

THE DISTINGUISHING PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S FAITHFUL SERVANTS.*

SERMON VIII.

Exod. xxiv. 11,

And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

THE Lord is calling us to come up to him into the mount of solemn ordinances; and though there be some who will abide at the foot of the hill, unconcerned and stupid, like Abraham's servant and the ass, I hope there are others who will desire to go forward, though it is likely there may be a struggle betwixt hope and fear about their entertainment there. How are your hearts affected upon this awful approach? are they saying within you, as these Greeks, "We would see Jesus?" Or, as the prodigal Jew, Luke xv. 17, "We perish with hunger." And at the same time with the men of Bethshemesh, 1. Sam. vi. 19, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" Our text gives you encouragement from this instance of the nobles of Israel. Upon God's call they came up to the mount; and (which divides the text into two parts), *first*, They were safe: "And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand;" *Secondly*, They were kindly entertained: "Also they saw God, and did eat and drink."—We shall attend to these separately.

The *first* part is, they were safe in their approach. Moses remarks this, to the praise of the divine clemency in a Mediator, through whom sinners may see God, and not die. Sin has set man at such a distance from God, and put his body into such a weak and mouldering condition, that consciousness of guilt and a sight of the divine glory meeting together, is more than enough to exanimate and make him faint away, to break to pieces the corrupt earthen pitcher the soul dwells in. Hence it was a common opinion, that such a sight was deadly.—Consider here,

1. The parties whose safety is particularly remarked, the nobles of the children of Israel. Some reckon Nadab and Abihu among these; but if so, why not Moses and Aaron? It is plain they were all there, ver. 9, and 10. I think, however, it is only the seventy elders who are meant; and therefore it is expressed emphatically in the Hebrew, intimating, that not only was Moses, the typical Media-

* This and the following discourse were delivered at Maxton, August 11 and 12, 1716.

tor, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, who were designed to be priests, preserved; but even the elders, the representatives of the people, these also were safe.—You will accordingly observe, that the people are as welcome to the divine favour, and to gracious manifestations of God, as ministers. Tho' ministers be employed to open the doors of the temple, the people stand as fair for a sight of the glory within as they do. Though Moses, &c. went up foremost to the mount; yet no man should either value himself before the Lord, or be discouraged upon the character which he bears. Ordinarily, people will pray that ministers may be helped in their public ministrations, to preach, &c.; but they should even also be concerned, that they may be helped to believe, taste, feel, and feed, with the rest of the children.

They were nobles, great men, rulers of the people; yet they went up to the mount with Aaron, and sat down to the sacred feast there, after they had taken the national covenant of Israel with the rest of the people, ver. 8 9.—You will thence observe, that it is the honour of the nobles of a land to see God, and to be seen upon the mount with God, at the sacred feast, as covenanters with him. This was some time the honour of Scotland's nobility and gentry; they were forward in the national covenant with God; and we have heard the days have been, when scarlet-cloaks and velvet-hoods bare great bulk in such meetings as this. But, ah! how is our gold become dross! they leave these things now mostly to the common people, with contempt of both. What wonder is it that they have been left to make themselves the tail, and not the head! to row us into deep waters, where the state is sunk, and the church is broken: to turn Babel-builders, so that for once the scaffolding is broken, and the builders, with many others, heavily crushed. For, "these that honour God, he will honour; but they that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed."

There were seventy of these nobles, the number of the children of Israel when they went down to Egypt, and so a fit number to represent the body of the people, who were now solemnly taken into covenant with God. God saw it not meet to give this sight of the divine glory to the multitude, and to set all down to the sacred feast on the mount; but, since it was covenant-entertainment, the seventy were brought to it, as the representatives of the people. Thus also the New-Testament church is represented by twenty-four elders about the throne, Rev. iv. 4 —From this you may learn, that safe communion and fellowship with God is the privilege of the church of believers, the Israelites indeed.—That all the people of God have not alike nearness of access to God; some come farther forward than others.



