

SERMONS.

DEPARTING FROM INIQUITY THE DUTY OF ALL WHO NAME THE
NAME OF JESUS.*

SERMON I.

2 TIM. ii. 19,

And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

A SOLEMN occasion of renewing our covenant with God being before us, it is necessary that we count the cost ere we begin to build. A Christian profession is easy, a Christian practice not so. It is melancholy to see how many in their practice do yoke together the name of Christ, and the working of iniquity, as if they had found out that secret of conjoining light and darkness, Christ and Belial, which is hid from all saints. Our text confounds this mystery of iniquity, shewing that men must either part with Christ, or depart from iniquity: And, says the apostle, "let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity."

In this verse, the apostle obviates that scandal, and that shaking discouragement, which arose to the saints, from the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, mentioned in verse 17. Satan could stand on the ruins of these men, and affright the saints with this temptation, Behold! what loose ground you stand upon! these who are now shipwrecked stood once as fair for the harbour as you. To drive the bottom out of this temptation, the apostle tells them, that for all this the foundation of the perseverance of real saints stands firm, as in ver. 19, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." As if he had said, The devil has got but his own, he has got none of Christ's. They were among Christ's sheep indeed; they were, however, nothing but the devil's goats, of whom he ever had a sure hold by some iniquity or other, one lust or other; and now by this bond of iniquity he has drawn them out from among the sheep of Christ: 1 John ii. 19,

* This and the following discourses on this text were delivered in May and June 1719.

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” But the foundation upon which every real saint is built is sure, and can never be overturned. This is the decree of election; (1.) A foundation of God’s own laying; (2.) A sealed foundation of God’s own sealing; and therefore affording the most ample security. A seal is for confirming and ratifying a decree and purpose; the decree of election including the perseverance of the saints, as the means to the end, is sealed for this end, and that with a twofold seal; having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his,” and, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

First, It is sealed with God’s knowledge, “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” Amongst the mixed multitude in the church, the Lord knows his own. He knows those whom he has chosen, he cannot mistake them, though men may, and sometimes do, take others for them. He knows them practically, that is, he knows them, to distinguish them from others, he will take care of them, that they be not lost, as one does with what he knows to be his own; and this secures them.

Secondly, It is sealed with effectual sanctification; Eph. iv. 30, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” He sees to the sanctification of his own, causing them to depart from iniquity, which is the only thing which can ruin them; and thus again they are secured.

For understanding this, consider, that the apostle here has an eye to the history of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Num. xvi. these Old Testament apostates who perished in their sin. There was a dispute betwixt them and Moses and Aaron for the priesthood; the congregation at length thought the former as much the Lord’s as the latter, ver. 19; though at first it seems they knew not in whose favour to decide. Moses refers it to God’s judgment, ver. 5, “The Lord will shew (Heb. make known) who are his, and who are holy;” importing, that the Lord knew who were his. This was the security of Moses and Aaron when the stroke came. When the earth was to swallow up Korah and his company, as in a spiritual sense it does all apostates, the congregation was, by God’s appointment, charged to depart from the tents of these wicked men, and to touch nothing that was theirs, ver. 26. This charge was effectual to the congregation, but not to these men’s wives and their children, ver. 27; so the latter perished, and the former were secured. It seems this was a

typical event, an emblem of the sure standing of the saints, while hypocrites fall away and perish.

This double seal answers to the two parts of the covenant; Jer. xxxii. 40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This covenant shall not fail on God's part, for it hath this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his;" nor on the part of the saints, for it hath this seal, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Let us attend,

1. To the seal itself, which, in its general nature, is a command of sanctification; in which consider, to whom it is directed, upon whom this awful charge is laid. They are the Lord's own words, directed to every one that nameth the name of his Son, that is, to all who profess Christ. And this character of professors serves not only to distinguish them from those without the church, who are incapable of apostacy; but also shows the obligation laid on them to holiness by their profession, the holy name named by them binding them to a holy life. The inconsistency between the holy profession and an unholy life, which, though men join together, God will have separated, sooner or later, for he will strip them either of their fair name, or their foul heart and life, in time or in eternity. Consider, the duty commanded, "to depart from iniquity," as from a thing one formerly stood to and followed. Iniquity is that thing which we all naturally follow as a master and leader; but there must be a falling off from it, an apostacy, or falling away from sin, as the word imports. And this is the way to prevent apostacy from the Lord; for this does import, that it is some one iniquity or other indulged, and left to reign in the heart, which betrays professors into apostacy, as Judas, Demas, &c. Consider,

2. How this can be a seal to secure the saints and elect ones from apostacy, since it is but a commandment? To this I answer, that the nature of the preceding seal would seem to have required this expression, "And they that are his depart from iniquity." But it is in form of a command, to show that the saints depart from iniquity by choice, and that they are by the Lord himself powerfully determined to this choice; so that their perseverance is both rational and gracious. It is a command, at the same time it is a powerful and efficacious command of God, like that in Gen. i. 3, "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light;" a command which effects what it requires in all who are his. It is such a command as that in Num. xvi. 26, (quoted above), which brought away from the tents of Dathan and Abiram, all who were not to be swallowed up

with them. And this command is going through wherever the gospel is preached, and will go till the last day; like a brisk wind separating the corn from the chaff, carrying away from the tents of sin all who are ordained to eternal life, though others dwell on in them still. Thus, though the profane and hypocritical, and all who are not the Lord's, are still held by some one bond of sin or other which is never broken: yet this powerful word looses the bands of all sin, sets them and their sins asunder, and keeps them asunder, who, being sealed with the first seal, are his. And all this God's efficacious word can do, as well as keep the world from returning into its primitive mass of confusion; Heb. i. 3, "Upholding all things by the word of his power." And so it is a seal securing them from apostacy. From this subject two general doctrines may be proposed:

DOCTRINE I. That God doth charge all who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

DOCTRINE II. That God's charge to depart from iniquity becomes infallibly effectual in all who are his, so as that they do truly depart from iniquity, while others hold it fast to their utter ruin. I begin with the

First, That God doth charge all that name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

In illustrating this point, I shall shew,

I. Who they are whom the Lord charges to depart from iniquity.

II. What is implied in departing from iniquity, which God chargeth these to do.

III. How he charges these who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity.

IV. Why these particularly who name the name of Christ are charged to do so. And then add the practical improvement.

We are,

I. To shew who they are whom the Lord charges to depart from iniquity.

The text tells you it is every one who names the name of Christ. Thus, it is every one of you, whatever your character be. The poor pagans, amongst whom Christ is not named, God winks at them; but he charges you, and every one of you, to depart from iniquity. This charge is to you,

1. Baptized persons, capable to discern betwixt good and evil; the name of Christ is called upon you, and you name him; God charges you to depart from iniquity. You are engaged to be the Lord's, to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh. You

have no liberty to follow your lusts, and the vanity of your minds. You are charged, as God's subjects, to have no more converse with his enemies; since you have given up your names to Christ, you are to dwell no more in the tents of sin. There is no exception of the young more than the old, but every one who nameth the name of Christ is to depart from iniquity. The charge is to you,

2. Who profess faith in Christ, and hope of salvation through him. You name his name, and therefore you are charged. Although, perhaps, you will not so much as bow a knee to God, nor have so much as a form of godliness, yet you have not renounced the faith, nor your part in Christ; therefore, since you retain his name, and will be called Christians, depart from iniquity; live like Christians, and not like those who never heard of Christ.—The charge is to you,

3. Who pray to God through Christ. You name the name of Christ, and therefore are charged to depart from iniquity. Some of you, perhaps, pray only sometimes, as if you had more necessary business than serving the Lord; some pray ordinarily, yet go on in some sinful course or other; as if God was only to be served with fair words, and your lusts with the whole course of your life. But though this be your situation, this charge God lays on you notwithstanding, Depart from iniquity.—This charge is to you,

4. Who profess faith in Christ, and holiness of life also. You name the name of Christ, and therefore you should depart from iniquity. Are there not many such, whose lives are miserably stained in points of immorality, who walk most unsuitably to their character, by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of? Rom. ii. 23, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?" God charges you to walk up to your character, to your profession, and to depart from iniquity.—This charge is,

Lastly, To communicants who name the name of Christ in a most solemn manner, by sitting down at his table, before God, angels, and men. This charge is to you. You have named this name, and gone back to those iniquities of which you were convinced. Are there not some who have adventured to stretch forth their hand to the Lord at his table, and have quickly again stretched it out to their lusts? To you the Lord is saying, Quit your communicating, or your iniquity; join no more an unholy life to such a fair and flaming profession.

We are now,

II. To shew what is implied in this departing from iniquity which God chargeth us to aim at.—Here,

1st, Let us inquire in what this departure, this happy apostacy lies. And,

2dly, What of iniquity God charges us to depart from.—We are

1st, To inquire in what this departure, this happy apostacy lies. There are five things which belong to it.—There is,

1. A giving up with our rest in sin. God says of sin to all who name Christ, “Arise ye, and depart for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.” Sinners, ye are settled on your lees, as wine on the dregs, but there must be a separation; you are dwelling in a dangerous place, like Lot in Sodom; lying among the pots, as the Israelites in Egypt; sleeping securely like the sluggard on his bed, “while his poverty cometh as one that travaileth, and his want as an armed man.” God chargeth you to awake and bestir yourself, to spring to your feet, and prepare to make progress in the ways of holiness.—There is,

2. A going off from sin, and giving up with it: Job xxxiv. 32, “If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.” God is saying to you of sin’s dominion, as he said to the Israelites at Horeb, “Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount; therefore up and be gone from the tents of wickedness; ye have dwelt too long in the tents of Mesech and Kedar.” May not the time past suffice to have done the will of the flesh? 1 Pet. iv. 3, Ye “have long wandered on the mountains of vanity, come away from them now: Song iv. 8, “Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon.” Bid a long farewell now, and turn your backs on the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.—There is,

3. A standing off from sin, as the word properly signifies: Prov. iv. 15, “Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” Keep yourselves at a distance. Stand off from it as from a fire that will consume you, as from a leprosy that will infect you, as from an unclean thing that will defile you, as from a sword and arrow which will pierce and wound you to death, as from a serpent whose biting and stinging is poisonous, painful, and deadly.—There is,

4. A going off to the other side, namely, to Christ and holiness; Isa. lv. 7, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” There can be no neutrality in the matter betwixt sin and holiness, no standing between the two: “He that is not with me is against me,” saith Jesus; “and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad,” Matth. xii. 30. Sin and holiness are such opposites, that one of them must be predominant in every subject capable of either. Apostates

from religion betake themselves to the other side, and they who run away from Christ, they list themselves under Satan's banner; and so do those who fall away from sin, fall in with Christ and newness of life.—There is,

Lastly, A going farther and farther from sin. Even the saints must always be departing from it: Job, xi. 14, "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles." The first departure of the saints in conversion, though it be sincere, is not perfect; but what is then begun, must be held on in the progress of sanctification, as a spring, when opened, runs and runs on, till the mud be wholly removed out of the fountain. Prov. iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." They, having this hope, purify themselves, even as God is pure, 1 John iii. 3. And hence their departing from sin consists in daily mortification, and living more and more to righteousness.

