

THE INWARD FRAME SHOULD CORRESPOND WITH THE OUTWARD
PROFESSION.*

S E R M O N V .

DEUT. v. 29,

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever.

THAT dreadful appearance which God made on mount Sinai, in the giving of the law, and that effect it had upon the Israelites, Moses here puts them in mind of. When the Lord spoke with a great and terrible voice out of the darkness and fire, the people were affrighted, and they see their absolute need of a mediator, and therefore desire Moses would mediate betwixt God and them; and in this event they promise all obedience. The Lord gives his verdict concerning this, which consists of two parts.

1. That the words were very good. If words could have proved them saints, they would have been among the foremost. If promises could have passed for performances, they had wanted neither faith nor good works; ver. 28, "They have well said all that they have spoken." They have said two things;

(1.) They had desired a mediator, ver. 27, "Go thou near," said they to Moses, "and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." They saw so much of the majesty of God, and of their own sinfulness, that they beg of God he would not deal with them immediately, but by a mediator; and this was the great end in giving the law on mount Sinai, and that with so much terror, Deut. xviii. 15.—18.

(2.) They promised obedience, that they would take the law out of Moses' mouth, and perform it; that they would no less highly esteem it as coming by his hand, than if God should thunder it with the greatest terror into their ears. What could look liker faith and obedience, according to the Old Testament dispensation? What could look liker accepting of the great Mediator in all his offices, according to that dispensation of the covenant, wherein types and figures of him who was to come did so much abound? How ready seem they to sit down at the feet of a prophet and learn?

* This and the following discourses were delivered in 1709.

So that upon this the Lord promised Christ under that very notion, Deut. xviii. 18. How plainly do they take with guilt, and stand as criminals who have nothing to say on their own defence, acknowledge their need, and profess their desire of an intercessor, being unable to stand before the Lord without a shelter, or on their own legs. How readily do they subject themselves to the laws of their King, and stoop to take on his yoke without any exception whatsoever? But all is not gold that glitters, the heart of man seldom holds foot with the tongue.

2. The other part of the verdict follows in the text; "O that there were such an heart in them!" By which he discovers their hypocrisy, and precipitancy, their tongues running before their hearts in their engaging themselves to the Lord. The Lord speaks thus after the manner of men, so that they who would hence conclude, that man's will by nature is such, as that it is of himself flexible, either to spiritual good or evil, while the Lord stands by as an idle spectator, and puts to no hand of power, may as well conclude, that God hath eyes and hands of flesh, and that he who is not the son of Man that he should repent, and with whom there is no variableness, may even with propriety repent as to what he has done. Inefficacious wishing, properly understood, argues imperfection. (Hebrew, who will give their heart to be such in them?) Now, it is certain, God can give such a heart; Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart also will I give you." And if he will do it, who can hinder him? Job xi. 10. —This declaration therefore imports,

(1.) That such an heart was not in them, for all their fair words and high pretences; that though they looked well outwardly, yet within they were naught. They had learned to speak better than they were wont; but though they had got the new tongue, they had but the old heart still; Deut. xxix. 4, "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." When they were in Egypt, they were sunk into stupidity, the instructions of the patriarchs had worn out of their minds, they had almost forgotten their fall in Adam, and what sin was; and though God had made the promise to Abraham, yet they were now grown proud and secure. And though sin, and also death, were reigning over them, yet being without the law, to evidence sin and death to their consciences, they would not charge themselves with it, and so found no need of a Mediator, Rom. v. 13—20. But now the law being proclaimed with so great terror, laid their peacock-feathers a little; but though they had more knowledge of their sin and misery than before, yet they had still the old heart. This declaration imports,

(2.) That such an heart should have been in them, it was their duty to have it, God required it of them: "Make to yourselves a new heart." God requires the conformity of the heart, as well as of the conversation, to his will. It imports,

(3.) That the want of such an heart was a dead fly in all their engagements, which made all the ointment to stink; "O that there were such an heart in them!" The chief thing is wanting still, they have not yet brought up their heart to their work. It imports,

(4.) The great excellency and worth of such an heart. The Lord speaks honourably of it, as that which would bear weight in the balance of the sanctuary. It is pleasing to the Lord, it is God's delight; they want only this to make them happy. For illustrating this subject, we shall propose and consider the following doctrines.

DOCTRINE I. That men often make what ought to be the most solemn transactions with the Lord about their souls' concerns, but solemn trifling with him.

DOCTRINE II. That a heart sincerely and suitably corresponding with the profession of a covenanting people, is a most valuable and excellent thing.

DOCTRINE III. That the work of covenanting with the Lord is slight work, when it is not heart work. Or, in other words, solemn covenanting with the Lord is but solemn trifling with him, when the work of covenanting is not heart work.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That men often make what ought to be the most solemn transactions with the Lord about their souls' concerns, but solemn trifling with him.

Never was there a more solemn transaction which men had with God than what was here. Their ears were filled with the noise of the thunder, the lightnings flashed in their eyes, they heard God himself speak, they were most express in covenanting with God; all this time their hearts were not right with him, nor sound in his statutes. In discoursing from this doctrine, we propose,

I. To shew how far a man may go in transacting with, and engaging himself to the Lord, and yet after all he may be but trifling.

II. Shew wherein this trifling and slight work in such a weighty business doth appear.

III. Point out how people come to turn such solemn work into mere trifling.

IV. Apply the subject.

We are, then,

I. To shew how far a man may go in transacting with, and engag-

ing himself to the Lord, and yet after all he may be but trifling. Upon this head we observe,

1. That a person may formally and expressly covenant with God, to be the Lord's, and yet after all be but trifling with God. So did this people, ver. 27, (quoted above). A person may make a covenant with God, both by word and writ, when there is no such heart in him, and the heart goes not along either with tongue or pen. It is an easy thing to say unto the Lord, that he shall be our God, but not easy to say it with the heart. The tongue is not always a faithful interpreter of the heart, especially in these things.—We observe,

2. That a person may make a very full covenant with the Lord, and yet after all be but trifling. What exception was there in this, ver. 27, "All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, we will hear it and do it." How large a promise was this, Matth. viii. 19, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." No doubt, had their hearts kept pace with their words, they had engaged to purpose. Had there been as few secret as there were open reserves, they had dealt honestly.—We observe,

3. That persons may even be morally serious in all this, thinking and resolving in the time to do as they say. It was not a season for gross dissimulation, nor to make a jest of transacting with the Lord about soul-concerns, when the Lord was speaking out of the darkness and fire to them. Persons in this case are like those who trifle with merchants, in offering to bargain for their wares, out of mere simplicity and ignorance as to the worth of these wares, who, if they had matters set in their due light, would never once propose again so to bid for them. The foolish virgins saw not their lamps out till it was past time.—We observe,

4. That persons may do all this from a sense of their need of a Mediator. Thus did they in the text. What was it that brought this people to this? Why, they had formerly engaged with a whole heart to be the Lord's: Exod. xix. 8, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." But now they fall more solemnly and seriously to work. God sets the mountain on fire for a tribunal of justice; there is a trumpet whose voice waxes louder and louder; by all which God doth, as it were, summon them to compare before him. There are dreadful thunder-claps to carry the sentence of death to their hearts; there are lightnings, by the glancings of which they read the wrath of God against sinners. Yet they must not touch the mountain, lest they be consumed, to teach them how sin had laid the bar as to access to God. This fills them with terror and fear of death, and now they feel

the necessity of a mediator; Exod. xx. 19, "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And yet, after all, "O that there were such an heart in them!"

