

request to you, that ye will take this method this day for your security against the day of wrath. And if I should never have another occasion of this nature to speak unto you, I would leave it with you, That this, and this only, is the way to be secured against the day of wrath.

THE SIN OF PEOPLE'S FORSAKING GOD AND BETAKING THEMSELVES TO THE CREATURE IN HIS STEAD.*

JER. ii. 13,

For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

THIS text is ushered in with a strange preface, wherein the heavens are called to stand amazed, to be filled with horror, and to dry up. Why, what is the matter? the sin and folly of Israel. "My people have committed two evils," &c. In which words there is,

First, A general charge against them: they have done "two evils," two ill things. Why, two is not many; yea, but they are two leading ill things, two mother evils. They are two fountain-sins, each of them casting out their thousands, as a fountain doth her waters. They are enough to overwhelm them with sins and sorrows. And the evils are the greater, that they are "my people," in covenant with me, that have done them. It is not the isles of Chittim, nor Kedar; but Israel.

Secondly, A particular condescension on these evils, these fountain-evils.

1st, Deserting of God: "They have forsaken me," left me, and gone away from me. I am their King and Lord, and they have shaken off their subjection to me; their Head and Husband, and they have run away from me. I am their confederate, who took them into covenant with me; and they have broken the bands, and burst the yoke. I am their God in covenant, whom they have forsaken.

2dly, Taking up with the creature. They have betaken themselves to the creature in my room and stead. They have "hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (*Heb.* for to cut out, &c.) Thus they have made an exchange. They have

* Several sermons, preached at Ettrick in the year 1725.

left me, to go to them ; like traitorous subjects, casting off their rightful lord, for an usurper ; an unfaithful wife, deserting her husband, for her adulterer ; a wretched creature, deserting his God, for an idol. So here,

1. There is something supposed. It is supposed,

(1.) That Israel was no more self-sufficient than any other people under heaven. They were not able to satisfy themselves from themselves ; they were as much in need of supply for the satisfaction and rest of their hearts, as ever a thirsty man was of drink to refresh him. And as proud as they were, they behoved to hang on about some door or other for their supply ; either God's or the creature's.

(2.) That, in this their necessitous case, God took them home to his house, as one would take in a beggar in rags, and set him down with the children : and told them, they should not want, if they would stay with him, Deut. xxxii. 10, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness : he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." He called them his people, took them into the covenant, and set them down at the fountain-head, the well-spring of mercy and goodness.

2. There is something expressly declared. It is so declared,

(1.) That Israel had made a wilful exchange of his condition, cast himself out of God's house, into the devil's common again ; "changed his glory, for that which will not profit ;" forsaken the God that took him in, and gone back to the empty creature, where he was before.

(2.) That Israel had sinned and played the fool egregiously in making this exchange. And accordingly his sin and folly is here proclaimed. And,

1. Israel was a holy people ; but the text proclaims them a sinful people with a witness. Their forsaking him "the fountain of living waters," and betaking themselves to "broken cisterns," are signal evils. There is a heap of evil in each of them. They could not have made a worse choice, to the dishonour of God, and to make his name to be blasphemed among the heathen. So they affronted their God.

2. Israel was a wise people ; but the text proclaims them fools with a witness ; that were as blind to their own interest, as they were unfaithful to God's honour. Men's wisdom or folly appears in their bargains : let us see what a blind exchange they had made. They had exchanged,

1st, A spring-well, for cisterns. A cistern is a hollow place cut out in the earth, in wood, or stone, for receiving and keeping rain water, or water otherwise put into it ; whereas the fountain or

spring hath the water from itself. God in Christ is the fountain, all-sufficient in himself. All the creatures are but cisterns ; if there is no water brought into them from heaven, or from the spring, they are dry. Who then would exchange a fountain living and springing, for a cistern ?

2dly, A fountain made ready to their hand, for cisterns that were to be hewed out. Happiness is ready in God for us, and we need only to draw out by faith the waters of consolation. But O what hard work is it, to hew out the cisterns of created enjoyment ! It is desirable to have comfort ready. Who then will be so foolish, as to exchange a fountain made ready to their hand, for cisterns that require much labour to hew them out ?