Secondly, Let us inquire what of iniquity God charges us to depart from. It is the accursed thing, with which we have nothing to do. We must depart from all sin, from the whole of it.—We must depart,

1. From under the dominion of sin: Rom. vi. 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Sin has a dominion over all who are out of Christ. It commands their whole man. The motions of it are the laws they obey. It is a dominion which is opposed to Christ's; in the one, grace reigns unto life; but in the other, sin reigns unto death. Christ offers to break the bands of your yoke; come then to him, and shake off the yoke of your sins, renounce your allegiance, withdraw and refuse obedience to your old masters; say, "What have I any more to do with idols?"—We must depart,

2. From the practice of sin, Isa. lv. 7, quoted above. Give up with and put an end to your sinful courses; be no longer workers of iniquity, for such workers will get a sad reward of their work, Matth. vii. 23, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." To what purpose do men pretend to believe in Christ, while they are the servants of sin? How can one serve two such contrary masters? What avails the pretended belief of the truth, which purges not the heart and life of ungodliness and unrighteousness; Rom. i. 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Depart then from the practice of sin,—in your outward man, your life and conversation. God is saying to you this day, James, iv. 8, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-

minded." Reform your lives, if ever you would have communion with God here or hereafter, Psalm xxiv. 3, 4, Isa. i. 16, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil." Look to your conversation, see what is in it offensive to God, and dishonouring to his name, and depart from all this; Lam. jii. 40, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."—Turn from gross pollutions of the outward man, and live the Christian life, or give over the Christian name, Jer. vii. 9,—11. There have been sober Heathens, who were remarkable for their temperance, their justice in dealings, and, in a word, regular lives according to the precepts of morality. But how many Christians are there, whose lives are stained with profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness, injustice, dishonesty, filthiness, and other gross pollutions, by reason of which the way of truth is evil spoken of! God charges you, since ye name the name of Christ, to depart from these, upon the pain of eternal exclusion from his presence, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, Gal. v. 19—21. Wherefore, let him that did these things do so no more. Turn from the lesser pollutions of the outward man; Acts, xxiv. 16, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." A person may be drowned in a rivulet, as well as in the deep sea, if they take not heed to themselves. Vain and idle words, as well as vile and wicked ones, may ruin a man: Matth. xii. 36, 37, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that a man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." There is a careless way of living, though not the way of open profanity, which yet is offensive to tender Christians, in which men swim to destruction in a stream of sins that few in the world make any account of, and they go to hell without making the sound of their feet to be heard by the way. Hear their doom, Psalm cxxv. 5, "As for such that turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," Eph. iv. 17. Look to the law and to the testimony; cleanse your way by these, Psalm cxix. 9. If the word of God condemn your practice, though all the world justify it, God charges you to depart from it. Depart from the practice of sin in the inner man, James iv. 8, (quoted above), Psal. xxiv. 3. 4. Sin may be beaten from the outworks, while it has retired in safety to the heart: there may in appearance be a clean life, while the heart is foul all over, and wickedness is practised at ease in the secret chambers of imagery.

Therefore God charges you, as Jer. iv. 14, "O Jerusalem! wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Turn, then, from heart vileness. Since the heart is as open to God as the life, it is of little use to be as a whited sepulchre, while within we are full of rottenness, to clean the outside of the cup while the inside is full of ravening. Purge your hearts of speculative filthiness; away with filthy imaginations, impure thoughts, envy, covetousness, malice, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Be as much concerned to crush these vipers in the shell, as to resist external actions. Turn from heart-vanity, Eph iv. 17 (quoted above). Vain thoughts are like idle words, offensive to God, and therefore hated and resisted by the godly; Psalm cxix. 113, "I hate vain thoughts." Vanity of heart is the next step to, and paves the way for vileness of heart and life. It is the house swept and garnished, to which the devil returns with seven other spirits worse than himself. Therefore labour to get your hearts filled with good motions and holy desires, regulated by the fear of God, warmed with his love, guarded by watchfulness, and so busied as that ye may not feed on wind, but may be taken up about what may be of good use, both profitable and pleasing.

3. Depart from the devising and contriving of sin. A good man may be surprised into sin, but for a man to sit down and contrive sinful actions, is to make his heart a forge to Satan. To sleep and wake in pursuing the contrivance of sin, is the character of a wicked man; Psalm xxxvi. 4, "He deviseth mischief upon his bed, he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil." Thus men set themselves wilfully in an ill way, which grieves the Spirit, extinguishes his motions, and wastes the conscience. Men may show their worldly wit in this way, that they are wise to do evil; and they may, for a time, prosper in their ways, and bring their wicked devices to pass, Psalm xxxvii. 7. But such a habitual practice will prove a man graceless, 1 John iii. 8, 9, and will be bitterness in the end, for evil doers shall be cut off, Psalm xxxvii. 9. Depart, then, from the devising of sin, or quit the name of Christians.

4. Depart from the love of sin; Ezek. xvi. 6, "Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations." 1 John ii. 15, 16. While the love of sin reigns in the heart, though they may seem to depart from it, the devil has a pledge of them that they will not go far away, but that they will come again back to him. This is that which makes so many communicants a scandal to their profession; so many who put their hand to the plough, to look back. They still

love sinful liberty, their hearts are not divorced from their lusts, and so they return to their idols. If you name the name of Christ, and profess love to him, God charges you—to turn your esteem of sin into disdain and contempt of it, Isa. ii. 20, “Cast your idols to the moles and to the bats.” Let grace and holiness have the ascendant of sin and wickedness in your esteem. Account them no more the happy men who take to themselves a liberty in sinful courses, but as men who are most miserable, vile, and pitiful, as slaves to sin, and in the road to destruction, Psalm xv. 4. You are charged to turn your love of sin into hatred and abhorrence of it, Psalm xcvi. 10, “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.” Hate it as evil, as the worst of evils, worse than any sufferings; hate it as hell; Rom. xii. 19, “Abhor that which is evil.” Hate it as destructive to the soul, as dishonouring and displeasing to God. Abhor it as you would do a cup of poison, though a golden cup. Your love of it must be turned into loathing. Look not only upon it as an ill thing, but as a filthy and a loathsome thing, at which one’s heart is apt to stand, Isa. xxx. 22; Ezek. xviii. 31. You have long kept at it as a sweet morsel. Let your soul apprehend its real filthiness, so as that you may vomit it up again. Your former cleaving unto sin must be turned into longing to get rid of it, Rom. vii. 24, “O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Long to be free of it, as a prisoner longs for the opening of the prison-doors, as a captive for his liberty. Look on it as a burden on your back, which makes you stoop; as a burden on your head, which perplexes you how to get free of it; as a burden on your stomach, which you will endeavour to cast up. This is the heart’s departing from sin, without which all other departures from it will be to little purpose.

5. Depart from the enjoyment of the fruits of sin. The righteous man is one who despises the gain of oppression, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing of evil. When lovers part, they give back their tokens; and when a sinner parts with his sin in earnest, he will part with its fruits, whatever advantages he has by them. This is so evident even to a natural conscience awakened, that Judas, repenting of his betraying of Christ, could no longer bruik the thirty pieces he had made by his sin; and Zaccheus, sincerely repenting, is ready to make restitution, Luke, xix. 8. It was Balaam’s character, he loved the wages of unrighteousness. And he who wilfully keeps the fruit of his sin, thereby nails down his own soul in a state of impenitency, so that he cannot repent of that sin; he binds the guilt of it on himself as with bands of iron and brass,

so that it cannot be forgiven while this disposition remains. Wherefore purge out this leaven, and cast away the fruits with the tree.

6. Depart from the occasions of sin, and all temptations to it, Ezek. xiv. 6, (quoted above): It is vain to pretend to depart from sin, when men do not watch against the occasions to it. They who in a siege resolve really not to give up the town, will defend the out-works as long as they can. These do not depart from, but run into sin, who cast themselves into the way of temptations. Therefore says Solomon; Prov. iv. 14. 15, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass over it, turn from it, and pass away." Mind the apostle's advice, 1 Thes. v. 22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Occasions and temptations will seek us out while in this evil world; but let every one who nameth the name of Christ be upon his guard against them.

Lastly, Depart from the workers of iniquity; 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Let birds of a feather flock together; but if ye name the name of Christ, depart from the tents of wicked men. True, we cannot altogether shun them while we are in the world; but to make choice of ungodly persons for our companions, is the way to ruin; Prov. xiii. 20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Wherefore, if you be setting your faces heavenward, depart from those whose faces are towards hell; Acts, ii. 40, "With many words did Peter testify and exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation." Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shall keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON I I.