We are now,

II. To shew wherein this trifling and slight work in such a weighty business does appear.

(1.) It appears in persons engaging themselves to the Lord, without being at pains to prepare themselves, and bring up their hearts to the duty. O what a light thing do most people make of covenanting with God! It is but the saying of a word in prayer; and this is soon said. It is but taking the sacrament; and this is soon done. In the meantime, the heart, like Abraham's ass, is left at the foot of the hill; Gen. xxii. 5, Matt. xv. 8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honour-eth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." They are strangers to God who are strangers to heart-work. They who find no difficulty in bringing their hearts to duties, do not bring them to them at all. The true Christian finds much difficulty in this. "I find," says Paul, "a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." It is but trifling to give the hand to the Lord, while the heart is far from any due concern about the business, and from that solemn seriousness requisite to get it rightly managed. This appears,

(2.) When people engage themselves to the service of the Lord, but do not give their hearts to him. Many engage with the Lord, as a married servant with a master; the master is to get his service, but another has his heart; Jer. xii. 2, "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." The heart may remain glued to lusts, while the soul pretends to be engaging itself to the Lord; and if it were not so, there would not be such a sad account of many who covenant with God. This is but to trifle with God, who requires the heart, or nothing; Prov xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart." Jer. xxx. 21, "For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord." It is an ill-made second marriage, when there is neither the death of, nor a divorce from the first husband. There is no right engaging with the Lord, but where the soul forsakes all others for him, and the heart takes up its eternal rest in Christ. This trifling appears,

(3.) When people have any secret reserves in their closing with Christ, as is the case when the heart is not well content to take Christ with whatsoever may follow this choice: Luke xiv. 26, "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." There is none make right work here, but those who, weighing all things, are content to put a blank in Christ's hand, saying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. They do but trifle who have their right hand sins which they wish not cut off, for they will in this case mar the bargain; and also those who cannot digest that tribulation which is in the way to the kingdom. No cross, no crown. That heart which is not reconciled to the cross, is not such an heart as is required. This trifling appears,

(4.) When people overlook the Mediator in their covenant of peace with God, but transact with God for peace and pardon without respect to the atoning blood of Christ. It is natural to all men to come immediately to God without a Mediator; Exod. xix. 8, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." They are thus for coming without a Mediator, till the terror of God correct their rashness, and they see what a consuming fire God is, and that, if they would be safe, they must come to him under the covert of Christ's wings. If a soul sincerely desires to come to God, the first person to which they must go, is to Christ, the secretary of heaven. For "by him we have access into that grace wherein we stand," Rom. v. 2. And he is "the Mediator of the new covenant," Heb. xii. 24. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. But there are beasts that will touch the mountain, though they be thrust through with a dart. Would you transact with God a covenant of reconciliation? then go to him on the mercy-seat? not the seat of mercy merely for mercy's sake, such a mercy-seat has no being in heaven, but only in the vain imaginations of men on earth; but to the mercy-seat for Christ's sake, where mercy is abundantly distributed with the cordial consent of justice: 2 Cor. v. 19. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is to God as veiled with flesh, that the guilty can only approach; otherwise it is but trifling. For Jesus is "the way, and no man cometh to the Father but by him," John xiv. 6.

(5.) This is turned into solemn trifling with God, by people's not taking Christ for all, but only for making up that of which they may come short; thus endeavouring to patch up a garment of their own righteousness and of his together. Thus many think to please God, by doing what they can to fulfil the law, and looking to Christ to make up that of which they come short. It was forbidden, under the law, to wear a garment of divers sorts of woollen and linen together. And they will find themselves befooled, who will adventure their

salvation on this party-coloured garment: Gal. iii. 12, "And the law is not of faith; but the man that doth them shall live in them." A garment pieced up of sundry sorts of righteousness, is not meet for the court of heaven. That heart which would share the glory betwixt Christ and the man himself, is not right with God, and will be left to its own weight.—This trifling appears,

(6.) By persons making a covenant of works with Christ; the tenor thereof is, that if Christ will save their souls, they shall serve him as long as they live. If Christ will give them wages, they will give him work. If he will pay their debt, they shall be his servants, while they have breath in them. And upon this, men may take the sacrament to bind them the faster. And thus, I fear, many make sad work at sacraments and other ordinances. That this is but solemn trifling with God, appears, if ye consider, that this is a covenant which hath no warrant in the word of God, and therefore Christ will never set his seal to it, though we should seal it with our blood. It is quite opposite to the covenant of grace; the design of which is to draw the sinner into the debt of free grace, and to set the crown only on Christ's head, Rom. iv. 14—16, and xi. 6. The covenant of grace, is an everlasting covenant; once in, never out: Isa. lv. 3, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." But this is a tottering covenant, broken every day. This is a servile covenant, to give Christ service for salvation. The other is a filial covenant, where the soul takes Christ and salvation freely offered, and so is a son: "For to as many as believed on him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, John, i. 11. Therefore, they do not serve, that they may get the inheritance; but because the inheritance is theirs, therefore they serve, Gal. iv. 24. and downwards. To take hold of God's covenant, is for a poor empty-handed sinner to come and live freely on Christ; this is to come and buy from him. In order to bring this charge home, I shall mention some evidences of the above practice.—Such as,

(1.) Persons looking upon, and making use of the sacrament only as seals of their vows, and not as seals of God's promises. I do not say but the sacrament is a seal, to seal our engagement to be the Lord's; but this is but the one half, and even the least half as I take it, 1 Cor. x. 16. Why then do people so overlook this, but because, not being shaken out of themselves, they look more to the confirming of their resolutions, than their faith and communion with Christ in his fulness?

(2.) A second evidence is, persons coming to the Lord in this ordinance, rather to engage themselves to duties, than to get strength for the performance of them.

(3.) A third evidence is, persons drawing their peace and comfort rather from their duties, and the performance of that to which they have engaged, than what Christ makes over to sinners in the covenant of grace. It was not so with David, for the covenant itself was all his salvation, and all his desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. But when the other works, he expects his wages; when he fails, he has no hope, as one who has broken covenant with Christ. But, when the true covenanter fails in his duty, yet all that his soul depended upon still remains a covenanted righteousness; all that he trusted to for his duties also remains, to wit, covenanted strength, Rom. vii. 24, 25, and viii. 1. And so there is new application for covenant-benefits; whereas when many fail in their covenant, all is gone, and it must be made over again, ere he can have any new footing. This trifling appears, when,

7. Persons lay hold on Christ with a faith of which the mighty power of God was not at the forming, Eph. i. 19; but is merely the product of a person's natural faculties. Most men's faith is like wild oats, that grow up without the labour of the husbandman. They come too easily to it to make any sure work by it. The evil heart of unbelief is not so easily shaken off as men imagine. Those who find no difficulty, do but trifle and beat the air; if the work were heartily plied, it would not be so easy. We now proceed,

III. To inquire how people come to turn such solemn work into trifling. They do so,

1. Because they have no due consideration of the worth and preciousness of their souls, they do not suitably value the great salvation; Matth. xxii. 5, "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." Men will not trifle in matters which appear to them of great concern. But men who do not duly value their souls will venture them on they know not what. But who considers eternity, and the weight which lies on the soul's transacting with God? If men had eternity in their eye, and were transacting as for eternity, communicating for eternity, they would act in another manner, and not thus trifle in so important a business. They do so,

