first conversion to God, but the work of our whole lives, 1 Pet. ii. 4, compared with vers. 2, 3. For always the more we find of Christ, we have the more life, and the less of him, the less life. Finding Christ we find all for holiness and happiness. The Jews say, that the 613 precepts of the law are all reduced to this saying, Hab. ii. 4, "The just shall live by his faith." And the truth is, the sum of the Christian life lies here; Gal. ii. 20,

USE. II. Of exhortation. Seek Christ until ye find him, and find life in him and by him. To press this, I offer the following motives.

MOTIVE 1. Man is a seeking creature: Matth. xiii. 45. Sinners out of Christ are as busy seeking as others are, like the watch going as fast when wrong as when right. There is a void within that would be filled; but the matter is, they go all wrong in their search. They are seeking a rest to their hearts in the creature, and a rest to their conscience in the works of the law; but in neither of these will they find what they seek. Turn ye, sinners seek Christ; why seek ye the living among the dead? In Christ only is to be found what ye are seeking, rest to the conscience and to the heart.

MOTIVE 2. Now is the time he is to be found; Isa. lv. 6. The day will come when he will not be to be found; and so the sinner has no more access to life. Remember the case of the foolish virgins; Matth. xxv. That is a heavy word; Prov. i. 24, 26, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." And how stinging will it then be to think, that the time of seeking Christ was spent in seeking what cannot profit; and that then all access to him is lost for ever.

MOTIVE *ult.* Ye will be made up for ever, if ye find Christ; and undone, if ye find him not; Prov. viii. 35, 36. If one was taken up all the days of his life, seeking him, and should find him at last, all would be found to be well bestowed; Matth. xiii. 45, 46. And find what we will, if we should find all the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world, it would not compensate the loss of a missed Saviour; Matth. xvi. 26. But I will branch out this exhortation in two particulars.

First, Sinners, seek to find Christ, and to find life in him, by getting a saving discovery of him made to your souls. To press seeking of this saving discovery, consider,

MOR. 1. There is no closing with Christ, or believing in him, without a saving discovery of him made to the soul; Psalm ix. 10; John iv. 10. Men may believe in an unseen, but not an unknown Christ. There is an illumination in the knowledge of Christ, that is

necessary towards the embracing of him. Without it the wounded soul will pine away in its wounds, not knowing the Physician; and the sinner in his sins, not knowing the Saviour.

2. All your labour in religion, without this, will be but working in the dark, and labour in vain; John xiv. 6, compared with Eccl. x. 15. What will all attainments in religion avail, without the knowledge of the main thing, *i. e.* the knowledge of Christ? Matth. vii. 22, we find some prophesying in Christ's name, in his name casting out devils, and in his name doing many wonderful works, who lose all their pains, because there was no saving acquaintance betwixt Christ and them.

3. The discovery of Christ is the most excellent discovery that men are capable of. Therefore Paul determined to seek after nothing but that; 1 Cor. ii. 2; he preferred it to all other things; Phil. iii. 8. What though men be ever so well acquainted with the nature of the creation, and can dive into the secret mysteries of nature, with the reasons of the same? if they be unacquainted with Christ, it is but a bewitching vanity, and a gilded ignorance.

The knowledge of Christ appears to be the most noble, if one considers, (1.) The superlative excellency of the object; Col ii. 9, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (2.) The way and manner one comes to this knowledge. Not by the light of nature; this cannot discover Christ to a soul; not by mere objective revelation in the word; men may indeed learn much of Christ that way, but may go to hell for it all; but by the light of the Spirit and subjective revelation; Matth. xvi. 16, 17. (3.) The certainty of it, which surpasses all demonstration; Heb. xi. 1. (4.) The usefulness of it. Other knowledge men may have, and perish with it; all the arts and sciences in the world cannot give life to the soul; but this is life, eternal life to them that have it; John xvii. 3. Wherefore all other researches are but laborious trifling, unless in so far as they are subservient to this.

✦ Christ discovered in his glory will satisfy your souls, and arrest your hearts; Matth. xiii. 45, 46, "Be shut my eyes and ears," saith Luther, "and say, you know no God out of Christ, none but he that was in the lap of Mary, and sucked her breasts." What is the reason of the apostasy and backsliding of many, but that they were never brought into this inner court of religion? If they had, they had been held fast. They had seen in him what is fully commensurate to the desires of a soul, and therefore had no occasion to have gone back unto the world and their lusts. This would be an anchor of the soul, in the midst of temptations, troubles, persecutions, and losses, arising from whatever quarter they may; and is the absolutely best way to fix the heart.

5. Christ is a veiled beauty, an unknown Christ to the most part of the hearers of the Gospel, and to all those to whom the Holy Spirit has not given saving illumination, Cant. v. 9, compare John i. 10. Beware he continue not to be so unto you. Seek to get the veil removed, that ye may see that in Christ, which the world left to perish in their iniquity never sees. The leading difference betwixt the wise and the foolish builders, and the wise and the foolish virgins was, the one had illumination, the other had not.