2 TIM. ii. 19,

And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered to whom the charge is addressed, and what is imported in the charge, "depart from iniquity,"

We now proceed,

III. To explain the nature of this charge, or to shew how the

Lord charges those who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. You may know the nature of this charge given to them in the text, by these following properties. It is,

1. An universal charge, and this in two respects. *1st*, In respect of the persons naming. "Every one," says the text, "who nameth the name of Christ:" there is no exception in the charge, it is directed to all and sundry who profess Christ, or who are called Christians, whether ye be communicants or not. Since you are Christians by name, you are charged by the God who made you, to betake yourselves to the Christian life, and depart from iniquity. Whether you be high and honourable, or low and mean in the world, whatever difference is betwixt you and others, God makes none in this charge. But whether young or old, you are included in the charge, and you cannot resist it, but at your highest peril.—*2dly*, The charge is universal in respect of the sins which you are to depart from; Ezek. xviii. 31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" They are all and every one of them dishonouring to God, displeasing to him, disagreeable to the holy name by which ye are called, and therefore all of them are to be departed from.—You must part with your fashionable sins, (with which, to be neighbour-like, you comply, though you should be a wonder to many), as well as with unfashionable ones, to which you have no temptation; Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world." You must depart from your gainful sins, as well as those by which you make no profit: Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" You must part with the sins of your calling and station in the world, as well as those which lie out of your road. This is an ordinary screen for sin; but see Luke iii. 12, 13, 14. You must part with little sins, as well as with great sins; with your darling sin, your bosom-idol, as with others less beloved; with the sins of your constitution, that sin which most easily besets you, Heb. xii. 1; in one word, with all your sins of heart and life. It is,

2. A peremptory charge; Acts xvii. 30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men every where to repent." There are no *ifs* or *ands* for your keeping your sins, or any of them. Many go about to compound the matter with God. They will part with such and such a sin, they will only harbour this and that, which is but a little one, a right eye, &c.; but in vain, you must part with all. If you would give rivers of oil, or

the fruit of your body for your sins, you cannot be allowed to keep any one of these accursed things. It is,

3. A charge for the present time; Psalm xc. 7, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." It requires obedience upon hearing of it, a speedy and quick compliance, like that, Psalm cxix. 60, "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments." You are not allowed to advise another day, whether you will depart from iniquity or not. For ought you know, it is now or never with you; 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And if you refuse this once more, God may take you at your refusal, and determine your eternal state by it, Prov. i. 24, and downwards. Often refusals are most dangerous; Prov. xxix. 1, "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." It is,

4. A charge with certification, a charge upon your highest peril: Heb. xii. 25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." You are charged to depart from iniquity, as you will answer it before the Judge of the quick and dead. There is in this instance a fivefold certification. There is this certification,

(1.) That if you do it not, you shall incur the high displeasure of God: Rom. i. 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Who knows the power of His wrath who is able to frown the creature into the lowest abyss of misery? His anger makes the hills to tremble, the mountains to smoke; alas! how can worm man bear it?—There is this certification,

(2.) That if you do it not, you shall have no communion with God in duties: Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" You may go to your prayers, but God will not be found of you: he will turn the back and not the face to you: Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." You shall find a separation-wall built up between God and you: Isa. lix. 2. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." You may come to a communion-table, but your harboured lusts shall separate betwixt God and you; this will make it a sapless meal to you. There is this certification,

(3.) That if you do it not, your best services and duties will not be accepted, but rejected as an abomination. Remember that God requires obedience rather than sacrifices; and it is in vain for men

to think to please God in the external acts of devotion, while they do not make conscience of obeying his commandments in holiness of life; Prov. xxviii. 9, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." Will men dare to go over the belly of their duty enjoined them from the Lord's word, without ever aiming to comply with it, and yet think to communicate acceptably? There is this certification,

(4.) That if you do it not, you will get a curse instead of a blessing in your approaches to God, Mal. ii. 2, 3. God has made some monuments of his vengeance, who have presumed in their sins unrepented of to approach his presence in a solemn manner, Lev. x. 1, 3. But because God does not strike men often this way, there are found those who, living in secret wickedness, come to the Lord's table to cloak their wickedness, little considering the blasting curse to which they expose their souls. There is this certification,

(5.) That if you do it not, you shall perish in your iniquity; Heb. xii. 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." True holiness is in all manner of conversation. One thing lacking will ruin and sink the ship of your souls, as well as a thousand.

We are now,

IV. To show why those particularly who name the name of Christ, are charged to depart from iniquity. All to whom the gospel comes are so charged, but those who profess Christ are in a special manner thus charged. For,

1. The practice of iniquity is a contradiction to their profession; so that they cannot have this practice, but they give the lie to their profession. An holy profession, and an unholy practice, are such inconsistencies, as that the one overthrows the other; "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. By their profession they are friends of God, by their practice they are enemies; by the one they carry Christ's yoke, by the other sin and Satan's. Thus the life is woven into one practical lie.

2. Whosoever partakes of Christ's salvation, departs from iniquity; for salvation from sin is the leading and chief part of Christ's salvation; "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Therefore none can justly claim Christ as his Saviour, who still lives in sin. Hence we are told, James ii. 17, "That faith without works is dead." And a holy life is just as necessary to evidence our interest in Christ, as light is necessary to evidence that the sun is risen.

3. The practice of iniquity in such, is in a peculiar manner offensive to God, and grieving to his Spirit. Sin is offensive to his holiness, wherever it is found; but the offence is doubled in those who name the name of Christ; Amos iii. 2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Friends wounds pierce deepest; and the nearer that the relation is betwixt the offender and the offended, the offence is the worse taken, Psalm xli. 9, and lv. 12, 13. The treachery of a traitor is more grievous than the enmity of an open enemy, and more severely punished; and accordingly the impiety of those who name the name of Christ, is more heinous than that of others who do not; Matth. xi. 22, "But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." The breaking of a covenant, which all the baptized as well as communicants have entered into, is most aggravating, both in respect of sin and punishment. See Matth. xxiv. 51. Compare Jer. xviii. 34.

Lastly, It reflects a peculiar dishonour upon God; such sins bring a scandal upon that holy name and religion which they profess; Rom. ii. 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." The loose lives of professors expose religion to the ridicule and reproach of its enemies; so that they are the Judases by whom the Son of man was betrayed. Religion is the worse of them; and it meets with worse entertainment in the world, that workers of iniquity do profess it.

We are now,

V. To make some practical improvement; and this,

First, In a use of information. This doctrine shews us,

1. That all and every one amongst us, by the authority of God who made us, and in whose name we were baptised, are obliged to depart from iniquity. You cannot keep it without rebellion against your sovereign Lord, without treachery and breach of your covenant. O that men would seriously reflect on the authority they are under! consider the charge given them from heaven, and how they will answer for their disobedience to it, when God rises up to judgment. This shews us,

2. That for men to abstain from the sacrament of the supper, to this end that they may not be abridged of their liberty in sinful courses, is not only impious, but childish and foolish. It is impious, as it is a determined disobedience to God's express charge. It is foolish, because this liberty is already cut off from them, and renounced by them, by their taking on the possession and badge of Christianity. Their abstaining from the sacrament of the supper, unless they also renounce their baptism, and all their part in Christ,

speakers, slanderers, and backbiters, who use their tongues so busily in the service of the devil, know what they have to expect, if they approach the table of the Lord, Psalm l. 16—23. And let all know, that a loose unbridled tongue will prove a man's religion vain; and this vain religion will leave him in the lurch at length; Jam. i. 26, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this man's religion is vain." Depart therefore from all these, or presume not to approach the Lord's table.

5. All those who make no conscience of inward purity, the keeping of the heart; Matth. v. 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Outside religion may give you outward privileges, but it will leave you to break your teeth on the shell, without ever enjoying the kernel of them. Speculative impurities and sins entertained in the heart, will exclude you from heaven; and, before the Lord, will exclude you from his table, if you are not repenting of them, and resolving, through grace, to wrestle against them. Depart also from these, or venture not to approach his holy table.

6. All those who entertain and indulge themselves in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, or are not content to have their sin and duty discovered to them; Psalm lxxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." One thing may mar all in the bargain betwixt Christ and your souls. If one lust be reserved and excepted, it is no bargain; Mark x. 21, 22, "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." Men, then, should soberly consider, with what conscience they can sit down at the Lord's table, while they are living in sin, in that which they are convinced to be sin, and yet are never endeavouring to amend.

5. Behold how the door of access to the Lord's table is opened to all true penitents, whose hearts are loosed from, and set against, all sin. Those who would now sincerely depart from their iniquity, and turn from it without reserve to the Lord, are welcome to name the name of Christ, they have his Father's allowance for it: Isa. iv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." He saith not, that they who will name the name of Christ must be without iniquity; there are none such in this lower world; but they

must depart from it, they must turn their backs on it, though it may tempt them; they are to flee from it though it may follow; they are to resist it, nay even though it attack them. Whosoever, then, is brought to be weary of their former sinful courses, are sincerely desirous of, and are resolving through grace to be the Lord's only wholly, and for ever, to take Christ for their Saviour from sin and wrath, to take holiness for their way, and God's word for their rule, they have access to the covenant, and to the seal of the covenant, in a comfortable way.

Lastly, This shews us the necessity of self-searching, examining ourselves on this occasion. 1 Cor. xi. 28. Communicants should examine themselves beforehand as to their sins, as well as with respect to their graces, since God has commanded every one that nameth the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. Make not superficial work of communicating, but examine your heart and life for the time past, that ye may discover what has been, and what is your iniquity or iniquities, from which you are now to depart: Lam. iii. 40, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." One reason why there is so little reformation on the back of communions is, that people do not beforehand take a view of what is wrong, they do not consider what they are to endeavour the reformation of. Now, if a person do not know what he should depart from, how can he depart from it? Wherefore the same authority which charges you to depart from iniquity, charges you to take a view of what has been amiss in your ways. Take some time for this, and be as particular as you can, to search out the old leaven, and devote to a curse what you find out. Examine how your hearts stand affected to your sins for the time present, whether you really repent of them or not, whether you be ashamed of them before the Lord, are heartily grieved for them, hate them, and are longing to be rid of them, to be delivered from the guilt, the stain, the power, and the indwelling of them, or not. If you have not attained to this, you are, while in this case, utterly unfit for a communion table. If you have, the master of the feast makes you welcome. If your repentance be real it will reach to all your known sins whatsoever, without exception, both the root and the branches, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Examine how your hearts stand affected to them for the time to come; if you be sincerely resolved through grace, on newness of life. Surely it is meet at all times, but especially before a communion occasion, to be thus resolved: Job xxxiv. 31, 32, "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do

no more." If you cannot think to give up with your sinful courses, or to live without them, do not mock God, and bring more guilt upon your souls, by sitting down at his table : but if you would wish to be holy as God is holy, and, under a sense of your inability to subdue sin, desire to betake yourself to Christ for his sanctifying Spirit, resolving through grace to watch against sin, and resist the motions of it, ye are welcome guests to the Lord's table.—We shall only add,

Secondly, An use of exhortation. We exhort you to depart from iniquity, turn from your sins, since you name the name of Christ. Let none think to find shelter for their sins under this, namely that they intend not to take the sacrament. You have taken a sacrament already, which obliges you to do this, and therefore I charge one and all of you to depart from your iniquity this day. If you will not, know the name Christ, whose name you name, while you will not depart from iniquity ; it will be your great enemy : Luke xix. 27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay before me." Sin is the great make-bait betwixt God and the sinner, and the friendship with your lusts will be enmity with the Lord. Hereupon I would ask you, How think ye to live on God's ground, amongst the midst of his creatures, while God is your enemy ? Know ye not that all the creatures are banded together against him to whom God is an enemy ? Does not the meat thou eatest say, Lord if thou wilt allow me, I will choke this rebel ? The earth, I will swallow him up who will not depart from iniquity ? Again, let me ask you, how will you look the king of terrors in the face ? What comfort will these sins which thou now holdest fast leave thee, when the old sinful tabernacle begins to fall down, the soul to flee away, and the carcass is brought down to a grave, both to be imprisoned, the former in hell, the latter in the grave, till the resurrection ? How will you bear to be raised up and sisted before the great tribunal, to answer for all those sins you will not now depart from, and to receive the eternal reward of your works ?