3dly, One spring-well, sufficient for all their needs, for many cisterns. There is no one cistern that will do one's business ; when the man has hewed out one cistern, the water is lacking and unpleasant there, and he must hew out another, and so on. And thus the soul once forsaking God, becomes restless ; there is no end of cisterns. It is a great conveniency, to have what we need in one place, and not to be obliged to go here and there for it. Who then would forsake God, the fountain of all blessings, and betake themselves to the creatures, which though tried one after another, cannot supply their wants ?

4thly, Fresh and sweet waters of the spring, for the dead un-savoury waters of the cistern, *i. e.* springing waters, bubbling up through the earth, cool, and fresh, for the standing, stinking waters of the cisterns. Who then will be so foolish, as to forsake the living waters, and betake themselves to the stinking waters of the cisterns ?

Lastly, A spring-well, for broken and cracked cisterns, that let the water through them, and cannot hold it in. So that when the man comes to drink at his cistern, for his thirst ; behold there was a crack in the cistern, and the water is all gone ; and there is nothing left but sediment, mud, and mire.

The scope and substance of these words may be taken up in these two doctrines :—

DOCTRINE I. Forsaking of God in Christ, and betaking one's self to the creature in his stead, are two ill, signally ill things.

DOCT. II. To forsake God in Christ, and take the creature in his stead, is a wretched exchange.

I return to the first of these, viz :—

DOCT. I. Forsaking of God in Christ, and betaking one's self to the creature in his stead, are two ill, signally ill things.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall consider the two branches of it separately, viz :—1. The forsaking of God in Christ; and, 2. The betaking one's self to the creature in God's stead.

First, As to the *first* of these ill things, the forsaking of God in Christ, we shall consider,

1st, The object forsaken.

2dly, How sinners forsake God in Christ.

3dly, Why they forsake him.

4thly, The ill of this practice.

Lastly, Make application.

I. *First*, We shall consider the object forsaken. It is not simply God, but God in Christ: for the object in the text is "the fountain of living waters" to sinners, to refresh them, and satisfy their souls: but God out of Christ, an absolute God, is a consuming fire to them. We can no way, according to the scripture, conceive of God, as "a fountain of living waters" to us, but in Christ Jesus, Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness." John iv. 10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." It is true, there is an infinite fulness of goodness, mercy, and grace, in the nature of God; but to sinners it would have been a sealed fountain for ever, had not the Mediator interposed. So there is,

1st, A forsaking of God simply as God. Thus Adam, falling from his integrity, forsook God, shaking off the yoke of obedience to his Creator. This was a horrid evil, and it lies on all men in their natural state. They are in a state of desertion, having left God, Eph. ii. 12, "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." The first covenant tie is no longer able to hold them with him. In this sense, the Pagans have forsaken God, who never heard of Christ.

2dly, A forsaking of God in Christ. And thus only his visible church and people called by his name, are capable of forsaking him; as the text hints. He becomes their God in a visible church state, bidding them welcome to all his fulness, for the supply of their needs and making over the same to them in the gospel offer: they professing their acceptance, by receiving the seal or seals of his covenant.

So the God forsaken by the hearers of the gospel, must be considered,

1. As God in our nature, for communion with guilty us, Matth. i.

23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted is, God with us." We could have no communion with an absolute God: the rays of his Majesty would have burnt us up, as fire does the dry stubble. But he clothed himself with our nature, that he might be a refreshing spring to us, 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," &c. The rock of ages was found in our wilderness, and there he was smitten with Moses' rod, and the waters gushed out, the living waters, for us. He tabernacled among us.

2. As God in our nature, ready to communicate his fulness to us, for making us happy in time and eternity, John iv. 10, forecited. The spring is not to dig now; it is digged already, and running, that "whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. The invitation is given out, to come and drink, John vii. 37. All the saints have drunk, but the spring is running as much as ever for us.

3. *Lastly*, As a God we have professed to betake ourselves to for our happiness, Jer. xvi. 19, "O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." We have found the scorching thirst that hath seized us, through the disorder brought into our souls by Adam's fall; and have professed to look for our relief in God only; and so have sit down by the well.

II. The second thing on this head is, How sinners forsake God in Christ? Sinners forsake him,

STEP 1. Lowering their esteem of him, the value and honour they had for him sinking low, Psal. l. 21, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." It is the high esteem of Christ that brings sinners to him; and as that sinks, they will go away, John vi. 68, "Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." The mystery of Christ is ready to be despised by proud nature, because there is no seeing of the glory of it without a peculiar light. Hence God in Christ is a stumbling stone to the blind world, Matth. xi. 6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." And a stroke in the eye, whereby one sees no beauty in him, leads here.