Peter, James, and John, were taken up to the mount of transfiguration, and not the rest of the apostles.—That it is a mercy to have an interest in, and relation to, these who are brought near to God, especially such as will act for us in the mount with God. There may be some young ones here, whose fathers or mothers are to approach the table of the Lord. I would advise them to tell them to mind them there. Say, "I cannot go, but, O! give up my name to Christ, consent you in my name to the covenant, and tell your covenanted God, I am also content to be his." Or, if you have not father or mother, tell any other godly person ye know. And so may one distressed Christian do with another: Song, v. 8. "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem! if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love."—We may observe,

(2.) How their safety is expressed: "He laid not his hand upon them," that is, did not hurt or destroy them, Gen xxxvii. 22. Though they saw God, (ver. 10.) yet they died not, their lives were preserved. This imports, that he might in point of justice have laid his hand on them. They were sinful creatures; and though they were on the mount of God, yet they had a sinful nature with them, which did leave the marks of it even upon what they did there. But he overlooked their weakness, and in mercy spared them. This instructs us, that when we are at our best, if God should mark our iniquity, we could not stand before him. We are ever in mercy's debt, and cannot be one moment safe without being under the covert of blood. Even in heaven, it is under that canopy the saints will feast for ever, Heb. vii. 25.—It also imports, that the weight of his hand would have crushed them. If he had but laid it on them, it would have done their business. If he had but put forth his hand and touched them in wrath, they would have gone like a moth with a touch of the hand.—From this we may learn the utter weakness and nothingness of the creature before the Lord. He can touch it to destruction, and can frown it back, when he will, into the womb of nothing. Why, then, should we strive with our Maker?—More particularly, that the greatest of men are nothing before the great God; *Upon the nobles he laid not his hand.* Though they caused terror to their inferior fellow-creatures, they were as unable to bear the terror of God as the meanest in the camp of Israel. All flesh is alike before God.—You will observe,

(3.) How they came to be safe. The word *nobles* signifies select, separate ones, who had been set apart. They were selected out of the covenanted body of the people, to come up into the mount to the Lord, at his call. Moses gets an order for so many to come up with him, ver. 1. Having that order, he first proposes a covenant

to the people, and they declare their acceptance, ver. 3.; then he writes the words of the covenant, and the covenant is most solemnly entered into, ratified, and sealed; there is an altar built to represent God in Christ, ver. 4, and twelve pillars to represent the twelve tribes. Thus these were the parties. Sacrifices were offered, ver. 5, shewing the covenant to be founded on the blood of a Mediator. The half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, ver. 6, shewing it was not an absolute God with whom they were to covenant, but a God atoned by the blood of a crucified Saviour. Then he read the book of the covenant; thus proposing it to the people; and their second thoughts are as their first, they solemnly consent to it, ver. 7.; and he sprinkles the rest of the blood on them, and so it was sealed and ratified. Then, after all this, he and these selected elders go up to the mount, in obedience to the call formerly given; and there they saw God, and were safe notwithstanding. Thus, their separation was their security. From which you may observe, That there is safety in following God's call, be the calling never so high. Had any of the people attempted to have gone whither they went, they had smarted for it; but being called, they were safe. Some, who measure reverence of God more by their own carnal wisdom than by God's word, cry out on us for not kneeling, but sitting, at the Lord's table. But though sitting be a gesture of more familiarity than kneeling, yet seeing it is instituted, we may expect more safety in it than in their kneeling, which at the Lord's table, wants both precept and example,—We now come to the

Second part of the verse. They were kindly entertained in their approach: Also (or but) they saw God, and did eat and drink.— Here observe,