Particularly, O communicants ! presume not to sit down at the Lord's table, without departing from iniquity. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may keep the feast.—O communicants ! will ye betray the Son of man with a kiss ? When sitting down at his table, you profess yourselves to be his friends, members of his family. But if you depart not from iniquity, you will betray him as sure as Judas did, for you are in league with his enemies. And your vows at the communion-table will become like Samson's green withs, which were broken at the first onset, and you will return back again with more eagerness to these sins from which you never really departed :

you know what will be the end of such conduct.—Will ye go out against Christ as against a thief with swords and staves? You do it by going in your sins unrepented of to his table. We are to commemorate his love in dying for our sins, sins which furnished a Judas to betray him, nails to pierce him, and a spear to enter into his side. And will you presume on this exercise, holding fast these sins, and refusing to let them go? If you would proclaim war against Christ, instead of sitting down at his table, you could reach him no other way, than you will do by holding fast iniquity. It is the day of his espousals, of his coronation; let us not make it a day of crucifying him afresh.—Would you see Jesus, and in him God reconciled to your souls, blessing you with the seal of your pardon, peace, and right to eternal life? Come away to Christ freely from your sins, make your most beloved lusts stepping-stones, over the belly of which you will come to his table, putting a bill of divorce into the hand of them all, with a sincere resolution, through grace, never to entertain them willingly again. In this event, I know nothing to make the separation betwixt him and you: Isa. lix. 1, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” But, alas! some say, I cannot get rid of my sins. To this I answer, Is thine iniquity thy burden, which thou wouldst as fain be rid of, as of an oppressing weight? Then thy heart is away from it, and God accepts thee in this case, sincerely, though not perfectly, to be departed from it. It is one thing to be sitting still in a house, willingly entertaining a guest; another, to be labouring to get away, though the troublesome guest will not part with us. If the latter be thy case, you may come to the Lord at his table, with hopes of welcome, you will then be strengthened for the struggle, and shall get the seal of complete victory in due time. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N I I I .

2 TIM. ii. 19,

And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

HAVING, in the preceding discourses, offered all that was intended on the first doctrine taken from this subject, I now proceed to a consideration of

DOCT. II. That God’s charge to depart from iniquity is infallibly

effectual in all who are his, so as that they do truly depart from iniquity, while others hold it fast to their own ruin, Acts xiii. 48 ; Matth. i. 21 ; or briefly thus, that all the elect of God shall depart from iniquity.

In explaining this, I shall,

I. Shew when and how far this charge is effectual in all who are his.

II. Evince the truth of this doctrine that the charge is effectual in all who belong to God.

III. We shall, in the conclusion, make some practical improvement.

WE are,

I. To shew when and how far this charge is effectual in all who are his. I shewed before, from what of sin we are to depart. And, in general, this charge is effectual, in all the parts of it, in them who are the Lord's. But more particularly,

1. It is effectual in them who are his, in this life. Here the work is truly and happily begun ; they all become saints on earth, who shall be saints in heaven, Psalm xvi. 3. Though by nature they are wild olives, growing in the forest of the world lying in wickedness, they are plucked up and planted in the nursery of grace, where they grow till transplanted into paradise ; while their fellows stand still in that forest till cut down for the fire. It is effectual in this life, in a gospel-sense, though not in a law-sense, in respect of a perfection of parts, though not of degrees. And this in three respects :

(1.) It is effectual in all who belong to God, in so far as they come freely away from sin in conversion. Some may be longer in coming away than others, they may abide in the tents of wickedness, after other sealed ones are gone, but they shall infallibly follow sooner or later ; For, says Jehovah, Joel iii. 21, " I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." This one and the other may often be passed by ; while others are taken, who shall certainly have a place in the building of mercy. Here consider the following things :—That all mankind by nature lie in wickedness : They are dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. They are in the devil's camp, they are bound with the bands of wickedness, estranged from God and all that is truly good. They will not leave it, because it is their element.—Consider also, that yet among them God has some which he has chosen to life, and whom in his eternal purpose of love to their souls, he has sealed as his own, to bring them away, and to make them partakers of his glory.—Consider farther, that the alarm of the gospel comes indefinitely to all, whether they be the Lord's or not. It comes to the devil's

camp, and says, 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separated, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." It says as Moses to Israel, in respect of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men." Or as the angel to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain," Gen. xix. 17. Consider, that as God knows who among them are his, so he infallibly brings them away from the rest, in obedience to the gospel-alarm; "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts xiii. 48. This march out of the devil's camp, was begun at the first preaching of the gospel in paradise, and is continued to this day, though sometimes more, sometime fewer go off together. And it will be continued until there be not one of them that belong to God left among them; and then comes the end.

Now, in conversion, the Spirit sounding the alarm, Depart ye, depart ye; they that are the Lord's are impressed by it; so the dead soul awakes, the impenitent heart melts, they spring to their feet, resolved and determined to depart from the tents of sin. The devil and those who are his, do what they can, by allurements and threats, to hold them still; but under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's host, they march out with banners displayed, and depart freely from iniquity; the trumpet still sounding, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." As to the nature of their departure, we observe the following things:—

[1.] They depart from sin sincerely. They depart from it, because it is a departing from God, contrary to his holy nature and law; they depart from it as sin, Luke xv. 18. They who belong to God, leaving their sins, leave them not from the inferior motives *only* of danger to themselves, here or hereafter; but from higher motives also, because they are offensive to God, they dishonour his Son, grieve his Spirit, transgress his law, and deface his image. Thus the worthy communicant reforms, and departs from iniquity. Here, however, there may be proposed this

QUESTION, How do they with those sins from which they formerly departed from lower motives only, or which left them ere they left them? To this I answer, That they do with them as men used to do with those who die by their own hands. They bury them disgracefully, and throw stones upon their graves. They look back to them, and loathe them. They left them at first for their own sake; they go farther away from them for God's sake. They neglected them before, as having no use for them; they abhor them now for their intrinsic loathsomeness. They were hanging before betwixt heaven and earth, like Absalom on the oak; now they thrust the darts into their hearts, and throw them into a pit.

[2.] They depart from iniquity voluntarily ; not out of constraint, but choice; Psalm cxix. 30, "I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me." They do not cast away sin only as one would do a live coal out of his bosom, because it will burn him; or a serpent, because it will sting him; but as a loathsome, unclean thing because it will defile him. Some depart from their iniquity against their will. They part with it as Phaltiel with his undutiful wife, 2 Sam. iii. 16. They dwell in the tents of sin, and will not move hence, till there is no abiding longer there for them; as the covetous man parts with the world at death, or when it is violently taken from him; whether he will or not, he must let it go. But this departure is not lasting, such will go back again, Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. And so hence there occurs a

QUESTION, May not a person be driven from his iniquity by terror of God? To this I answer, I conceive that when the time comes, at which a person who belongs to God is to depart from iniquity, there are two trumpets which sound in his ears. The *first* trumpet is that of the law, which is so terrible, that it makes the man's soul quake within him, and makes an earthquake in the devil's camp to him, so that he finds no more firm footing there, nor rest as before, but he must flee for his life in consternation. But if there be no more, he may flee from one part of it to another, but he will still abide within the trenches. The *second* trumpet is that of the gospel, the still small voice, sounding pardon, peace, welcome, to Christ's camp, and to the feast of fat things, to all those who will depart from iniquity. This takes the trembling sinner by the heart, and makes him come away freely and voluntarily from iniquity; so that, although the trumpet of the law shall cease, this charms him so as he can stay no longer in the tents of sin, Hos. ii. 14, and iii. 5.

[3.] They depart from iniquity resolutely, absolutely, and unconditionally, cost what it will; they cannot, they will not, they must not stay. Others may do as they please; but, with Joshua, they peremptorily say, "We will serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv. 15. If all the world should sit still, they will go, though they should go alone. Satan may frame many objections against their departure, and enter into terms for their staying, as Pharaoh with the Israelites, about their departure from Egypt. But converting grace makes their ears deaf to all proposals of this nature. If they should leave all they have in the world, they must leave sin, Luke xiv. 26, if it should be never so much to their loss as to their temporal interest, they will depart; if they must go through fire and water, make their way out of it through briars and thorns,—any thing but sin; Rev. xiv. 4, "These are they who follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth." These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto

God and to the Lamb. He whose departing from iniquity depends on *ifs* and *ands*, effectual grace has not yet reached his heart.

[4.] They depart from iniquity speedily, without delays; Psalm cxix. 60, "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments." Many good purposes come to nothing by delays. The man intends to part with such and such a sin, to comply with such and such a duty, only he cannot do it yet. And whereas there is one hinderance in his way at present, there are two after; and so the project flies up for good and all. But they who belong to God are snatched away as brands out of the burning. They will delay no longer to depart from sin, than one delays to fling a burning coal out of his bosom, or a stinging serpent. Being determined to depart, they are determined to depart without delay, because a moment's delay in this matter may be an eternal loss.

[5.] They depart from it universally; Psalm cxix. 104, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Ezek. xviii. 31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Whoso departs from one sin sincerely, and as sin, departs from all sin known to them to be such; because the reason moving him to depart from one, is to be found in all. Every sin is a deadly wound to the soul; and therefore, if but one remain uncured, the man is a dead man; Matth. v. 29, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." One sin retained will make all our reformation naught, as Abimelech, the son of Jerubbaal's concubine, was the death of his seventy sons by his wives, excepting one, Jud. ix. 5. Hence those who belong to God depart from all sin without exception, however others may have their reserved idols. Thus they depart from that sin which is the sin of their constitution, that sin which attends their calling in the world, that sin to which they have the strongest and most frequent temptations; Psalm xviii. 23, "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." That sin which most easily besets us, Heb. xii. 1, is the predominant evil the heart must be loosed from, the right hand, and right eye, the one thing lacking, which mars all other things; from which, however loath they be to part, they will be made willing to part with it in the day of power. Thus, all who belong to God do come freely away from sin in conversion; and so the charge is effectual.