2. Because they know not what a God they have to do with, they think that he is altogether such a one as themselves, Psalm l. 21. Men transact in their duties with they know not whom, and therefore they know not what; Joshua xxiv. 19, "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God, he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins." When people have mean thoughts of God, they are ready to think any little thing may serve him. They thus trifle,

3. Because they know not their own hearts, and their deceits; Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? There are many secret biases there, to which they do not advert. Men may be hypocrites, and not know themselves to be such. The heart has a depth of deceit, which is not easy to fathom, which will make men say, with Saul, I have performed the commandment of the Lord, while, after all, the bleating of the sheep will discover the deceit. They thus trifle,

4. Because sin has never been made bitter enough to them. It is hard to wean us from the love of lusts, if the breasts of them be not laid over with gall and wormwood. We must dig deep, and build upon the rock. Where the fallow ground is not plowed up, there will be a sowing among thorns, Jer. iv. 3. The consent of many to take Christ, such as it is, is too lightly won to be solid.—They thus trifle,

5. Because they are hasty and indeliberate in their engaging. They fall a-building ere they count the cost, Matth. xiv. 25.; what is rashly done, is but slightly done in this matter. He that would make sure work, must lay his account beforehand with what he may meet with in the Lord's way. Then, meet with what they will, they will not be offended.—They thus trifle,

6. Because they have never got a sufficient discovery of their own utter weakness and insufficiency. They think they have a stock, and therefore may trade with it, and are very ready to undertake, though their heart will certainly misgive in the performance. This is building on the old foundation of nature; whereas, there will never be sure work, till this foundation be razed. If any man will come after Jesus, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow him. It only remains that,

IV. We make some application. This doctrine may help us to see the reason why so many return with the dog to his vomit. There is an error in the first concoction. That you may beware of this, we would exhort you, to make sure work in your transacting with the Lord. O do not trifle in so important a concern! To guard you effectually against this, consider the following things.

Consider, this is to put, so far as you can, a solemn cheat on the great God: Gal. vi. 7, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is a dangerous thing to mock God. His all-seeing eye knows how you deal with him, and can penetrate through all your pretences. Consider.

2. It is to put a solemn cheat on your own souls; you thus deceive your own souls. If you trifle with God, you will find at length a sad disappointment; Isa. l 11, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that

compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." As ye sow, ye will reap. Sow the wind of hypocrisy, and you will reap the whirlwind of wrath.

3. Consider the weight of the matter; the salvation or damnation of the soul is no small business; if you manage it right, you may get your salvation sealed; if not, see Luke xiv. 24, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper."

4. Consider, if you thus trifle with God in this matter, you will be discovered. The man without the wedding-garment was soon found out. You will not hold right to the end; you will return to the vomit; your latter end will be worse than your beginning. Consider,

5. That you have a deceitful heart; it is necessary to be sure with it; it will soon give you the slip, and break the bonds, if they be slightly put on. Consider,

Lastly, If you make sure work, you will find the eternal advantage of it. All the blessings of the covenant will be your portion. You may get a feast; "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word."

I shall close with the following short DIRECTIONS:—

Set about the work of self-examination. Inquire particularly at your hearts, whether they be willing to take Christ, and renounce all other lovers, and to take him wholly, only, and everlastingly. Pray that God may examine you, and discover yourselves to yourselves; lay yourselves open to self-searching. *Lastly*, Put your hearts into the Lord's hand, as sensible that in yours they will miscarry. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N V.

DEUT. v. 29,

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.

You have been this day avouching the Lord to be your God. You have all had an offer of Christ, and there was none heard tell of

protesting against him ; nay, did not your hearts say within you, Even so I take him ? Many of you have, before angels and men, sealed a covenant with him this day, and we may report to the Lord, that you have said you are content to be his. O that there were such an heart in you, all would be well !

Having, in the preceding discourse, offered all that we intend from the first doctrine, we now proceed to

DOCTRINE II. That a heart sincerely and suitably corresponding with the profession of a covenanting people, is a most valuable and excellent thing.

Here I shall,

I. Shew what a heart such a heart is.

II. Make it appear, that such a heart is a most valuable thing.

I. We are to shew what a heart such a heart is ; and on this head, the particulars shall be mostly taken out of the context. We observe,

1. That such an heart is a heart that has got a view of the majesty and glorious perfections of that God with whom we have to do : Deut. v. 24, " And he said, Behold the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire ; we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." The eye saw this ; all would have been right, if the glory of the Lord had thus shined in their hearts. An unenlightened heart in the knowledge of the Lord looks so like hell, and unlike heaven, that it cannot be such a heart. A dark heart will make a dark confused conversation. There is no right worshipping of an unknown God. This view of the Lord's glory is necessary. Moses desired it, Exod. xxxiii. ; and all get it in a greater or less degree : 2 Cor. iii. 18, " But we all beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If ye have seen the King in his glory, and his train filling the temple, it is a token of good. But, alas ! many see the chair of state, who behold not the King sitting in it.

2. It is a heart filled with the fear of God. " O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me." Indeed they professed it, and they had a tolerably sufficient measure of it, had it been but of the right stamp, and had it got leave to have soaked kindly into their hearts. But, alas ! it was only like a scud of rain, violent in the time, but wetting only the surface of the ground, and soon dried up. But O for such a heart as would fear always ! not with a slavish distrustful fear, but a filial reverential fear, a fear of circumspection. Such a heart as would keep the eye upon the majesty of

the Lord, would promise to keep right : Heb. xii. 28, " Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." A heart wanting this, will be like an unruly horse without a bridle ; Prov. xxv. 28, " He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

3. It is a humble heart. O how humble did they seem to be now under the sense of their own sinfulness, and the holiness of that God with whom they had to do ! A heart humbled indeed is a valuable blessing. When Christ lances the swelling of the heart, and lets out the filthy stuff of pride and self-conceit, makes the man low in his own eyes, he is even preparing a house for himself on earth ; for the Lord " dwells with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. They durst not go near the mountain to touch it, they looked as they would rather have rolled themselves among the dust of the Lord's feet. " O that there were such an heart in them !" The honest heart is shaken out of self-confidence, for a right sight of the Lord in his glory, and of our own vileness, go always together ; Isa. vi. 5, " Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

4. It is a heart filled with wonder at the goodness of God, his condescension and patience towards sinners, vers. 24 and 26. That soul will wonder that God should ever have come in speaking-terms with vile man ; that ever anything should have proceeded out of his mouth, but arrows dipped in the vinegar of the curse, to have slain the traitors outright. And will God thus indeed deal with man ? It will be the wonder of that soul, that God hath not consumed it, mingled its blood with its sacrifices, struck it dead at the communion-table. O how wonderful that they should have spoke with the Lord, and are yet alive !

.5 It is a heart convinced of the need of a Mediator, and resolved to employ him in all causes betwixt God and them, ver. 27. It is not every one that sees their need of Christ, and their need of an Advocate to go betwixt God and them. But he who has such a heart will look on himself, in himself, as dry stubble, as he looks on God as a consuming fire ; and all his own duties and attainments as a wall of dry boards which will not keep the fire from him, but increase it, and desire to have Christ betwixt them and a holy God, as a crystal wall, which may let through the light, but not the flames of that fire. His very name will be precious to that heart,

for it is "as ointment poured forth," Song i. 3. How sweet is the name of a Redeemer to a captive, and to a humbled sinner, one who may lay his hands on both!