1. A glorious sight which they got.—Where consider,

(1.) The object, God more largely expressed, ver. 10, "The God of Israel." Not any visible resemblance of the divine nature, but some glorious appearance and token of God's special presence. Our Lord Jesus Christ was known to the Old Testament church by this name, the God of Israel. And that this was the Son of God, seems very plain from that word, ver. 1, "He said, Come up unto the Lord." Compare ch. xxiii. 20—23, with Exod. iii. 2—8. Now, he who sends is the Father, and it is the same who speaks here; and he speaks of another person, who also is the Lord. And, seeing we read of his feet, ver 10, he seems to have appeared in a glorious human shape, as a pledge of his future incarnation. This, then was a most glorious sight of Jesus Christ. Nothing is here described but what was under his feet; though the text seems to intimate they saw more, an

inconceivable glory which mortals cannot make words of.—Consider,

(2.) The act, “they saw.” This seeing imports something more than in ver. 10, for it is evident that the first part of the verse relates to that seeing, ver. 10. And so the sense requires something more to be in this. Accordingly, they are different words in the original; this here signifies to contemplate and fixedly behold; from it our word gaze seems to be derived. It might be read, “They beheld God;” importing, not a transient glance, but a fixed view: John i. 14, “And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;” which is still more admirable condescension, and accordingly it is emphatically expressed.

Now, consider this as following upon the solemn transaction of the covenant made by sacrifice.—It holds out to us, (1.) That the great end of the covenant, next to the divine glory, is the happiness of the covenanters in seeing and enjoying God. There it is completed. And beyond this the creature cannot go.—(2.) That not the sight of an absolute God, but of a God in Christ, is the covenanters happiness. None can see God in mercy but they, for there is no other way but that of the covenant; and their happy sight is no thing other than a sight of God in Christ. In Christ, all the lines of our hope meet for time and eternity. Observe,

2. A blessed feast of which they were partakers: “They did eat and drink.”—Here consider,

(1.) What they did, “they did eat and drink” upon the mount. They feasted upon the remains of the sacrifices of the peace-offerings, ver. 5. And this in token of their hearty satisfaction with the covenant now made, their ready acceptance of the benefits of it, and their communion with God in pursuance of it. Thus the believers feeding on Christ and gospel-dainties is expressed in scripture: Psalm xxii. 25, 26, “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation; I will pay my vows before them that fear him; the meek shall eat, and be satisfied.” Thus they were admitted to a holy familiarity with God, to eat and drink in his presence: “They saw him, and they did eat and drink.”—Consider,

(2.) How they did it, with holy joy and comfort. This is implied in the connection, or opposition betwixt the parts of the text. They were so far from being slain with the sight, that they were not faithlessly frightened at it; but with a holy composure of spirit, they did eat and drink. What they saw was not like a cloudy sky to damp them, but as a clear one to refresh them. Holy reverence is necessary, but faithless fears in solemn approaches to God, are displeasing to him, and hurtful to our own souls, for they hinder us

from eating. Happy they who can believe and fear.—From this subject, we may take the following DOCTRINES, viz.

DOCTRINE I. That a sight of God in Christ, and a holy familiarity with him, with all safety, is the privilege of God's covenant-people, especially in these solemn approaches to which he calls them.

II. That it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, see God, and are familiar with him, and yet come off safe.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That a sight of God in Christ, and a holy familiarity with him, with all safety, is the privilege of God's covenant-people, especially in these solemn approaches to which he calls them.

In handling this doctrine, we shall,

I. Shew what is that sight of God in Christ, which is the privilege of his people in their solemn approaches to him.

II. What is that holy familiarity which is their privilege in their solemn approaches to him. And then,

III. Improve the subject.

We are then,

I. To shew what is that sight of God in Christ, which is the privilege of his people in their solemn approaches to him.—There is a twofold solemn approach of God's people to him.—There is a right approach,

1. When God calls them up to the mount of myrrh, where our Lord abides till the day break, Song iv. 6; when he calls them to come up to the hill of God in Immanuel's land, where stands the King's palace, namely heaven. This call comes to the believing soul at death. Then, as Rev. iv. 1, there is a door opened in heaven to the heaven-born soul, which is now, as it were, wrestling in a mire of corrupt flesh and blood in the body, and the voice is heard, Come up hither. This will be a solemn approach when the soul of the meanest believer shall go up thither, attended with a company of holy angels, and, like Lazarus, be carried by them into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22.—It will come to both souls and bodies of believers at the last day: Psalm l. 5, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." And then God's covenant-people, who dwell in the dust, shall awake from their sleep, come out of the lowly darksome house of the grave, and enter into the King's palace, Psalm lxx.—Then they shall see God in Christ to the completing their happiness for ever. Then they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. 1 John iii. 2. We know little now of this sight in glory, 1 Cor. ii, 9; but it vastly transcends all sights got of him here.—There it

will be immediate, they shall see him face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.—Perfectly transforming, 1 John i. 2.—Everlasting, without interruption, without intermission. They shall be ever with the Lord. But on this we insist not. There is a right approach,