(2.) It is effectual in all who belong to God, in so far as they never again return to it as formerly, but persevere in that course of

holiness which is once begun. They who have once freely departed from the tents of wickedness, shall never again come back to them, they shall never mix again with the ungodly world, from among whom they have come out; Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Converting grace fixes a gulf betwixt the two, which they shall never repass. I own a gracious soul may fall from its first love, to carnal sluggishness, remissness, and indisposition for duties. Thus it was with the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4. Yea, they may fall into some enormous offences and gross transgressions of the law, as Peter did, and they may for some time lie in these unrepented of, as David and Solomon did; and they may relapse into the same sins formerly mourned over, Rev. xxii. 8; compare chap. xix. 10. Thus, Abraham denied his wife twice. They may thus fall after solemn engagements to the Lord, as Peter did, after the first communion, and after gracious manifestations, Song v. 1—3. To be more particular,

[1.] They shall never fall back to sin, with the same heart and good-will which they had to it before; not with a full consent, but with reluctance; Rom. vii. 19, "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that do I." They may be sin's captives while they are here, driven back to some iniquity or other by the force of temptation; but sin's ready subjects they shall never more be. There is a principle of grace within them, which, at the lowest ebb, will check that full spring-tide of sin which they were wont to have before they departed from it, Song v. 2.

[2.] They shall not lie still in sin, but sooner or later rise again to repentance. So did Peter, David, and Solomon. They shall not live in the habitual practice of any known sin. Hypocrites, after solemn engagements to God, may return and live in the habitual practice of their former lusts; like the mixed multitude sounding a retreat into Egypt, they may fall away and never recover. But though a straying slave never be sought after, a straying son will be. Those who belong to God may fall in the way, but they shall never fall out of God's way of holiness; Job xvii. 9, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Having once departed from iniquity, they shall hold on their way; for he that set them on the way shall keep them in it; 2 Thess. iii. 3, "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." The Lord is the keeper of all those who have departed from iniquity, and he watches night and day, Isa. xxvii. 2. They are kept by the word of God, which is a sufficient defence against the powers of darkness. Their keeper never leaves them, nor forsakes them, Heb. xiii. 5. When once

Christ takes hold of a soul, he will never part with it again, however low the pass to which they may be brought; Psalm lxxiii. 23, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand." None can loose his hold, nor pluck them out of his hand, John x. 28. Again, they have an immortal principle within them for carrying them forward. The Spirit of Christ dwells in them for ever, John xiv. 16. Grace is a never-dying seed, which remaineth in them, 1 John iii. 9. This, by virtue of the covenant, secures the continuance of their departure from iniquity, Jer. xxxii. 40. Hence, when the believer steps aside from the Lord, there is still in him a restlessness, more or less, until he return, like the dove into the ark, Song v. 2. Farther, sin can never recover that dominion over him which it has lost, and that irrecoverably; Rom. vi. 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." And though, in the war with sin, corruption may sometimes get the upper hand, yet grace shall overcome at length; Gen. xlix. 19, "Gad, a troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last."

3. It is effectual, in so far as they go farther and farther from it in the progress of sanctification Prov. iv. 18, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" Isa. xl. 31, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," &c. Grace is of a growing nature; and though it grows not at all times, yet it does grow. The life of a saint is a going up out of the wilderness of this world; and the farther he goes, he is the nearer his journey's end. And thus a gracious soul is still departing from iniquity, and shall depart. He departs, by watching against it; and always the more watchful, the farther from it; Psalm xxxix. 1. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Any distance we can be at from sin while here, is a distance of opposition; and the more the Christian has his eyes in his head, to observe the motions of the enemy; to avoid occasions and temptations to sin, he is set at the greater distance from it. Un-watchfulness is the ruin of many. They who belong to God shall be made to watch; and if they be at a time taken nodding, it shall serve to make them more awake afterwards. Again they shall depart, by keeping up a struggle against sin; Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Sin may get quiet harbour in the breast of a hypocrite, but in those who are the Lord's it can get no more ease than mud in a spring-well, where there will be a working it out; John, iv. 14, "The water that I shall give him," saith Jesus, "shall be in him a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life." And this struggle will con-

tinue as long as there is a Canaanite in the land; for it is not, as in the hypocrite, against some kind of sins only, but against the whole kind of them. And the gracious soul will be groaning, longing, wrestling for the perfect delivery, no truce being to be made here, but the war undertaken for extirpation, Rom. vii. 24. Phil. iii. 13, 14. Finally, he departs, by growing in grace: Psalm, xcii. 12, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Many go back to their old lusts again, because, though they seem to depart from some sins, yet, being destitute of grace, they cannot grow in the opposite graces, and therefore it fares with them, as in Matth. xii. 44, 45, "Thus their last state is worse than the first." But as a man is always the farther from his disease, the more that nature is strengthened; so the gracious soul is set the farther from sin, the more that the contrary graces are made to grow in him. From this part of the subject, we may learn,

1. That if ye be the Lord's people by sincere dedication, his covenant-people, ye have come away freely from all your lusts, unto himself. You have been at his table solemnly devoting yourselves to him; if you have dealt honestly with him, and have not eaten and drunk unworthily, your hearts are loosed from all your idols, you have with heart and good-will turned your back on the Sodom of sinful courses, with sincere resolutions not to look back. However little influence this charge has had on others, it is effectual on you; you have taken the alarm, and have begun your march out of the tents of sin, you dare no more be disobedient to the heavenly vision. If so, it is well; if otherwise, you have but mocked God, and wronged your own souls. You may learn,

2. That if you be indeed the Lord's people by covenant savingly, you will not go back to your former lusts: Luke, ix. 62, "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." You are not to return to your vain conversation. You have lifted up your hand to the Lord, and you cannot go back in point of right; and unless you have been dealing deceitfully with God, you will not go back. Apostacy and backsliding take the mask of hypocrites; and fearful is their condition, for fallen stars were never genuine stars, but stars only in appearance: 1 John, ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us." Think on this when temptations come, that to return into the tents of sin, is to prove yourselves not to be the Lord's. We may learn,

Lastly, That if you be the Lord's by election you, shall part with

those sins which now part betwixt the Lord Christ and you. For though you hide yourselves from him who came to seek you, he notwithstanding will find you out; and as fast as your lusts hold you, and you them, the Lord will make you fain to cast them as fire out of your bosom, if he has any thoughts of eternal love to you. If he has not, you will get them kept, and you may embrace and hug them during life and through eternity; they shall clasp about you like serpents, stinging with endless despair. But it looks fearfully ill, while the trumpet of the gospel, day after day, and year after year, is sounding an alarm to depart from sin, and others are marching away in your sight, that you are still staying behind.

The life of a saint is a departing from iniquity, and this is their work while here; so that although it still cleaves unto them, yet they are not sitting down contented in it, but endeavouring the separation for altogether. Thus the charge is effectual, in so far as they go farther and farther from it. Here there is another,

QUESTION, But is it not often seen, that Christians are farther from iniquity at first than ever they are afterwards? hence many complain that their days, after a long standing in religion, are not found to be by far so good as when they were but young Christians. In answer to this, I observe,

1. That there are not a few who, though never found converts, yet had awakening grace at their first setting out in a profession, making a mighty reel among their affections, and a great change on their life; which wearing away by degrees, they settled on a lifeless empty form of godliness, and so were farther from iniquity than than ever before. But this will not prove it to be so with the truly godly. I observe,

2. That Christians of a long standing in religion have their sleeping and decaying times, and young Christians also have theirs. In Song, v. 2, we find the spouse asleep after great manifestations; and in Matth. xxv. 5, we find the wise, as well as the foolish virgins, slumbering and sleeping. And if we compare the sleeping days of aged Christians with the waking days of those who are only young, no doubt the latter has the advantage of the former, even as a working boy is in less danger of the enemy's surprise, than a sleeping man. But since the power of grace effectually stirs up both from their spiritual slumbers, it is but just the comparison pass betwixt them, in the waking frame. I observe,

3. That there is a difference betwixt the bulk of religion, and the solidity and weight of it; the vehement commotions, and its firmness and rootedness. Young Christians may be of more bulk than the old in respect of many glistening affections, arising from the new-

ness of the thing, which are mixed with it, and afterwards go off. But with old Christians, though there be less bulk, it is more solid and weighty; as the gold, the oftener it is in the fire, is the more refined, though not so bulky. Young Christians have more vehement affections, but the old have them more regular, rooted, and firm; thus the old is better. The longer one stands in Christianity, certainly he has the more experience of the goodness of God, and of the corruption of his own heart, and of the danger from spiritual enemies. Hence he must be more resolute in solid serious dependence upon the Lord of all; more humble, self-denied, and more firm against temptation; and, in one word, have more of a regular composed tenderness, with respect to sin and duty. And herein lies the stress of departing from iniquity: 1 John, v. 3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."

Young soldiers may rush upon the enemy with greater briskness, but the old ones stand the ground best, and abide the shock more firmly. Wherefore, let no Christians of long standing in religion be discouraged as if they were not departing from iniquity, because they do not make such visible progress as when religion was new to them, if there remain with them a rooted tenderness with respect to anything that may be displeasing to God, with a sincere purpose and endeavour to keep a conscience avoid of offence towards God and towards man: 2 Cor. i. 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Add to this, a serious longing to be freed from the body of death, Rom. vii. 24.; and to be perfected in holiness, Phil. iii. 13. 14. For as the progress of the ship in the main ocean is not so discernible as when it was coming off from the shore, tho' it may move as fast; so it is no wonder that the progress of the Christian of long standing be not so visible as at the first; or as the growth of a tree the first year is more discerned than after, so it may be with the Christian.

Having thus shown how far the charge is effectual in this life, we add upon this head,

That it is effectual in all who are the Lord's people, at death; and this in so far as that then they perfectly depart from sin, and sin from them. They come then to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. There is a great difference betwixt the godly and the wicked in life, and a still greater at death. As the wicked do in life hold fast their iniquities amidst all the means of justification and sanctification offered them; so at death all these means are

removed for ever out of their sight ; and thus their iniquities meet upon them, to prey on their souls for ever. Then sin is settled in its full power in their souls, as on its own base. No more hopes nor possibility of sanctification ; and the several pieces of guilt, as cords of death, are twisted about them for ever. As sin in the godly is in their life loosed at the root, so at their death it is rooted up ; as in life they depart from it sincerely, so at death perfectly. The body of death goes with the death of the body, that as death came in by sin, so sin may go out by death. Now, sin is in the godly as the leprosy in the walls of the house, which, therefore, being taken down, the leprosy is removed ; when the gracious soul drops the mantle of the body, it will, at the same instant drop all the uncleanness cleaving to it. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON IV.

2 TIM. ii. 19,

And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, shown that this charge is effectual with all who are the Lord's, both in this life and at death, we now proceed, as was proposed,

II. To evince the truth of the doctrine, that the charge is effectual in all who belong to God. With this view I would have you to consider the following things.