6. It is a heart taking the Lord only for their God. They professed they would have no more to do with idols, though it was not long ere their hearts turned to their old bias: Exod. xxxii. 8, "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them, they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." But such a heart renounces all other lovers, gives Christ's rivals their leave, and halts no more betwixt two opinions. If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all, that is, part with all but Christ. When a man gets such a heart, there is an extraordinary uproar made in the soul; when it enters the man's breast, Satan cries as these, "They that turn the world up-side down, are come hither also." There is a strange overturning of thrones there. As when Christ and the gospel came into the world, the world, which before was wholly given to idolatry, then made great reformation; oracles were struck dumb, idols were cast to the moles and to the bats; so when the man gets such a heart, down goes the clay-god, the world, and Christ mounts the throne; neither back nor belly must be gods longer to the man, king self loses his crown, which is put upon the head of Christ, and free grace. The heart, which was divided among many lusts before, enters now on Jesus, the beauty of the Upper house.

7. It is a heart for the Lord's work, ver. 27. It is a heart which inclines the man who has taken Christ's enlisting money to fight his battles; which willingly stoops to the yoke of Christ's commandments, and is set to walk in the way of obedience. It is a heart reconciled to the law of God; the soul being married to Christ, may not be barren, but must bring forth fruit unto God. When the Lord charges the heart, the bullock is tamed, and accustomed to the yoke. To be more particular here, we observe,

(1.) That it is a heart for universal obedience, ver. 27. It wishes to neglect none of God's commands, but to have respect to them all, Psalm cxix. 6. When the heart is straight, it makes the conversation uniform. The Lord's stamp on every duty recommends it to the care of such a heart. The heart naturally is like some servants who promise to do all at the bargain-making, but fail in the accomplishment, like the sluggard who will not plow because of the cold. But such a heart puts a blank in the Lord's hand, and makes no exceptions. Some sins lie nearer the heart than others, some a right eye, some but a left toe. The right eye must be plucked out;

thou must put to thine own hand to this hard work, it must be with thine own consent. Amen, says such a heart; let bosom-lusts yield to Christ.

(2.) It is a heart for constant obedience. They limit no time. Compare the text with John viii. 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." We have a sad account of Rehoboam, 2 Chron. xii. 1, "When he was established in the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him." He was like many men, who make use of religion like a net, who, when they have caught their prey, fold up and lay by their net. But see the fountain of his apostacy, ver. 14, "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord;" prepared or fixed, or established *not* his heart. But such an heart is for following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, in foul and fair weather, and will abide with Christ in a storm when the summer vermin is not to be seen: Psalm xix. 9, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever." Trees planted in God's vineyard, watered by his grace, having such a heart, are not like common trees, green only one while of the year, but those are ever green, and are yielding their fruit in their season, Psalm vii. 3. Such an heart takes with the stock, and so lives by its sap.

(3.) It is a heart resolute in obedience. We will do it, say they, stand in the way what will. See the portraiture of such a heart, Micah iv. 5, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." Such a heart had Caleb and Joshua, they followed the Lord fully. It made them row against the stream. It gives the man courage for the arduous enterprise. Heaven is sweet in the eyes of all; why then do so many go to hell? why, they have not such a heart. There are difficulties in the way to heaven, they have no courage to grapple with these. They see heaven afar, but there is a great gulph betwixt them and it, and they have not such a resolute heart as to venture on it, and heaven will not drop into their mouths.

(4.) It is a heart that is content to know what is duty and what is sin: "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." And indeed that is a very rare heart; for most people are glad to lodge lust; as some lodged intercommuned people, they are willing they should get house-room, but are desirous that they themselves should not see them, so as to know that they are there. But such a heart loves to know the whole counsel of God: John iii. 20, "But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that

they are wrought in God." It is a nonsuch heart, which is content to have all anatomized and searched out; which in every case is ready to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;" which is content to sit down at Christ's feet and learn all; while others lodge their lusts under disguise, and loathe the discovery of them, rebel against the light, and shut their eyes, till God judicially blind them, so as that they at last come to believe lies.

(5.) It is a heart to which God's bare will is a sufficient reason both for faith and practice. Such a heart receives the speaker for the word's sake, and not the word for his, but for God's sake. Such a heart receives the kingdom as a little child, who has authority enough if father or mother say it. Such a heart had Abraham; he gets a strange commandment, for which he could see no reason but the will of God, Gen. xxii. Father and son must part, not to see other more in this world, though the son of the promise. The Father himself must do the deed. Here were many deaths both to the father and to the son; but God's will was revealed, and they were about fully to obey; then says the Lord, ver. 12, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God;" that thou hast such a heart. We go on to observe,

8. It is a heart that has high and honourable thoughts of God, ver. 24, "Behold the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." His greatness; "O that there were such a heart in them!" They professed this. High and honourable thoughts of the husband is necessary to the comfort of the married state, and to the performance of duties. The queen stands upon the right hand, Psalm xlv. 9. Mean thoughts of God are the neck-break of right obedience to him. They think him such an one as themselves, Psalm l. 31. Hence mean, pitiful services are thought sufficient. They forget that he "will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people will he be glorified, Lev. x. 3. Such a heart is let into the view of his greatness in some measure, so that its conclusions will be, Psalm xc. 3, "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods." So that the soul's familiarity with God will yet be managed with a due regard to the awful greatness and infinite distance betwixt God and the creature. And this may serve as a help to distinguish true communion with God from delusions, Hebrews xii. 28, 29. John xx. 28.

It is a heart which the voice of God has reached, ver. 24, (quoted above.) O that this voice had had as much access to their hearts as

to their ears! Paul spoke, and God spoke, and Lydia's heart was opened. "My sheep," said Jesus, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John x. 27. To honest covenanters there is something more in preaching than a bare sound, something more in sacraments than bread and wine: these are but the vehicles of the Lord's voice to the soul, and the ordinances are empty things when there is no divine fire infolded in them. There is a voice of the Lord in our mother's house; in the public ordinances there is a good report of Christ. Sinners are invited, obtested, commanded to hear and believe. But Christ comes into the inner chamber of the elect's hearts, and there he gives his voice, which is a majestic voice, a heart-melting sound; Jer. xxiii. 29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It thaws the frozen affections. A quickening voice that puts activity in the soul; it puts the spirit in motion, so as that it rests not till it has taken up its rest in God; John vi. 63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

10. It is a heart which takes up with the Lord for its God, even when he appears in the glorious robes of his perfect holiness. This they professed; but "O that there were such a heart in them!" The truth is, the carnal mind is enmity against God; and none but saints indeed can give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, Psalm xxx. 4. God is glorious in his holiness indeed; but none will love him for that glory, but such as are partakers of his divine nature. Those who love him for this, love him for himself. And indeed such a heart, being a holy heart, will cleave to the fountain of holiness, to the end that they may be transformed into the same image. To take God in the robes of mercy, is not strange; but God's holiness chaseth unholy hearts away from him.

11. It is a heart sensible of that vast distance which sin has made betwixt God and the soul, which has got such a sight of his own sinfulness, and God's holiness, that it sees there is no transacting with God but by a Mediator, ver. 27. Such a heart will say as Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." Such will not offer to come into the presence of God but as introduced by the King's Son, nor will desire to look on God but as veiled with flesh, knowing that a sight of unvailed majesty is enough to confound a sinner. And truly, till the Lord touch the heart, it will not be such a heart, but, like a fearless beast, will touch the fiery mountain. Such a heart will highly prize Christ, and come to the Lord under the veil of Christ's flesh, and will have no boldness of access but what flows from the blood of Christ, Heb. x. 19, 20.