2. When God calls them to come up to the mount of ordinances, to meet him at the sacred feast, as the nobles of Israel in the text, and as we at this time are called, to feast on the great sacrifice in the sacrament. This is a solemn approach. Now, what is the sight of God in Christ which is the privilege here? As to this we observe,

(1.) That it is a believing sight of God in their nature, John i. 14, (above). The nobles saw the Son of God in human shape, with their bodily eyes. But the great design of it was to shew the privilege of the saints by faith. O glorious sight! to see God in our nature, the divine nature, in the person of the Son, united to our nature? O high privilege! to sit at his table, and under the teaching of his Spirit, to spell the glorious name Immanuel, God with us. O the sweetness of every letter and syllable! God the fountain of all holiness and happiness, we, the sink of all sin and misery: yet God with us. The personal union, the foundation of the mystical union; and so an holy God and sinful creatures are united through Christ. We observe,

(2.) That it is a sight of this God in the place of his special residence; on the mount to which they were invited, where he stood, as it were, on a pavement of sapphire. It is their privilege to see him on the mount of ordinances, at his table, the glorious place of his feet, Isa. xxv. 6, 7. O the high privilege of the saints! We were all born under a sentence of death, to see the Lord no more in the land of the living, and (as in Haman's case, Esth. vii. 8.) as the word goes out of the King's mouth, our face is covered. Some live all their days in this case, come to communion-tables, and go away in it. But the believer laying hold on the covenant, Christ draws off the face-covering, and then, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. They see the bread, the Lord.

(3.) It is a sight of the glory of the place of his feet, ver. 10. It is a promise relating to gospel-days: Isa. lx. 13, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the face of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." The ark in the temple, and gospel-ordinances in the gospel-church. It is their privilege to see a glory there, where the world see none; to see a majesty in the sacrament,

a spiritual glory and heavenly lustre in the bread and wine at the Lord's table, as sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 29. This glory and majesty in the ordinances, must be discerned by faith; and because it is beyond the stretch of the natural eye, therefore carnal wisdom in Rome, and the church of England, has gone about to supply its place with a great deal of external pomp, that may work upon the senses, defacing the simplicity of the institution. But after all, to a spiritual discerner, the external glory is as far below the spiritual glory, as artificial painting would in the eyes of the nobles have been below the natural clearness of the body of heaven.

(4.) It is a sight of God as reconciled in Christ. They saw God, and did eat and drink as in the house of their friend. This is the sight to be seen in the gospel-glass, 2 Cor. v. 18—20. A refreshing sight to a soul pained with the sting of guilt. Christ has died, and his blood has quenched the fire of God's wrath against the sinner; so that when on the mount he looks to the Lord, he sees as it were a clear sky under his feet: a sure token, that the storm is blown over, that there is peace from heaven, and an offended God is reconciled to us through his own Son.

(5) It is a sight of God as their God. They saw the God of Israel. Here lay the surpassing sweetness of their sight. Such a sight got Thomas, when his faith got up above his unbelief: John xx. 28, "My Lord, and my God." And for this sight is the sacrament especially appointed, that the child of God may say, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. The nature of the ordinance leads to it, which brings the word preached in the general to every believing communicant in particular: "This is my body broken for you."

Lastly, It is a sight of transcendent glory in him. Nothing is described but what was under his feet. For, search the universe, there is no person, no thing like him. Even what was under his feet, is described to have been a sapphire stone. But the best things on earth are not sufficient to set forth the glory even of this, and therefore it is added, "as if it were the body of heaven in his clearness." They who see him, see that of which they can never see the like.