6. *Lastly*, Without a saving discovery of Christ, ye perish, John xvii. 3. Isa. liii. 11. Ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with Christ must needs be fatal to the soul, since he is the only way to the Father, and there is no salvation in any other. It is the great design of the Gospel to bring souls acquainted with Jesus Christ: so where that is not reached, the gospel has not its effect; and where the gospel has not a saving effect, the law will take effect to one's condemnation.

I shall give you some directions for obtaining this discovery of Christ.

DIRECTION 1. Labour to be acquainted with yourselves, your own sinfulness and misery. And for that cause lay your hearts, lives, and state, to the rule of the holy law. Conviction leads the way to saving illumination, the knowledge of the disease to that of the physician, Acts xvi. 30, 31.

2. Seek the discovery of Christ in your attendance on public ordinances, Prov. viii. 34. These are the galleries where the king walks, the lattices by which he shews himself. See Psalm xlv. 8. There is the market where the eye-salve is to be bought of him. There Lydia's heart was opened. It is good to be in Christ's way, as Zaccheus was. And were we looking and longing for a discovery of him there, we would not long want it.

3. Seek the discovery of him in his written word, the scriptures, for they are they which testify of Christ, John v. 39. God's word is the great means of illumination; Psalm xix. 8. The Psalmist found it to be so by experience, Psalm cxix. 130, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." It is the special instrument the Spirit uses for illumination.

4. Seek it earnestly in prayer, Prov. ii. 3—5. When the disciples were together at prayer, the doors being shut, he manifested himself unto them. We are not to expect bodily discoveries of Christ; if we had them, they would not do our turn; the Jews saw him so who believed not on him; but we are to seek a discovery of Christ in the glory of his person and offices, by the Spirit, which alone can be attended with saving effects.

5. *Lastly*. Whenever the Lord lets in the least beam of heavenly

light into your souls, cherish it, though it may be painful by discovering your sin and misery ; make much of it ; after little, more may come, Hos. vi. 3.

Secondly, Seek to find Christ and life in him, by getting an interest in him. The soul then finds Christ, and has life, when it has got an interest in him. If you enquire how that interest is got ? It is through faith. God hath given to us eternal life in the free offer of the gospel, and that life is in his Son, 1 John v. 11. Believe the word of the gospel with particular application to yourselves, receive and rest on him siducially for life, the life of grace and glory, and ye have it. Wherefore come to Christ, that ye may have life. To press this, consider,

MOTIVE 1. Ye are to come to Christ, that ye may get life in and by him, Isa. lv. 1, 2, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here is an invitation to life, let not that complaint be made of you, John v. 40, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Consider,

1st, It is an offer the fallen angels never got. When Christ was born there was good-will towards men, but no sign of it towards fallen angels. Yet they are in themselves a rank of beings superior to mankind, and he owed no more to us than to them. Only his sovereign pleasure made the difference. "How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ?"

2dly, It is an invitation not given to millions in the world, who are the sons of Adam as well as we. Many kingdoms and empires in the world lie in darkness and the shadow of death, and no offer of life is made to them ; but it is made to you.

3dly, It is the greatest offer that ever was or shall be, that heaven can give and earth receive, admired by angels, and grudged by devils ; and shall it be slighted by men ? even an offer of the son of God, and eternal life in him.

4thly, It is an offer frequently repeated. Now sinner, Christ is boding himself and eternal life upon you. You have given him many refusals, but he will not yet take your refusal, but continues the offer.

MOTIVE 2. Christ is very willing to give himself, and eternal life in himself to you, John vi. 37. Consider,

1st, How ample and large the gospel offer is, excluding none that will come, Isa. lv. 1, forecited. Rev. xxii. 17, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

2dly, There is no case a sinner can be in, that shall mar his reception with Christ, and partaking of life, if he will come to Christ; 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." Manasseh's bloodshed and witchcraft, Paul's blasphemy and persecution, and Mary Magdalene's lewdness, hindered not their getting life in and by Christ. When he was in the world, he raised Lazarus when sinking in the grave, as well as the ruler's daughter newly dead.

3dly, He takes kindly notice of the sinner's first steps towards him; the father met the prodigal son while yet a great way off. See Jer. xxxi. 18—20. He surprises souls with looks of kindness preventing them, Is. lxx. 1, as he did Paul, Zaccheus, and others.

4thly, He is at great pains with sinners to bring them to himself for life. He stands and knocks; by convictions, surprising mercies, rods, and crosses, he says in effect, "Why will ye die?"

MOTIVE 3. Ye are commanded to come to him, that ye may have life; 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." All the gospel invitations are commands; so that it is not left to you whether to come or not; but ye are peremptorily enjoined. Consider,

1st, Ye are creatures owing obedience to the commands of your sovereign Lord; and therefore trample not on his gospel command.