1. Consider that it was for this purpose that they were elected ; Eph. i. 4, " According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before him in love." All whom God has chosen to life, are chosen to holiness ; so that the decree of election in their favour, secures their departure from iniquity. If a person had determined to save a certain number of madmen, going about to kill themselves, with knives in their hands, the resolution to save them would import the taking the knives out of their hands ; so here, reprobates may get their lusts kept, but the elect shall not. Wherefore, as sure as the elect cannot perish, and the Lord will lose none who are his, so sure shall all who are his depart from iniquity. There is no separating of the means and the end, which, in God's decree, are firmly joined together. Life is the end, departing from iniquity the means ; there-

fore, they who are ordained to life shall infallibly depart from it. As sure as the purpose of God cannot be broken or disappointed, so sure shall they who are his depart from iniquity. It is God's purpose in election, to bring them out of their sin, to everlasting life : Eph. i. 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before him in love."

This purpose cannot be broken, for says God, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. xli. 10. Therefore, they shall depart from iniquity; and whoever holds it fast, are strangers to the grace of God. Consider that,

2. It is the end of their redemption by Christ. Why did Christ give himself for those who are his? It was that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. Why gave he himself for his church? It was that "he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water, by the word," Eph. v. 26. He came to save them, but from what? From their sins, Matth. i. 21. Sin had a double hold of those who were his; it held their consciences, by the cords of guilt; and held their heart, will, and affections, by the interest it had got there. Christ shed his blood, by the efficacy thereof to loose the former, and procured the influences of his Spirit, who, by his indwelling might loose the latter.

Those for whom Christ did not die will continue in their sins, and perish in them. They are not willing to part with them, and the influences of the Spirit are not procured for them to make them willing. Had Christ been to save sinners in their sins, then those who will not be saved from their sins, might have been saved from death. But it is not so. Those for whom Christ died, shall infallibly depart from iniquity; and such are all those who are the Lord's; John x. 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Otherwise, the design of Christ's death is frustrated; he died in vain, and all the promises of a seed, made by the Father to his Son, in the covenant, turn to nothing; to imagine which, is blasphemous.

Christ bare a good will to those who were his from eternity, and and would have them made happy. But they were unholy, therefore he must redeem them from their iniquity, by his blood; otherwise, the gates of the city would have remained closed for ever on them. And now, that the ransom of the blood of the Son of God is paid, is it possible that the prisoners can remain undelivered? Some may be apt to say, O! will ever Christ sanctify such an unholy creature as I am? I will surely perish by the hand of my lusts, and will never get free of them. Why, poor soul, if this be thy ex-

ercise, to depart from thy iniquity, it is an evidence thou art his ; and it is his honour and interest to make thee holy, and deliver thee from the dominion and power of thy powerful lusts, in so far as he shed his blood for this end. And, however worthless thou art in thyself, thou art dear bought, and therefore must not, canst not, be lost.

3. Consider, that it is the end of their effectual calling. They are called to be saints, Rom. i. 7. The world lies in wickedness. Those who are the Lord's by election, lie among them, till the effectual call come, which brings them out from among them ; " Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," 2 Cor. vi. 17. This call is necessarily connected with election, and it can never be effectual without the soul's being brought to depart from iniquity ; " Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. viii. 30. The conversion of all the elect, their regeneration, their translation from the power of darkness, are infallibly secured, and consequently their departing from iniquity. For what is conversion, but turning from sin unto God ? and regeneration, but arising from the death in sin ?

4. Consider that it is the end of all providences. Providence has an eye on all the children of men, but has a special eye on those who are the Lord's people. Favourable dispensations are cords of a man, to draw sinners from their iniquity : Luke i. 74, 75, " That he would grant us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Afflictive dispensations are scourges, to drive them from their iniquity ; Isa. xxvii. 9, " By this therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." Heb. xii. 10, " He chasteneth for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." True, they are not effectual on many ; mercies do not allure them, judgments do not affright them. But wisdom is justified of her children. And can it be imagined that they shall not be effectual to them ?

5. Consider, that it is the end of all ordinances. Wherefore does the Lord send the gospel to sinners, but that they may depart from iniquity ? Titus ii. 11, 12, " For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The word is designed for the sanctification of souls ; John xvii. 17, " Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The promises, the threatenings, the doctrines, all lead away from sin. The sacraments of the New Testament are also appointed for this same end. In a word, all gospel ordinances

whatever, Eph. iv. 12. They are all "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These will have their effect on those who are his, however they be in vain to others.

Lastly, Consider, that since all who shall be saved shall depart from iniquity, and all who are the Lord's shall be saved, it is evident, that all who are his shall depart from iniquity. Such as continue in their sin can have no communion with God here, much less hereafter, Psalm v. 4—6, and Psalm xv. throughout. No sooner did the reprobate angels depart from holiness to sin, but God thrust them down to hell, 2 Peter ii. 4. Adam was driven from the tree of life, on his sinning, Gen. iii. 22. Who then can expect to see the face of God in heaven, without departing from iniquity? We now come,

III. To make a practical improvement of the whole ;—and this, *First*, In an use of information.—This subject informs us,

1. Whence the success of the Gospel is derived. We see it has its effect on some, in turning them from their sins unto God, while others, having the same means of grace, are untouched by them. Trace this to the spring-head, and it must be ascribed, neither to the free-will of the party, the piety or parts of the preacher, but to the eternal love of God terminating on some. There is a time of loves set in the counsel of God, respecting all the elect; and when this time comes, they shall infallibly answer the call.—We may see,

2. That the unsuccessfulness of the gospel, barrenness and impenitency under the means of grace, are matters which draw very deep. Men think little of disobeying God's charge, sounded continually in their ears, by the gospel; think little of going on in sins, from which they are charged to part; but did they consider that the charge must be infallibly complied with, by all who are the Lord's, their own sitting of it would be a terror to themselves. For, in so far as they comply not with it, so far they show themselves not to belong to God. Where God has much people, the gospel will have much success.—We may learn,

3. That iniquity is that abominable thing which God hates. It is the greatest of all evils, and therefore, as it is that thing which God sets himself particularly against, so we in a special manner should set ourselves against it. Poverty, meanness, and contempt in the world, God suffers in those who are dear to him; but he will not suffer sin to have dominion over them, and at length will quite expel it from those who are his. He will not bear with it in his own, as he hates it for itself.—We are informed,

4. That there is a divine power comes along with the charge, to

all who are the Lord's people, when once the time of love is come. This is that which makes them depart, while others hold fast their iniquity: Isa. liii. 1, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The elect of God are as much dead in trespasses and sins as others are; sin has the same dominion over them as over others. But with the word the Spirit enters into them, and brings them away from the tents of sin, causes them to rise up out of their graves, while others lie still in them.—We may learn,

Lastly, That departing from iniquity is absolutely necessary to evince that we belong to God, because all such do depart from iniquity. It is the fruit of election and conversion; and so the great evidence of interest in God's eternal love, and his present favour.—For understanding this, three things are to be noticed.

(1.) That a person's being in his sin, still under the dominion of it, unsanctified, unholy, is a certain evidence of his being in a state of enmity with God, in a state of wrath, and that he does not actually belong to God, but to Satan. One may pretend faith in Christ, and a covenant interest in God, while he is going on in a course of sin. But his pretences are vain, his works disprove his faith, his unholy life discovers his graceless state: James ii. 17, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

(2.) That a person's being still in his sin, under its dominion, will not, while he lives, prove him to be none of God's elect, excepting only in the case of the unpardonable sin, which is most rare. The reason is, that the charge is effectual in all the elect, yet it may be long in taking its effect on some, as in the case of the thief on the cross. So that while there is life, there is hope. This I note, to baffle that temptation, with which Satan attacks some, namely, That they are not elected, and therefore they need not set their minds towards religion, for it will not do with them. This is barefaced reasoning from hell; for be your case never so hopeless, though ye be quite graceless, and this never so long continued in, while you do not obstinately, and altogether maliciously, reject salvation by Christ, it cannot prove you to be none of God's elect; for at the eleventh hour you may be called. Yet,

(3.) Without departing from iniquity, no person can certainly know he is elected, or that he belongs to God. By this, indeed, a person may know it, 2 Peter i. 10: but without it, no man can; for God does not allow us, nor can we at first hand go and read our names in the book of life. We must learn it by sanctification, which is the fruit of election, by which we come to know both our election and our effectual calling.—We may improve the subject,

Secondly, In an use of trial.

Hereby you may try whether you be the Lord's covenanted people or not. This may be known by your departing from iniquity, or your not departing. Here, to assist you, we shall mention the two following marks :—

MARK 1. If you are departing from iniquity, there will be a sincere endeavour after universal obedience, Psalm cxix. 6 ; aiming to please God in all things, and not indulging yourself in any known sin, being content to know, in all cases, what is sin and what is duty. The truly godly will set themselves against the first motions of sin, Rom. vii. 7 ; against secret sins, Psalm xix. 12 ; even against that sin which most easily besets them, Psalm xviii. 23 ; and will witness against self, in various shapes, Matth. v. 3.

MARK 2. If you are departing from iniquity, you will be wearying and groaning under the remains of sin, Rom. vii. 26. However much the hypocrite may content himself with as much grace as seems necessary to secure heaven to him, yet the godly man is going on, and pressing forwards towards perfection, though he cannot reach it ; and looks on the remains of sin as iron fetters, which he would fain be quit of, that he may be holy, as God is holy ; and perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect.—We may improve the subject,

Lastly, In an use of exhortation.

We beseech you, O sinners ! to depart from iniquity. You have dwelt too long in the tents of sin. You are called now to arise and depart from all your sins, freely to part with them, never to return to them, but to be still departing farther and farther from them. The exhortation concerns both saints and sinners.

There are three motives, which the text affords us to prevail with sinners in drawing them from their sins. These are,—the evil of sin,—the necessary connection betwixt a person's departing from it and their belonging to God, and the obligation lying on sinners to part with it, from their naming the name of Christ. We shall consider these separately, as in their nature important and weighty ; and O that we could improve them, so as to draw you all from your sins. We begin with,

MOT. 1. Sin is an evil, a great evil, from which you are called to depart. Sinners are deceived with an appearance of goodness, of profit, or of pleasure in their sins. But, God knows, it is the worst of evils, and therefore from it by all means God will have his own to depart. O that I could draw the monstrous evil in its own colours, to bring you all from it to holiness ! Could you get a genuine sight of it, you would run from it as from a fire, as from hell fire ; Rom. xii. 9. " Abhor that which is evil." Sin is the greatest evil. This will appear, if the following things are attended to. Sin is an evil.