We are now,

II. To shew what is that holy familiarity which is the privilege of God's people in their solemn approaches to him.—It is a believing, holy, humble freedom before their Lord! Eph. iii. 12, "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." In the sight before us, the sense of their own unworthiness, and a sight of his glory, did not mar their faith, nor put them in an

unbelieving frame. They did eat and drink; neither did the familiarity of faith mar their holy fear, or make them forget their distance: compare v. 1, where they were commanded to worship afar off, which no doubt they did. I will mention some instances of familiarity allowed them,

1. They were allowed to come forward to God, when others must stand back, Isa. lvi. 6, 7; when others must abide at the foot of the hill, (and it is at their peril if they venture forward), believers may come up to the mount, and are welcome. They have a token from the Master himself: Song v. 1, "Eat, O friends! drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!"

2. They were allowed to feast on the sacrifice set before them. Christ the sacrifice typically slain, and believers are allowed to feast on this sacrifice, to eat his flesh and drink his blood; to make a believing application of a whole Christ to their own souls for their spiritual nourishment: "Take, eat, this is my body, broken for you." You know what it is to feed your eyes on some pleasant object that is your own. The covetous man can feed his eyes on his bags of money. So believers are allowed to feed their eyes on Christ; beholding, and delighting in Christ; solacing themselves with his sweetness, and the sweetness of every part of the mystery of Christ.

3. They were allowed to converse with God freely, as one at the table of his friend. The peace being made by accepting of the covenant, the nobles were, and all believers are, set down to the feast in token of their communion with him: 1 John i. 3, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The believer has liberty to tell the Lord all his mind, Eph. iii. 12, (quoted above); to unbosom himself to a gracious God, and point particularly at what he would have, what he would be quit of. "What is thy petition?" says the King at the feast.

4. They were allowed to be in his secrets, to see what others have no access to. They *saw God*. Believers are allowed to see the glory of his person, John i. 14, (above.) The glory of his covenant: Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant."—The glory of his redeeming, his everlasting love to them: Jer. xxxi. 3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."—The hidden glory of his word; Luke xxiv. 32, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Hence,

Lastly, They were allowed to lay all their wants on him. When believers come to the mount, in his light they see light clearly, and at his table they are fed. Christ says to his guests, as Judges xix.

20, "Peace be on thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me." Psalm lv. 22, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The Lord allows his people to lay all their burdens upon him;—the burden of their debt, the guilt of sin, he will answer for it;—the burden of the strength of sin: Micah vii. 19, "He will subdue our iniquities."—The burden of our duties, and through-bearing in the way of God: 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—The burden of afflictions, crosses, trials; Isa. xliii. 2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," &c.—The burden of their families; Jer. xlix. 11, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."—The burden of their souls for time and for eternity: Isa. xli. 4, "And even to your old age, I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear: even I will carry and will deliver you."

We now come,

III. And last place, to make some practical improvement.—And as a suitable improvement, we may observe, that this doctrine, like the cloudy pillar, has a dark and a bright side.—Dark to those that are not in the covenant.—Bright to all God's covenanted people.

1. It has a dark side to all natural men, strangers to the covenant, who are none of God's covenant-people.—Such are these,

(1.) Who are grossly ignorant of the doctrine of the covenant. It is a promise of the covenant: John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that has heard and has learned of the Father, cometh to me." And therefore, such as are not thus taught, are not in it. No person stumbles in the dark into this covenant.

(2.) Those who never found the intolerable weight of the first covenant, the law. Ye cannot be in both covenants at once, Rom. vii. 4. And if ye be brought into the second, ye have found the yoke of the first intolerable; Gal. ii. 19, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Ye have been awakened to see your natural misery, and your utter inability to help yourselves by your doing or suffering; to despair of salvation in any other way, but through the obedience and death of a Redeemer.

(3.) Those who were never yet pleased with the frame of the covenant as God made it, who in all their pretended closing with Christ, have still had some secret reserves as to some beloved lust, or as to the cross.