2dly, How highly merciful and reasonable this command is. All God's commandments are most righteous, Psalm cxix. 128. But behold this is an eminently merciful and reasonable one, that the creature should seek the favour of its Creator; that man should be at peace with God; that the poor sinner should go to the rich Saviour, the sick to the Physician, the guilty flee to the city of refuge and live, and the dying soul have recourse to the fountain of life. And all this under the pain of God's displeasure.

3dly, What a mercy it is that there is not a countermand; that when Adam and his offspring fell, God did not forbid them ever to hope for the least grain of mercy; but graciously invites and intreats, yea, and commands them to come and partake of his favour!

4thly, It is such a command, that if it be not obeyed, God has no value for all other obedience, 1 John iii. 23, John vi. 29.

MOT. 4. Ye need Christ, and ye need life; ye have an absolute need of both. Do ye not need grace, the favour of God, pardon of sin, the light of his countenance, the influences of his Spirit, the

manifestations of his love ? Without these ye can never be happy, but eternally miserable. O then seek to find Christ, and life in him.

USE. *Ult.* Hereby ye may try whether ye have found Christ or not. The soul yet dead in sin hath not found him; but where there is spiritual life, Christ is found by that soul. How shall one know whether he be spiritually dead or alive? I will offer but three marks.

MARK 1. Spiritual light, not only let into the conscience, but into the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 6, John viii. 12. And that may be known by these two things.

(1.) The discovery it makes. The light of life shews a man his former darkness, making him say, "Once was I blind, but now I see." It discovers sin in its sinfulness, not only as dangerous, but as loathsome and abominable; the sinfulness of heart-sins as well as of life-sins; the first movings of sin, as well as of sin ripened by consent or action; the man's own utter inability to help himself, and the need of Christ both for justification, and sanctification; Christ's preciousness, and perfect suitability to the sinner's case. This is the discovery made by the light of life, or saving illumination, Luke xv. 17, 1 Pet. ii. 17.

(2.) The efficacy it hath on the soul, Matth. iii. 11. There are many who have a great deal of light; but it has no more efficacy on them to bring them from sin to holiness, than painted fire has to burn. But the light of life humbles the soul before God; causes grief for sin and hatred of it, as contrary to God's holy nature and will; a holy despairing of help by ourselves or any other creature; and a betaking one's self to Christ for all, for pardon, and favour with God, for holiness and happiness, Phil. iii. 3.

MARK 2. Where there is spiritual life there is spiritual sense and feeling. In spiritual death all the senses of the soul, so to speak, are locked up; and they may be at some times very dull in those who are spiritually alive. But it is evident, that in the quickening of the soul they are restored, and never lost again altogether. The eyes of the soul are opened to see God, Christ, sin, the world, and all things that concern the soul, in other colours than formerly. They hear his voice in his word and in his rod, and they discern it from all others, Cant. v. 2, so that their great business is to answer his call. They have tasted that the Lord is gracious; they have the witness in themselves, that there is something in religion more desirable than all the profits and pleasures of the world, John v. 10. They can say from their experience, that all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, Psalm xlv. 8, that everything about Christ is lovely and desirable. The fulness of grace lodged in him, is sa-

voury to them, Cant. i. 3. Their sense of feeling is awakened; the burden of sin they sometime went lightly under, makes them groan now, and long to be rid of it, as ever a poor prisoner was of his chains; Rev. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Every limb of that body is a weight to them. And they are sensible of Christ's goings and comings, his hidings and manifestations of himself, and the power of his grace; Psalm xxx. 7, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

MARK 3. Where there is spiritual life, there is a kindly heat and warmth of the same kind. There is a threefold flame kindled in the believer in the day of his being restored to life, though it acts not alike vigorously in all, nor in the same person alike at all times.

(1.) There is a flame of holy desires; Isa. xxvi. 9. They have longing desires after righteousness, both imputed and implanted; Matth. v. 6, they are set for the one as well as the other. They have ardent desires after communion with God in Christ; Psalm xlii. 1. Hence the secret cries of the soul, O that I knew where I might find him! O when wilt thou come unto me!

(2.) There is a flame of love to Christ; Rom. v. 5. They love him above all persons and things; Luke xiv. 26. They love his truths, his whole word; his commands, though striking against their corruptions; Rom. vii. 22, his promises, as the sweetest cordials to a soul fainting under the apprehensions of wrath, or prevailing of corruption; the threatening of his word approving them heartily as most just; Rom. vii. 12. Their hearts warm to any in whom God's image appears, and that because of that image; 1 John iii. 14. They love his ordinances; Psalm lxxxiv. 1, because they are his institutions, and the appointed means of communion with him.

(3.) There is a flame of zeal for Christ; Psalm lxix. 9. They are concerned for his honour in the world, the thriving of his kingdom. It vents itself in indignation against sin in themselves and others, because of the dishonour it reflects on Christ; 2 Cor. vii. 11, in endeavouring to be active for God in their station, and grieving for the ills which they cannot help, saying with David, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," Psalm cxix. 136.