12. It is a heart reconciled to the whole law of God, ver. 27. It is not every heart which is such. They only have it, "who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit," Rom. viii. 1. Hypocrites' hearts are never reconciled to the whole law of God. They cannot say they are not ashamed in having respect to all God's commandments, Psalm cxix. 6. There are always some parts of the Bible, which hypocrites would spend their blood on to blot them out, if that would do. Here, there is a raging lust says, yea; there, there is a holy law says, nay; the heart cannot be reconciled to both at once. Both may be in the experience both of the sincere Christian and the hypocrite. What is the difference? why, the hypocrite would fain have the law bow to his lusts, the sincere soul would have his lusts bow to the law. For he "delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man," Rom. vii. 22. And his heart will approve the law, when it forbids, accuses, and condemns his corruptions, ver. 16, "If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law, that it is good."

13. It is a heart which is for taking the law only out of Christ's hand as Mediator, ver 27. The Mediator first makes the peace between God and the sinner, then bids the man work. But the law of itself first bids sinners work, and tells them they shall have their peace according to their work; which would be dreadful news to such a heart. Under the law to Christ, 1 Cor. ix. 21. The law, cast into a gospel-mould, is the only law such a heart desires to meddle with, that, "being married to Christ, they may bring forth fruit to God," Rom. vii. 4.; that being by Christ made partakers of the adoption, they may serve as sons, not as hired servants or slaves.

Lastly, It is a heart ready for obedience, ver. 27. The soul then stands at Mount Zion, and says, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." They have had Christ's banner in the banqueting-house, as being ready to rise up and fight his battles, under the conduct and influence of their glorious leader. Such a heart has eaten the pass-over with its loins girt, and with a staff in its hand, ready for the journey. The heart that is for obedience, but not yet, is not such a heart; it is but a shifting heart, which will end in a refusal. It is but a civil way of putting off for altogether; Psalm cxix. 5, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

We now proceed,

II. To shew that such a heart is a most valuable thing.—It must be so; For,

1. Such a heart is God's delight; "O that there were such an heart in them!" This would give content to the heart of Christ.

This is his rest. The very prayer of the upright is his delight; Psalm xi. 7, "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." Such a heart is pleasing to God; and it cannot be otherwise, for it is shapen out according to his mind. The person who has such a heart is another David, a man according to God's own heart. It is a heart which, as believing, pleaseth God; a heart well pleased with him, in which God is well pleased.

2. It is that heart without which the largest profession, and the most express covenanting with God, is little worth. Without this heart men do but as the Lord's enemies, they lie unto him. And it is a dangerous thing to lie unto the Lord, like Ananias and Sapphira, who died with a lie in their mouth. They take God's name in vain. The voice indeed is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's. It is but mocking God, and juggling with the Holy One. It is but doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, and offering the blind and the lame for sacrifice, which will bring down a curse instead of a blessing. Let a man be at never so much pains in duties, yet still the one thing is lacking while they have not such a heart.

3. The want of this heart is very grievous to the spirit of Christ. The Lord doth thus, in the text, lament their want of it. If anything pierce the heart of God, it is when, with a covenanting people, there is wanting such a heart. What can be more grievous in a married lot than when the husband has not the wife's heart? Ezek. vi. 9, "I am broken, says God, with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a-whoring after their idols." There can be no contentment in that condition, as Haman said, "Yet all this availeth me nothing," Esth. v. 13. And a soul's grieving the Lord's Spirit, is a forerunner of the Lord's grieving them; Psalm xvi. 4, "Their sorrow shall be multiplied that hastens after another god."

4. God accepts of the duty, and is well pleased with the bargain, where there is such a heart; "O that there were such an heart in them!" There wants no more to complete the bargain betwixt them and me. Then, as they call me their God, so would I call them my people by a saving relation. But where such is not, the contract betwixt Christ and the soul is written indeed, but it is not signed. Would you know, then, if Christ be yours, with all the benefits of the everlasting covenant; why, if you have such a heart, you have Christ's heart, you are married to the Lord, and shall never be put away. A voice of the word without, and an echo to it of the heart within, closes the bargain; Psalm xxvii. 8, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." See also Jer. iii. 22.

5. Where there is such a heart God will be well pleased with the person, and accept the duty, though it have many defects; albeit he be not pleased with these defects, yet in mercy he will overlook them; "O that there were such an heart in them!" As if he had said, O if they were but honest in the main, I would not be severe on them for every escape. The Lord will use the indulgence of a father for such infirmities; Song v. 1, "I have drunk my wine with my milk." *Milk*, that is, he accepts the meanest work where there is such an heart. A groan, a tear, a breathing after the Lord, is accepted; as the father loves more the lisping child's expression of its affection to him, than all the towering compliments of a flattering tongue, 2 Chron. xv. 17; the eye of their faith, though, like a bleared eye, Song iv. 9; the fire of their love, though weak, ver. 10; the hand of their confidence, though a trembling hand; the anchor of their hope, though feeble, Psalm xlvi. 11; their feet of obedience, though lame, like Mephibosheth, yet shall they be set at the king's table; though their very sincerity be not without a mixture of hypocrisy, Gal. ii. 13, yet it holds weight in the balance; Christ takes their petitions, though not every way well drawn, blots out some, fills up other things in them, and gets them answered. Their will is accepted for the deed; their grief for want of will, for the will itself; all this where there is such a heart.

6. They will never prove stedfast in the Lord's covenant without such a heart; "O that there were such an heart in them!" They have spoke fair, but they will never keep a word they say, for they have not such a heart; Psalm lxxviii. 37, "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." The heart is the principle of actions; such a heart is the principle of perseverance; and there can be no stedfastness without a principle; Matth. xiii. 6, "And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root they withered away." The tree which is set in the ground but does not take root in it, will be easily blown over. The house without a foundation cannot withstand the storm, Matth. vi. 23. They who have covenanted with God without such a heart, will make foul work, it will appear that the devil has gone down with the sop, their former lusts will be swallowed over again, 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. Their last state will be worse than the first. Their vows will be no stronger than Samson's withs; their resolutions, like the walls of Jericho, will fall down at the sound of the horn of temptation.

7. Such an heart will fence the man against apostacy; "O that there were such an heart in them!" They would not then turn away from me; they would keep by their covenant: Luke vii. 15, "But

that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. Cleaving to Christ with constancy, without apostacy, is the very essence of such a heart. Gold is not gold but dross, if it do not continue in the fire. Men's hearts may get some light strokes of the Spirit, some fleeting motions of the same, and the heart still unsound as the stony ground. But the Spirit of God and of glory rest not on the heart, it is not such an heart: 2 John, ii. 27. "But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you;" the fire of true love will be preserved, though it flame not, whatever cools there may be taking place. Such an heart has learned so much of the grace of God as to deny worldly lusts, and all forsaken lovers, when they come to court the soul. Where such a heart is, there is the root of the matter in the man, Job, xix. 28.; and there is sap enough to keep in the life of it, Prov. xii. 3. "The root of the righteous shall not be moved. Yea, the Root of Jesse has engaged that this root shall not fail," John iv. 14. They are kept through the power of God. God is careful of the leaves of Christianity, Psalm i. 3. much more of real Christians themselves; therefore says Job chap. xvii. 9, "The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Be their light never so weak, it will last, yea it will grow, and shine more and more unto the perfect day. It is the abiding seed of God.