(4.) Those who are still in league with their lusts, their hearts never divorced from them: "If ye take me," says Christ, "let these go away." If Christ get the throne, the most beloved lusts will be

crucified.—It has a dark side to you as long as you continue in this state. It accordingly says to you,

If you see God at all, it will be a dreadful sight you will get of him. It will be the sight of an absolute God out of Christ, breathing out fury and vengeance against you. And he that is a refreshing sun to others, will be a consuming fire to you. And how will you be able to abide this sight? Isa. xxxiii. 14.—It says again, Though you come to his table, you cannot come in safety. You run a dreadful risk while you go thither, breaking up into the mount, without a warrant from the Lord. And it is a dangerous business for an unholy soul to be found in holy ground, 1 Cor. xi. 29.—It says also, Though ye sit down at the feast, ye cannot taste the sweetness of it, the sap and juice of it, namely, a sight of God in Christ as your own God; and a holy familiarity with him as such will be denied you. For what have ye to do with the covenanted-feast, who are strangers to the covenant itself?—It says, lastly, If ye snatch at the saints' familiarity with God, you put forth your hand to that to which you have no right, and go beyond God's allowance. Remember, Matth. xv. 26, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." And therefore you can expect no other than this entertainment: Matth. xxii. 12, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless."—But as this text and doctrine has a dark side to those who are not in the covenant,

2. It has a bright side to all God's covenant-people. Here is your privilege, O covenanters! you who are savingly in covenant. Ye are come into covenant, ye are divorced from the law; Rom. vii. 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is risen from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." If divorced from the law, ye have given it fair count and reckoning at parting, and fallen on a way of payment to it; for the covenant to which you now belong was not made but by sacrifice. Some are like an obstinate woman, who will not stir out of her husband's house, though he should slay her; these are desperate ones. Some like a foolish woman, who runs away from her husband, without suing out a divorce, or reckoning with him for the wrongs done to him; these are the presumptuous, whom the law will bring back from the horns of the altar. But Christ's spouse, at parting with the law, acknowledged all its demands just; but being sensible of utter inability to pay, goes to Christ as the great cautioner, and turns it over upon him for all.—If divorced from the law, the law also will be dead to you. Where one is divorced from

the first husband, he is as dead to her. The stream of your comfort by the law will be dried up, and it will flow from Christ alone. You will rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. You will not draw your comfort from your repentance, resolutions, vows, or reformation; but from the application of the blood of the covenant.

2. If ye be come into the covenant, your league with your lusts is broken. Though sin cleaves close to you, your hearts are loosed from it, and turned against it, Rom. vii. 17. You will hate it for itself, for its contrariety to the holy nature and law of your covenanted God, and not for the grievous consequences of it on yourself only. It will be to you as the fetters on the captive, he cannot get loose of them; but well he knows they are not his choice, though they were of gold.—Your hearts will be loosed from all sin, your hearts will hate it universally; Psalm cxix. 128, "I hate every false way." You will have a special eye for evil on your iniquity, so that you will gladly yield the offending right eye to be plucked out, and give your consent to the cutting off of the right-hand idol.—In a word, you have taken Christ, not for a shelter to your sins, but for a destroyer to them, 1 Cor. i. 30. Your business with the Mediator of the covenant will be as much for sanctification as justification, to partake of his holiness as well as his righteousness, his Spirit as well as his blood, Matth. i. 21.

Lastly, Ye have come into the covenant, if ye have the covenant's mark. The beast has his mark, and many are fond of it this day. Christ has also his mark, which he sets on his covenant-people.—There is the ear-mark; John x. 27, "My sheep," says he, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." See also Exod. xxiv. 7. Christ bores the ears of all that are his. They are taught of God, and have taken Christ for their teacher; they have a certain sense suited to discern Christ's voice from that of others, agreeable to their new nature: "A stranger they will not follow." They know the voice of their beloved, Song ii. 8. They look to him to be taught the way in which they should go; their ears are open, and their hearts willing to know his will, that they may do it. They wish to have shown them his truths, his ways, and ordinances, that they may cleave to them, Acts ix. 6.—Again, There is a fire-mark: Luke xiv. 26, 27, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." He reconciles all his to the cross; and they are content to follow him at all hazards, and are fully resolved to follow the Lamb,

whithersoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4; to side with him whoever side against him, being determined neither to be bribed nor boasted from him. Now, this doctrine has a bright side to all such, and bespeaks them as from the holy mount in this manner:

1. Come up hither to the Lord. Rise, the master calleth you to the feast at his table. Come in, ye blessed of the Lord, to Christ's banqueting-house, why stand ye without? Trample on all your doubts, whether they arise from the heaven above you, or from hell within you, and come forward to that God whose covenant you have laid hold on.

2. If you open your eyes, ye shall get a glorious sight of God in Christ. A sight which will be satisfying, and will darken all created glory. Though but bread and wine appear at his table, a greater than Solomon is there. Only believe; faith is the eye of the soul. Let us not have occasion to challenge your hearts after this communion with that which Christ said, John xi. 39, "Take ye away the stone."

3. Use a holy freedom in Christ's house, for he allows you. And do not reckon yourself a stranger at his table, seeing the feast is to confirm the covenant, Song v. 1. Make a believing application of all the benefits of his purchase. Say first of all, Song v. 16, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend;" and then conclude, that with him all is yours.

Lastly, Fear not, O trembling soul! Entertain indeed a profound reverence of God, but away with your faithless fears, which confuse and discompose the soul on the mount with God. Remember, upon the nobles he laid not his hand. Being in the covenant, you are under a covert of blood, and, by virtue of it, may assuredly expect, safety.—Here some may propose this question, How shall we manage that we get this sight? To which I answer,

Be exercised to take up the covenant in a suitable manner, ver. 4—1. Take some time this night by yourselves, and consider the covenant,—your undone state without it,—the suitableness of it to your case,—the absolute necessity of being in it. Labour to understand it, and examine yourselves, as to your willingness to come into it.—Solemnly enter this night into the covenant, ver. 3. Though ye have done it before, do it again, and do it with more heartiness, ver. 7. Let this solemn transaction with God go before your solemn approach, and do not venture to set God's seal to a blank, to sit down at his table, while ye have not honestly accepted of his covenant.—Again, sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on your souls, before ye venture to go forward, ver. 8. Apply Christ's blood by faith to your own souls, laying the weight of all your guilt over upon it;

believing firmly, that it is sufficient to purge you from all sin ; and in this way come forward to the Lord with holy boldness, under the covert of this blood.—Once more, shake off all worldly thoughts and affections : labour to be in a heavenly frame ; the nobles left the crowd at the foot of the hill, and went up into the mount. Put off your shoes, when you come on this holy ground.—Still farther, come forward under a due sense of the command of God ; they went up because they were called, and so must you from conscience of Christ's command : “Do this in remembrance of me.” Labour to have the sense of this command increased upon your spirits, as necessary to produce suitable obedience.—Lastly, open the eyes of faith, and look ; the mouth of faith and eat what is set before your soul there, a slain Saviour, with all his benefits. Amen.

GOSPEL PRIVILEGES WONDERS OF GRACE

S E R M O N I X .

Exod. xxiv. 11,

And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand : also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered the first doctrine taken from these words, we go on to a short illustration of

DOCTRINE II. That it is a wonder of grace, that sinful creatures, in their solemn approaches to God, are favoured with special sights of, and an holy familiarity with him, and yet come off safe.

In speaking to this point, we shall,

I. Shew that it is a wonder of grace, that sinful creatures are admitted to see God, and to be familiar with him.

II. Shew that it is a wonder that in their solemn approaches, and when they are thus favoured, yet they come off safe.

III. Explain how it comes to pass, that their safety, when thus favoured, is secured.—And then,

IV. Make some short improvement.

We are,

I. To shew that it is a wonder of grace that sinful creatures are admitted to see God, and be familiar with him. We think we need say little for proof of this. Only consider,

1. The infinite distance that there is between God and the creature in respect of perfection. The distance betwixt an angel and a