1. In the eyes of God : Jer. xlv. 4, "Oh ! do not this abominable thing that I hate." God, who knows all things, and cannot be deceived with fair appearances, looks on this, which men naturally set their hearts on, as the worst of ills. Oh ! shall we not think of it as God does ? Consider,

(1.) It is the only thing which he condemns, and he everywhere condemns it in his word. The world cries out on many things which are not sin, but God on nothing else. Many would persuade themselves, that God looks on their sins as they do. But this he takes as an affront to his holiness : Psalm 1. 21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Look to his word, which is the indication of his mind ; and there you will see he never speaks good of sin.

(2.) It is the only thing which he pursues with his wrath, and he does this wherever it is found. It is the enemy he pursues through the whole creation, wherever it appears. It entered in among the angels, and fixed itself in the reprobate ones ; wrath immediately pursued it, and tumbled them down to the pit ; "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment," 2 Pet. ii. 4. It got place with mankind in paradise ; and wrath was at his heels there ; Adam's prosperous state was quickly turned into misery. The very ground on which the sinner treads, is cursed for its sake. The sinner, in his sinful state, is in a state of wrath. It abides on him, John iii. 36. The sky never clears on him, while he is a sinner. Even with his own children, God writes his indignation on it ; John xii. 24, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers ?—Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned ?" The earth is made to groan under it ; and when the end comes, the defiled creation has to go through the fire to purge it. But above all, see how he pursued sin in his own Son, though it was only on him by imputation ; Rom. viii. 32, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." The sins of the elect met on him, and therefore the sorrows of wrath met in him, and left him not, till they brought him to the dust of death.

(3) Departing from it is the only testimony of his creatures' love to him which he requires, and nothing less can be accepted. He does not seek rivers of oil, nor other costly sacrifices : "But he hath shewed thee, O man ! what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?" If he call them to lay down their lives for him, it is only in the way of their standing off from sin ; otherwise it is not

acceptable, nor required, but his law is, Suffer any thing rather than sin. Behold it in one word, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," Psalm xvii. 10.

2. Sin is an evil, and a great evil, in the eyes of the truly godly. Whenever the eyes of any person are opened by grace, then immediately they are of this mind; while the rest of the deluded world hug the serpent in their bosom, they are for flying from it at any rate. If they lose this opinion of it at any time, it is owing to the loss of their light, their falling asleep. But in their settled judgment, it is the worst of evils. For,

(1.) Of all evils it has lain nearest their hearts, and produced the heaviest complaints and groans. Psalm li. 3; Lam. xiv. 17. Hear Paul's complaint; Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Did ever persecutions, prisons, reproaches, or all the ills he suffered, draw such a complaint from him? In tribulations he rejoiced, in a prison he sang; but in the fetters of the body of death, he groans like a dying man.

(2.) Sin or suffer being put to their choice, they have always, when themselves, choosed to suffer rather than sin: Acts xx. 24, "But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." It is true, a godly man may sometimes be bemisted, so as not to see a thing to be sin which is sin; nay, sometimes, in a hurry of temptation, to avoid suffering, he may fall into sin against light; but otherwise, by divine grace, they will choose poverty, imprisonment, banishment, death, rather than sin; even the greatest temporal evil, rather than the least sin. Thus the cloud of witnesses gave their testimony. From these they did not "accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection," Heb. xi. 35.

3. Sin is indeed in its own nature and properties the greatest of all evils.—To make this evident, consider,

(1.) That of all things sin is most contrary to the nature of God, who is the chief good, and therefore it is the chief evil, Lev. xxvi. It is walking contrary to God; it is worse than all penal evils; these met in Jesus Christ, who was God as well as man, but sin was not found in him; Heb. vii. 26, "For such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." God owns himself the author of penal evils, but it is blasphemy to father sin upon him. This fights against God; and, as one says, the sinner, so far as in him lies, destroys the nature of God, dethrones him,

and strikes at his very being. God, swearing by his holiness, swears by himself; but nothing is so opposite to holiness as sin is, nothing can be more or as much so: nay, it is the very thing which makes the devil evil, and therefore it is more evil itself than even the devil. Consider,

(2.) That sin is most contrary to the rational nature. Right reason condemns it; and no reason approves it, but as blinded and prejudiced. It degrades men, and makes them like beasts, the filthiest of beasts, dogs and swine, 2 Pet. ii. 22; more beastly than the beasts themselves; Isa. i. 3, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Thus the wicked man is a vile man, though never so honourable, Psalm xv. 4. Hence it is, that although there are some who glory in their shame, yet sin is such a work of darkness, that no person ordinarily is disposed to father the monstrous brat. Consider,

(3.) That sin is the deformity of the soul. That is the seat of sin, which is the noblest part of man. But it is the deformity of that part; and the corruption of what is the best is certainly the worst evil. Even a deformity in the face is worse than in another part; a bloody man on a throne is worse than such a person on a dunghill. Thus the ill of sin appears in what it does to the soul; it defaces God's image there, and so mars its beauty; Psalm xiv. 3, "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doth good, no not one." No running sore, canker, or gangrene, is comparable to it, for these do but prey on the body, sin on the soul. It makes men unlike God, and like the devil. God is holy, just, and good; the devil is unholy and wicked; and so is the sinner going on in his sin. It makes a person like the devil, as a child is to his father, John viii. 44, therefore both go to one place in the end; Matth. xxv. 41, "Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Consider,

(4.) That sin is a hereditary evil, and these are the worst of evils, the hardest to be cured. We were born with it; Psalm li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." It is woven into our very natures, it cannot be taken away without a miracle of grace; even such a power is necessary as is required in raising the dead, and quickening them: The whole man must be born again, new moulded, new framed, ere the person can depart from iniquity. Consider,

(5.) That sin is the mother of all those evils which ever were, are, or shall be; the teeming womb of all mischief. What cast the

angels out of heaven, Adam out of Paradise? What deluged the old world, and burned Sodom? It was sin. Of all the evils on soul and body to which man is liable, sin leads the van. Behold how death, in numberless shapes, has overflowed the world! What a flood of miseries is overflowing mankind, kingdoms, churches, families, persons, souls, bodies! What has opened the sluice of these? Rom. v. 12, affords the answer, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." There is never a sigh nor a groan in this world, under any hardship whatsoever, but it rises from the sting of this serpent; and it has filled hell with groans which will last for ever. Consider,

(6.) That where sin is removed in its guilt and power, the greatest evils cannot harm us; 2 Pet. iii. 13, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Diseases, crosses, death itself, without it, is like a serpent without a sting, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. The severe lashes of the just judge of heaven and earth, are turned into the rods of a loving father, Psalm lxxxix. 31, 32. Death is but the falling asleep, and dying only the shadow of death. Nay, they shall do us good; Rom. viii. 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Out of the most dark, troubled, and confounding case, God will raise a beautiful frame. Every stone cast at them shall be a precious stone, sanctified for their good. Consider,

(7.) That whatever sin is in force, it not only strengthens other evils, but blasts and poisons all that good which a person enjoys. It not only arms diseases, death, and hell, against a man, but turns his very blessings into curses; Mal. ii. 2, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." In all the enjoyments and comforts of a sinner out of Christ, there is death in the pot. One man's crosses ruin him, another man's prosperity ensnares him, and proves his ruin, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Nay, the very means of grace are a savour of death unto death unto some, 2 Cor. ii. 16. What is the reason why sin poisons the fountain? Thus, be the waters sweet or bitter, they are killing. Consider,

(8.) That sin is the most painful and tormenting evil, when once the pain of it is raised, and the poison begins sensibly to operate; Prov. xviii. 14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" It is true, that it is so long in

working with some, that it may never thus work till in hell they lift up their eyes; but O how dreadful must it then be! Conscience is a tender part; and this, sin torments. What torment was Cain in, when his conscience got upon him! It made Felix tremble, Belshazzar's knees to smite one against another; it involved Judas in utter despair, so as to make away with himself. See Job xx. 12—16. Consider,

(9.) That sin is a most deadly evil; Rom. vi. 23, "The wages of sin is death." It brought temporal death into the world; and the body of man, which by its creation was not liable to death, it made mortal. But more than this, it is the cause of spiritual death. It kills the soul, separating it from God and communion, with him, and makes many a man dead while he lives, so that his living body is but a coffin to a dead soul, Eph. ii. 1. And, finally, it brings on eternal death. Consider,

(10.) That sin is a most infectious evil. No plague nor pestilence is so dangerous. Many persons, in times of a raging plague, have been preserved. But as for the plague of sin, when once it seized Eve, she infected Adam, and he all his posterity. And now the world is a pest-house, where not one is quite free. Some are under the cure of grace, and in the way of recovery; but the most part are pining away in their iniquity, and every one of them infecting another more and more; Eccl. ix. 18, "One sinner destroys much good." This one sinner may have the blood of many at his door, whom he has ruined by his advice, carelessness, and evil example. Consider,

(11.) That the giving up of a sinner to sin, is the concluding stroke which God gives him, so that it is the worst thing a person can meet with. Here I would have you more particularly to consider,—that when God in wrath gives a man over in this life, he leaves him, and gives him up to his sin. God deals with sinners to part with their sins, they will not; God's offers are slighted, then, as in Psalm lxxxi. 12, "He gives them up to their own hearts' lust; and they walk in their own counsels." He is at much pains with them by providences and ordinances, but nothing does with them; then in anger he gives them over: Ezek. xxiv. 13, "In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest on thee." Thus, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," Hos. iv. 17. Of the heathen world it is said, "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections," Rom. i. 26. We read of one who was given up to the devil, that he was again recovered. But where find ye a man given up to himself, to his lusts, reclaimed? Wherefore better be given up to the devil,

than to sin. Fearful sentence! "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." Consider, when at death the impenitent sinner is carried out of the world into the pit, there is no more endeavours to separate betwixt him and his sin. In life he would depart from God, and so his doom is, "Depart from me, ye cursed." Then his sins are left to prey upon his soul for ever; no more pardon, no more sanctification; Prov. xiv. 32, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." God strives with the man in life to part him and his sins, but he will not part from them; so the whirlwind of death rises, and carries both away together to the pit. Consider,

(12.) When God has brought in all his elect to himself, and the last man of them has left the tents of sin, then shall the world be at an end. The sheep shall be separated from the goats, the sinners driven away in their wickedness to hell; this world defiled by sin shall be burnt up; and they, and sin, with all its effects, shut up in hell for ever, Rev. xx. 14, 15. Then shall there be new heavens and a new earth, but no sin there, 2 Pet. iii. 13. It shall be settled in hell for ever, as on its own base. Sin must be an evil, a great evil: For,

4. If you will continue in sin, of all things Satan loves most to have it so. It gratifies the enemy of mankind most; and this in two things, on which he is most particularly set.