Lastly, Such a heart enriches the man who has it; "O that there were such an heart in them!" they want no more to make them happy here and hereafter. Grace and glory, and all good, is the portion of those who have such an heart. Such an heart has taken Christ, is married and knit to him, and then Christ is yours, all is yours; pardon, peace, and every blessing; as he who gets a hold of the main link of a chain, draws all after him; "There the Lord commands the blessing, even life which never ends."

We shall conclude this discourse with beseeching you to be in earnest that you have such a heart. This is that which you all need, that without which you must be miserable for ever.—It is a most invaluable blessing, what you should highly prize; what is precious in God's esteem, and what he is urgent with you that you may possess: "O that there were such an heart in them!"

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

S E R M O N V I .

DEUT. v. 29,

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever.

HAVING considered, in the two preceding discourses, the first and second doctrines proposed from this subject, we now go on to

DOCTRINE III. and *last*, That the work of covenanting with the Lord is slight work, when it is not heart-work; or, That solemn covenanting with the Lord is but solemn trifling with him, when the work of covenanting is not heart-work.

In treating this point, we shall,

I. Produce some evidences, that solemn covenanting is often nothing but solemn trifling, and not heart-work.

II. Shew when solemn covenanting is not heart-work.

III. Shew how people come to make solemn covenanting but a trifling business.

IV. Shew the danger of trifling, and not making heart-work of this weighty business. And then,

V. Apply the whole.

We are,

I. To produce some evidences, that solemn covenanting is often nothing but solemn trifling, and not heart-work. It is of importance that you may be stirred up to take heed to the deceits which we may discover in this weighty business. With this view, we observe,

1. That apostacy and defection from the good ways of the Lord, persons returning again openly to the same courses which they pursued before. This is an evidence, 2 Peter ii. 19—22; Matth. xii. 45, "Then the evil spirit goeth, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." They who have no root soon wither away, Matth. xiii. 6. There are many who, since the revolution, have solemnly covenanted with the Lord at sacraments, and many who have done it, when they durst not so well avow it as now, who have given a sad account of themselves since that time,

having returned to their former courses of wickedness and profanity. Fallen stars were stars never but in appearance. To lose both life and leaf is a dreadful symptom; John xv. 6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Another evidence is,

2. When some lusts are maintained in Christ's room, as when an adulterous woman takes another man instead of her husband. There are some lusts from which the heart is never loosed, right eyes they cannot part with; this is secret apostacy from the Lord: Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." When the Lord offers himself to sinners, he says, if you will take me, let these go their way. Some enter into a marriage-covenant with the Lord, but they give their hearts to other lovers, Psalm xiv. 4, (quoted before). This is hypocritical dealing with God, which is a disease in the vitals of religion, Psalm lxxviii. 37, (quoted above). Another evidence is,

3. Persons making their covenant with the Lord, a cover to their sloth, and a pander to their lusts. It is sad work which persons make of covenanting, when it serves only to conjure their consciences, who hence can sleep more securely in their sins. Many are never more light, vain, and frothy, than after such a work; a most shrewd sign of a whorish disposition: Prov. vii. 14, "I have peace-offerings with me. This day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face." The covenant of God is a covenant of peace and war, which inclines the sinner to be at peace with the Lord's friends, and at war with his enemies. It makes the soul to say to former lusts, I have learned from the gospel, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Tit. ii. 12. Hence, Christ no sooner enters the heart, but he comes as Captain of the Lord's host; and the person's heart thus becomes the seat of war: Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other." And these lusts which were formerly gold chains, are now turned into heavy iron fetters: Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—Another evidence is,

4. The barrenness of the lives of professors, nothing of the fruits of holiness appearing in their lives. We are, Rachel-like, barren, having no more but the leaves of a profession, the performance of external duties, to give us the name of Christians. Alas! fire from

heaven seems to have blasted many of us, and the curse of the Lord is as a worm at our root. Married to the Lord, and yet barren, is a contradiction, Rom. vii. 4. For the very end of this marriage is, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. Where the soul is joined to the Lord, it is made the habitation of the Spirit: and this is that which produces the fruits of holiness, Eph. v. 9, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

Here some may say, Alas! this speaks death to me, for do what I will, the weeds in the cursed soil of my heart suffers no fruit to appear there. To such I answer.—There is no fruit which grows in the heart of a believer in the world, but it has a weed of corruption by the side of it; their faith is marked with unbelief, their hope with diffidence, their very sincerity with hypocrisy. But are you at pains to pluck up these? If you should look into a garden, and saw nothing but weeds in it, yet if ye saw the gardener weeding it, you would conclude there must be something else there; so in this case. Will you see if there be any thriving of undergrowth in your hearts, if you be growing downwards in humility, self-loathing, self-denial, depending and cleaving more from a sense of need to the Lord? Eph. iv. 15, 16. Barren trees use not to have their branches hanging down to salute the ground, unless they be broken off by a violent wind.—Another evidence is,

5. The having no communication of the life of grace from Christ to the soul: John xiv. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Food and raiment are what every soul married to the Lord get from him. If the soul be truly united to Christ, it will partake of the root and sap of the vine: John vi. 57, "He that eateth me, saith Jesus, even he shall live by me." True faith opens a way for a stream of blood to run through the heart, by which the soul is purged and quickened. The blood of Jesus "purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. But, alas! the faith of many is like a pipe laid short of the fountain, and so brings none of the water of life into the soul. Many covenant with the Lord as the seven women, Isa. iv. 1, who take hold of one man, as it is there said, they will be called by his name; for so is Christ's spouse, in token of her marriage-relation, she loseth her name, and takes her husband's, Isa. xlv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." This will take away their reproach before the world, and it will do much to silence the blustering tongue of an ill-natured conscience. Yea, but after all this, they will eat their own bread, Isa. iv. 1. They will live upon their own stock of natural and acquired abilities, for they are not, as in Matth. iii. 5, "poor in spirit." They come not, as true believers, with a

weak soul to a strong God, an empty vessel to a full fountain. Thus does the true believer, who says, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." But the other will live on their lusts; Christ gives rest to their consciences, and their lusts give rest to their hearts; he shall bear up their hopes, and their lusts shall satisfy their desires.—They will wear their own apparel. Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Their duties make a great figure in their own eyes, and therefore are cyphers in God's account. Hence the more they do and the better they do, the more they are in conceit with themselves, and the further from Christ. It is quite contrary with true covenanters; Phil. iii. 3, "They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:" Rev. ii. 14, "They wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb."—We shall only add as an evidence,

Lastly, The having no contentment in Christ alone. Where the soul heartily closes with Christ, he is to the soul a covering to the eyes: Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Hence the triumph of faith, even when all external things fail; Hab. iii. 17, "I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." But, alas! how many of us have no comfort, but when the cisterns of creature-comforts are running full! how few arrive at the height of rejoicing in the Lord, when these cisterns are dried up! Matth. xiii. 45, 46. Every person's house stands upon two props, Christ and the creature, but the weight lies only upon one of them. Take away the world from the believer, he stands firm on the rock Christ; take away the world from the hypocrite, and all falls down together. A person may bear to have some branch of his comforts cut off; but when God strikes at the root of creature-comforts, then may the hypocrite say, Thou hast taken away my gods, and what have I more? Some can endure any thing but poverty, for covetousness reigns in them; others any thing but disrespect, for pride is their idol.

Here again some may say, If this be an evidence, we know not who will make sure work, for many time gracious persons are as much, if not more, cast down with the loss of creature-comforts, than others; To this I answer, No doubt gracious souls will sometimes be more joyful on the receipt of a temporal mercy, and more cast down on the loss of them, than others: for the chief thing

which affects him is the face of God appearing in it, either as favourable or frowning; so that they will be ready to say on such an occasion, as in Gen. xxxiii. 10, "For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me." And this will make a mole-hill mercy or cross appear like a mountain. The godly in this case fetch their comfort from the Lord, others fetch theirs from something else in the world; when one stream runs dry, they go to another, like the prodigal before he came home. The drying up of the streams sends the gracious soul to the fountain.

We now proceed,

II. To shew when covenanting is not heart-work, but a trifling business.—It is so,

1. When the soul is not divorced from sin. The heart is naturally glewed to sin, and it is impossible that the heart can at once be both for the Lord and lusts, Matth. vi. 24. The first marriage must be made void before a second can be made sure. They must have their covenant with their lusts broken, who will have their covenant with the Lord sure; Hos. xiv. 8, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Living lusts and the living Lord will not both get the throne of the heart. In the day of espousals, when Christ gets the crown, lusts get the cross. Many will be in suit of the heart, and the heart for a time may be halting betwixt two; but in a covenanting day with the Lord, all others must be discharged; Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter! and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." Here some may inquire, How may a person know if their heart be divorced from sin? Answ. That which makes the man and his lusts one, is the greedy grip which the heart takes of sin, it is the heart cleaving to its lusts: Jer. viii. 5, "Why then is the people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." The heart and affections in sin are like the hot iron, where the iron and the fire are very close together. The man's lusts are to him like a leg or an arm which is knit to the body with joints and bands. Now, where the heart is divorced, it loaths that sin which before it loved. Though sin cleaves to the man, yet he cleaves not to it, Rom. vii. 17—22. Never was the captive more desirous to be loosed of his bands, than that soul to be free from sin. Like a weak honest virgin, though it cannot shake itself loose of its grips, yet it would be content if one would set it free. Solemn covenanting is trifling,

2. When the soul is not divorced from the law, Rom. viii. 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 raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God." Legal professors do but trifle with the Lord, and never make heart-work of covenanting with him. They may bind themselves faster and faster to duties, but there is no engaging their heart to the Lord of duties ; they are as they who would draw up with the handmaid instead of the mistress ; and do but bind themselves to the work of spinning out their own ruin out of their own bowels. There is a generation who get some convictions of their misery by sin, the law comes and takes them by the throat, and then they cry, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Hence they bestir themselves, and fall a trading to gain something for heaven and eternal life ; they set about secret duties, attending public ordinances, and take the sacrament, and the effect of all is but to wreath their necks faster in the yoke of law-bondage, and to remove themselves farther from Christ. This is but trifling.—If it be inquired, How may one know if they be divorced from the law ? you have the word, Gal. ii. 19, " For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The law comes home to the soul with such force and power, that it cuts off all hopes of the soul's ever mending itself by its works ; makes the soul see its utter emptiness and weakness ; and hence it dies off, and lies at the foot of free grace, with that prayer in its mouth, Jer. xxxi. 18, " Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God." Then Christ's blood is the soul's only refuge for guilt, Christ's Spirit for holiness ; and the soul will have no peace but what comes from this blood ; while many instead of this, lick themselves whole of their wounds by confession, mourning, prayer for pardon, and engaging not to do so any more. But it is quite different from this, when, as above, the Spirit of Christ leads his divorced bride out of the house of her former husband to Jesus himself.—It is so,

3. When the soul comes not heartily and freely to the Lord in his covenant, Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. The Lord will not meet that soul. He cares not for persons giving the hand, when they do not give him their hearts. Indeed this is a covenant which speaks out the extreme naughtiness of men's hearts, by their coming into it grudgingly and per force. The sacrifice that is dragged to the altar, will not be accepted, it will run away from it again. It will be like the strong bough which is forcibly bowed, which will soon fly back. When the Lord comes to a soul, he deals with the heart. He touches the heart, as he touched the hearts of Saul's companions, 1 Sam. x. 26 ; Jer. xxxi. 3, " The Lord hath appeared to me of old,

saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." There is grace in the Lord's lips, heavenly rhetoric to catch a sinner's affections, Psalm xlv. 2. When the Spirit of the Lord pours in overcoming grace, then the man pours out his heart before him, Psalm lxii. 8. Thus the people become willing in the day of his power, Psalm cx. 3. Here we may shortly state and consider two cases :—

CASE 1. What shall become of those, then, who are driven to the Lord by terror ? I answer, Those who are only driven by terror, they will even leave him again when the terror is over, for terrors will break a heart of stone, but will not melt it. At the same time, terror may begin the work, which love will crown : Hos. ii. 14, "Therefore, behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." When the Lord is to match with sinners, they are bold and perverse, they will not speak to him, till he has shot an arrow into their flesh, till he has made them prisoners of war ; and then, when he has them in chains, he makes love to them. He first drives the sinner, and then he draws him like Noah's dove into the ark, Gen. viii. 9. The Lord sets the avenger of blood in pursuit of the poor criminal, he with a heavy heart leaves his own city, and his old acquaintances, and flees for his bare life to the city of refuge, to which he has no inclination, but *must do* is a great thing. When he comes to the gates, and sees the beauty of the place, the excellencies and loveliness of the city charm him ; then he says, This is my rest, here will I dwell.

CASE 2. I often find, when I am to go to the Lord's table, a great backwardness to the duty. What should be done in this case ? I answer, There is a great difference betwixt a man's turning his back and running away from his friend, and a sickly man's coming slowly to him. And if I might be allowed so to speak, I should distinguish between a backward heart, and a backwardness upon the heart ; Matth. xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation ; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." A backward heart is a foolish heart, and will make sad work of a communion ; Prov. xvii. 16, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it ?" I wish the Lord may turn this people from the Lord's table, till he has turned their hearts back to himself ; or else, when they have put their hands to the plough, they will after all leave it, and injure religion more than if they had never meddled with it. But for others, our Master allows you to come as you are able, with your burden upon your back, and lay it down at his feet ; Matth. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give

you rest. Psalm. lxy. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." The great Physician knows very well his patient comes with heart and good will, though his sickness and indisposition makes him come with a slow pace. It is trifling,

4. When the soul comes to the Lord in his covenant for peace to their consciences, but not for victory over their lusts. Many come to the Lord, as a sick man to the physician, to cure him of his wounds, but not to live upon his charges; Psalm lxxviii. 34, "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God." They have use for the blood, not for the water, which came from the side of Jesus. This is but half-work, not heart-work. Enemies to the spirit of holiness are enemies to Christ. I never think it the best frame for a communion table when people sit down at the Lord's table chiefly for peace and comfort. A view of the King, a transforming sight which might strengthen the soul, to have this before our eyes sitting down at the feast, would certainly be most safe. To get a touch of the hem of Christ's garment, for stopping the issue of sin, will be salutary indeed. It is so,

5. When the soul accepts of conditional promises, but does not accept of and receive the Lord himself in absolute promises. This is to agree upon the less points of the covenant, and to neglect the main point, Heb. viii. 10. The great thing God offers in the gospel is Christ. He is a foolish man that would claim the benefit of the contract, while he neglects to marry the woman. It is a dreadful thing to turn the covenant of grace into a mere servile or mere social covenant, as passes betwixt neighbouring independent states. It is most properly a marriage-covenant, where the soul first takes the Lord himself, and then looks for the benefits accruing to it by the happy match. Natural men fancy a very easy covenant in,—“He that confesseth his sins, shall find mercy.—Call on me, and I will answer thee.—What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”—He will accept the will for the deed; not considering that all the promises are yea and amen in Christ; and suppose they could perform the condition of these promises, yet they could not have benefit by them while they have not the Lord Christ, dwelling, living, and reigning in them.—It is solemn trifling,