(1.) The dishonour of God. Satan is a rebel against God, who has not the smallest hopes of peace, and is utterly desperate, therefore rages and maliciously sets himself against God, sinning against God himself, and tempting men to sin and continue in it, that he may have the satisfaction of their dishonouring God, and despising his Son; thus grieving his Spirit, and trampling on his laws. Satan is set upon,

(2.) The ruin of souls; 1 Pet. v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." He loves to keep them in subjection to himself, that he may reign freely in their hearts, which will be as long as they are under the dominion of sin; and to have them companions with him in eternal misery; which he is sure to accomplish if he can keep them in their sins. I come now to

MOR. 2. To prevail with you in departing from iniquity, observe this is necessary from your belonging to God, your departing from sin. Whoso are his, infallibly do depart from iniquity, whatever others do. This has been proved before.—Now, upon this consider, the weight that lies here, whether a person belongs to God or not. You need to have this cleared, whose you are, whether the Lord's people or not. For consider,

(1.) Your state for time turns upon this point. All the world is divided into two parties; one belonging to God by covenant and dedication, Heb. viii. 10; another to Satan, the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. See them distinguished, 1 John v. 19, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The one is the family of heaven, the other Satan's family. If you belong to the former, you are justified, adopted, all is yours, and ye are Christ's. If to the latter, ye are in a state of wrath and enmity against God. Consider,

(2.) Your state for eternity turns upon this point. If ye be the Lord's, ye shall be for ever happy with him. Your names will be found written in the book of life. If not, your names will not be found there; and see the doom of such; Rev. xx. 15, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." You shall infallibly evidence, by your departing from iniquity, that you are the Lord's, Rev. xiv. 1—5. Sanctification is an infallible proof of election and justification, and an infallible pledge of glorification. It is a middle link of the indissoluble chain which begins with election and ends with glorification, Rom. viii. 29, 30; Thess. ii. 13. The spirit of holiness is God's seal upon them that are his, by which they come to be owned and discerned to be his; Eph. i. 13, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." But as long as you depart not from sin, it is a positive evidence that you belong not to God by accepting of the covenant, Jer. xxxii. 30. Your cleaving to sin is an evidence you are not united to Christ, and you can have no positive concluding evidence that you belong to God by election. It is but at best a peradventure it may be. And as always the longer that a person continues in sin, there are less the hopes of his recovery, so there is the less probability of his belonging to the election of grace. And if you die in your sin, it will be beyond dispute, that you do not belong to God at all.

Depart, then, from iniquity, as ever you would have any concern for shewing yourselves to be the Lord's. Upon this let me ask you, Is it a matter of indifference to you whether you be the Lord's or not? Truly this is the language of souls careless about their salvation, and particularly about their sanctification. It is declared to you, that all who are the Lord's depart from iniquity. Yet you are careless about your departing from it. This speaks your indifference. I would further ask you, can you ever be happy if you be not the Lord's? How can you live without his favour, living on his ground, and at his cost? Acts xvii. 25, "He giveth to all, life and breath, and all things." How can you think to look the king of terrors in

the face, without the favour of the King of heaven, which you can never have, while you do not depart from iniquity? Rom. i. 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." I would ask you, *lastly*, Is it not a miserable offence against your own souls, to dispute away any saving relation betwixt God and you? Every new disobedience to this heavenly charge, is a new argument against yourselves, that you are not his. This charge in the gospel is addressed to all to whom the gospel comes; it is like a fanning wind separating the wheat from the chaff. By it the grace of God brings away the elect out of the tents of sin, leaving others to perish there. What a dismal thought, then, is it to be left, time after time, in iniquity! I come now to urge the

3. And last motive, which is, that obligation which is lying on those who name the name of Christ to depart from iniquity. The Christian profession obliges all who make it to be holy, and to walk as Christians. And here I would consider,

1st, The obligation which lies on all to depart from sin who name the name of Christ, who are Christians by profession, as we all are.

2dly, The obligation which specially lies on communicants. I would consider,

1st, The obligation which lies on all to depart from sin who name the name of Christ, who are Christians by profession, as we all are. Here consider,

1. That your baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, by which you were to be engaged to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to obey the Lord Jesus, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. This is a seal of God's covenant, to which you have thereby consented. And since you bear the badge of Christianity, you ought to live Christian and holy lives. And God will treat you as covenant-breakers if you do not. Consider,

2. The author of your profession, from whom you take your name; Acts xi. 26, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." From Christ we are called Christians. And pity it is that ever those who profess Christ should be called by the names of sinful and wicked men. You know those who are named for men, are so named, because they are followers of them. And so the name Christian signifies a follower of Christ, one who follows that way which Christ taught. Now, consider him, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession Jesus Christ, Heb. iii. 1. What was the author of your profession? He was holy, Heb. vii. 26. His name is a name of holiness: anointed of God, for a Prophet, Priest, and King. A Christian indeed partakes of the anointing of the Holy

Spirit: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," 1 John ii. 20. They are made kings and priests unto God and his Father, Rev. i. 6. Now, how does a sinful life agree with the holy name, example and doctrine of Christ? Consider,

3. The faith and religion you profess. Surely the principles of our religion are holy, and teach us to depart from iniquity, and give no allowance to live in sin. Even reason says, men ought not to give, nor can they rationally live, in contradiction to their profession and its principles. Other religions allow something sinful, but the Christian religion, proceeding from him who is holiness and truth itself, condemns every even the least evil; and therefore Christians by their profession are obliged to depart from iniquity. Consider,

Lastly, The end of your faith and profession, the way to which it directs, namely, heaven, which is a holy place. The gospel has discovered life and immortality, 2 Tim. i. 10. A happy state after this life, where holiness is perfected, Heb. xii. 23. And meanwhile it directs to a life agreeable to this holy and happy state; for it "teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world," Tit. ii. 12. Have you no hopes, no expectations of heaven? If you have, surely you ought to depart from iniquity; for it cannot be expected that that holy place is for dogs and swine, for such as are strangers to holiness here.

2dly, I would consider the obligations to depart from iniquity which lie on communicants in a special manner. You have in a very solemn manner named the holy name of Jesus, by partaking of the sacrament of our Lord's body and blood. Let this then engage you to depart from iniquity. Consider,

1. That these additional vows of God are upon you to depart from iniquity. You have lifted up your hand to God, and you cannot go back. The terms of the Christian life were told you, and you have, after deliberation, engaged yourselves to the Lord. Beware that after vows you begin to make inquiry, Luke ix. 62. Consider,

2. That religion will be wounded by you if you do not depart from iniquity; Rom. ii. 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." You will be accounted betrayers of Christ, for you will give false testimony against his way in favour of sin, as if you had tried the way of religion, and after trial found cause to cast it off. And therefore, as you would not more than ever dishonour the Lord and his way, depart from iniquity. Consider,

3. That you will be great losers if you do not depart from iniquity. You will lose all the pains which you have been at in religion: 2

John 8, "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought." It may be, you have been at some pains to get something, and have done much in the way of God, but one thing lacking will mar all. You will lose your souls, for it is only they who depart from iniquity, so as never to return to it, that are saved: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." Backsliding is most dangerous: Heb. x. 48, "If any man draw back, my soul," says God, "shall have no pleasure in him." The very setting off once in the Lord's way obliges to hold forward. They can never sin at such a cheap rate as before; heavier vengeance abides backsliders, and a fall from heaven's threshold is worst of all.

Now, the Lord is saying to the sinners in Zion, as Jerem. vi. 8, "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem! lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited." He is threatening to depart from the generation, since they will not depart from iniquity; and sad will the departure be: Hosea ix. 12, "Woe also be to them when I depart from them." There are three sad consequences of God's departure when provoked to it, with which we are threatened this day.—There is,

(1.) Confusion in the church, the breaking of the staves of beauty and bands. There is a melancholy account of this consequence of the Lord's departure, Rev. viii. 7, 8. We have already felt the former, and were threatened with the Lord's making, in his wrath, the whole mountain of his house, a burning mountain with the fire of division. A sad sight it will be, come when it will, however fond of it many have appeared. Zion's work will be heavy work, when Zion's builders are, by the Lord's anger, made like Babel builders.—There is,

(2.) Calamity in the state. Many perhaps would little value what should become of the church, if they might otherwise live at ease. But God's departure from a generation often brings nations into the deepest perplexity and distress, 2 Chron. xv. 3—6. When God departs from a generation to see what their end will be, it will be a sad end, Deut. xxii. 19, 20. There is,

(3.) The ruin of many souls and bodies also. When God so leaves a generation, there are many snares for the soul. Confusion in the church brings deadness and darkness on, and makes havoc of the case of many souls. Calamity in the state, which removes peace far away, tends always to the ruining of temporal concerns, and often of men's souls concerns also.

O then depart from iniquity, as ever you would that God should not depart from you, nor from the generation! Our iniquities are the Achans in the camp which trouble us; the Jonah in our ship

which threatens to raise the storm. God has been long calling by his word and providence to us to depart from iniquity, and reform. But, instead of this, the generation has been filling up the cup of their iniquity, and want by some one thing or other to make it run over. But whatever befall us, departing from sin will be your security; Isaiah iii. 10, "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." God's way is the only way of safety; Prov. x. 9, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he that perverteth his ways shall be known." And a good conscience will be a feast in midst of trouble, 2 Cor. i. 12. Whereas an evil conscience, made such by continuing in sin, will be a bad companion at any time, more especially in the evil day. If any should propose this

Question, What shall we do that we may depart from iniquity? I answer, Impress your spirits with your own sinfulness. Consider your sinful nature, Psalm li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Observe how it spreads itself through the whole of your hearts and lives; Isaiah lxiv. 6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities as the whirlwind have taken us away." How contrary is it to God's nature and law, how inconsistent with your interests for time and eternity! Make application to Christ by faith for its removal. To his blood to remove the guilt of sin, 1 John i. 7. To his Spirit to break the power of it, and to sanctify you. Faith is the great mean of sanctification; "Purifying their hearts by faith," Acts xv. 9. We exhort you,

Lastly, To watch. Be ever on your watch-tower. Your spiritual enemies are still about your hands. Watch, therefore, against all occasions, temptations, and appearances of evil. Improve the season of duties. Study to be always doing good, and so your hand will be filled with other work. When departing from evil you will do good, you will seek peace, and pursue it earnestly. Amen.