Lastly, When there is not an absolute resignation of the will to the will of the Lord. This is to have reserves in our covenanting with the Lord. Man's will is the great rebel against the Lord, and must, if we make sure work, be bound hand and foot in a covenanting day. There must be a double resignation, (1.) To the precep-

tive will: Rom. vi. 17, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you." The soul must no more snarl with duty, but be content to take on the yoke of Christ's commands. And they who are not content to stand and receive the same commands from mount Zion, which were thundered into their hearts from mount Sinai before, their hearts are not for this work. (2.) There must be resignation to the providential will of God. It has been long a question between the Lord and you, who shall be master of your process, who shall carve out your lot? Are you come to a point now? even to that point? Psalm xlvii. 4. "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." It is well, you are wise; for our own will, and nothing else, is our wreck.

We should now,

III. Shew how people come to make solemn covenanting but a trifling business. But for this, see the third head of doctrine first.

We proceed, then,

IV. To shew the danger of trifling, and not making heart-work of this weighty business.—This will appear if we consider,

1. That the Lord rejects the work: Mal. i. 13, "Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts, and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hands? saith the Lord." Whatever pains persons may be at about covenanting, the Lord has no regard to it while it is not heart-work, Isa. i. 11. It is true, you may even sign the contract, but the Lord will not subscribe it, seeing it has not the upright consent of your hearts, Psalm l. 16, 17. You may expect the entertainment recorded, Matth. xxii. 12, "Friend, how camest thou in thither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."—Consider,

2. That it puts men more securely in Satan's grips than before. In this sense that holds true which you have in Isa. xxviii. 22, "Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." Publicans and sinners will enter before these. Such are twice dead, where the devil goes out and returns with seven other spirits worse than himself. The last end of such a person is worse than his beginning.—Consider,

3. That it exposes men to spiritual strokes; Jer. xlviii. 10, "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully." Deadening strokes. These are silent arrows which fly from the hand of God into the soul without noise; Isa. vi. 10, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;

lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Sometimes men are like Saul among the prophets, but afterwards they are knocked in the head by the secret judgment of God, because of their hypocritical dealing with him, it may be at a communion table, in so much that they have never a day to do well after; and from that time God answers them not, but they live and rot above the ground; their hearts are deadened, their affections dozed, their gifts withered, and their souls blasted; John xv. 6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Quickening strokes, whereby the man is dreadfully alarmed, the conscience is awakened, and made like Mount Sinai, where nothing but fire and smoke appear. God takes the filthy rags of their mock covenanting, wraps them in brimstone, and sets them in fire about the sinner's ears. Their wounds which were scurfed over bleed more dreadfully, while the plaster they made will not stick. Besides these, there are strokes upon their bodies. As Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1, 2. A wrong look into the ark cost the men of Bethshemesh dear, 1 Sam. vi. 19. God smote Uzzah, and he died by the ark, 2 Sam. vi. 7. And the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Consider,

Lastly, That however quietly people may get it carried in life, it will bring them a sad disappointment at death. The house built on the sand fell by the storm, and great was its fall. A great fall from high hopes into deep despair; like the foolish virgins, who were unexpectedly shut out.

We are now,

V. To apply the subject. Which we shall do only in an use of exhortation.

I would then exhort one and all of you to make heart-work and sure work in your covenanting with the Lord, and not to trifle in so solemn a business. You have heard the danger you incur by trifling with it. But perhaps some will say with a whole heart, that as they are resolved to keep themselves out of harm's way, they will not come to the Lord's table. To this I would answer, Well, will you not enter into covenant with the Lord? if not, then you will never see heaven; Eph. ii. 12, "Strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Where will you appear at the great day? Psalm l. 1—5. You must take hold of the Lord's covenant, or be damned. Sirs, if ye enter at all into this work, my exhortation reaches you. You may trifle with God upon your knees, as well as at his table. And if you be not

minded to refuse this covenant, why stand you back from the seals of it? why do you not prepare yourselves for it? why slight you this love token of our dying Lord? I would think if you were in earnest for the covenant, you would not slight the seal of it. Make sure work then. To induce you to be serious in this weighty work, I would mention and urge the following motives.

MOX. 1. You have need to make sure work, for you have deceitful hearts to deal with, Jer. xvii. 19. Let not the bands be put on slightly, or it will soon slip them all. Therefore dig deep, by serious solemn examination of your consciences before the Lord, that you may build as on a rock.

MOX. 2. Consider the weight of the business; the business of salvation, or damnation, is not a matter to trifle with. Sirs, life and death are before you. Your eternal state lies at the stake. I beseech you then, by all that weight of glory that awaits the saints, as you would not ruin your souls which a thousand worlds cannot repair, for the loss of the soul cannot be made up, that you seriously consider the business.

MOX. 3. Consider the Lord is not trifling, but is in good earnest with you; "O that there were such a heart in them!" There is a match proposed betwixt the King of glory and the daughter of Zion, the bridegroom is willing; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." There is nothing wanting on his part; Matt. xxii. 4, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage." How passionately does he call for her consent in the text: And now, when the Lord is thus offering himself to you, why will you refuse or trifle with him? Here some may propose this,

OBJECTION. This is a flourish which may pass well enough in a pulpit. But, O! if the Lord were really offering himself to me, I would never refuse. To this I answer, The offer is real, though ministerial. We have our commission from our Lord to bear us out in it, and he would do the same if he were here bodily present; 2 Cor. v. 10, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Hence, in the days of his flesh, he offered himself both to those that did, and those that did not receive him. Consider, he said to his disciples, "He that heareth you, heareth me." We are the friends of the Bridegroom; as Abraham's servants, we are come to bring you to our Master's son. What would you have to make the offer real, if you may not take it as such from the mouth of his messengers? Would you have him leave his glory a second time, and come in person to make the offer? Or would you have him come down in his glory? If so, you know not

what you ask. It would set you better to do as Abigail, bow yourself to the earth, and humbly accept of the offer, 1 Sam. xxv. 40, 41. So real is the offer, that if you refuse, ye will be damned for the refusal; Mark xvi. 15, 16, "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." John xvii. 20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." See then what ye do. It is a serious business on the Lord's part, and there is a prize in your hands, which you would do well diligently to improve. Does he indeed offer himself to me? do you say? notwithstanding my unworthiness. Yea, to you, we make no scruple to offer him particularly to every one of you, the vilest of you all; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It is not unworthiness, but unwillingness, that will mar the bargain; "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is athirst say, Come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

A RICH FEAST PREPARED FOR HUNGRY SOULS.*

SERMON VII.

ISA. xxv. 6,

And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

THE prophets of old prophesied of the grace of Christ which should come unto us, 1 Pet. i. 10; and of these none more than our evangelical prophet, who, in the verse before us, foretells a rich spiritual entertainment which should be made by the Saviour Jesus Christ unto a starving world of prodigal sinners, reduced by their extravagance into extreme want. Here there is to be observed,

1. The Maker and Master of the feast, the Lord himself; it is a royal feast, with which the King of Zion entertains his own subjects. Particularly, it is the Lord Christ, the Son of God, who, pitying the

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