STEP 2. The heart's falling off its rest in him, and turning restless, so that the fulness of a God cannot quiet it, Isa. xxx. 15, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." If the wife begin to harbour a discontent as to her husband, she is in a fair way to forsake him; and the

heart that cannot be content with the fountain, will forsake it, to hew out cisterns for itself; when the view of the broad covenant, with all its benefits, is not sufficient to lay bands on the heart, and make it to say, "This is all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, it is as good as gone from the Lord.

STEP 3. Ceasing to cleave to him by faith, and letting go believing gripes of the promise, Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." It is by faith one depends on and hangs about him for happiness and satisfaction. It is the hand by which his children hold him, Cant. iii. 4. It is the eye which they are to keep on him for the supply of all their wants, Isa. xlv. 22. While they do so, they are safe; and the fountain will spring forth to them; as in the case of Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 26, when he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" and in the case of the Syro-phenician woman, Mark vii. 24—30. But as soon as they let down their hands, and keep their eyes no more upon him for their supply, they are forsaking him. In the next place, they will be found,

STEP 4. Looking out some other way, for something to rest their hearts in. And then they are on their way away from him, Heb. iii. 12. Unbelief says, One may long wait at this fountain, ere he get wherewith to quench his thirst; then he begins to think of hewing out cisterns. It says the promises of a rest are but fair words, not to be trusted to; then they are for turning back to Egypt again and think they must seek a seen good, Psalm iv. 6, "There be many that say, who will shew us any good?" Thus the restless heart, giving over to seek its rest and satisfaction in God, goes to the creature to find in it what it cannot find in God.

STEP 5. Growing remiss in duties, and slighting opportunities of communion with God; a form of duties may be kept up, but the heart is away, what avail they? Cant. iii. 1, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not." Prayer is posted over; for it is for fashion's cause, rather than from faith or hope of gaining thereby, that they seek him at all: and by their coldrifeness in their addresses, they court a denial. At sermons, they are not all there, their heart is away after some one idol of jealousy or other, like those spoken of, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Satan strikes in, picks up the word as it is sown, and fills their hearts otherwise, Prov. v. 14, "I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly."

And Sabbaths become a burden, like those who said, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" Amos viii. 5.

STEP 6. Having no regard to please him in their ordinary walk, Ezek. xxiii. 35, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms." Hence they are in no concern to acknowledge God in their ways, to seek counsel of God in particular cases, and to carry along with them a regard to his glory in all things; but are like the princes of Israel, Josh. ix. 14, that "took of the Gibeonites, victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." So, if they do a good thing, it is not because it pleases God, but because it pleaseth themselves; and if they do evil, and are touched for it, it is not because it is displeasing to him.

STEP 7. Laying aside the word for a rule, and regulating themselves by another standard, Psalm cxix. 53, "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law." Satan shuffles in the course of the world, the voice of the multitude, instead of the Bible into their hand; and it is enough for them that they see a throng in the way before them, though they hear not the voice behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left," Isa. xxx. 21. But God speaks to us by his word, and binds us to it, Isa. viii. 20, "To the law and to the testimony," &c; and it is the appointed means of communion betwixt God and us; the rule of our obedience, and must be the reason of it; and it is the appointed channel of influences, Isa. lix. 21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." So whoso forsake the word, forsake God.

STEP 8. Forsaking his people for their companions, Prov. xiii. 20, "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Like as it is with the sinner returning unto God, he turns his back on the world lying in wickedness, and forsakes his former companions in sin, Psalm xlv. 10, for there is no going in the way of life otherwise, Prov. ix. 6; so men forsaking the Lord, are ready to forsake his people too. Indeed men may keep by God's people, and yet forsake God; but none can forsake the people of God, and not forsake God himself; more than they can throw off a living body, and yet hold by the head.

STEP 9. Forsaking ordinances, and the communion of saints there-

in. Ordinances are the trysting-places for the meeting betwixt God and sinners; he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks: he will account himself forsaken by people's turning their back on the trysting-place where he is to be met with. Mark Heb. x. 25, 26, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another. for if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." He hath sent out his messengers with an awful certification, Luke x. 16, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Therefore says Jeremiah, chap. xvii. 13, "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me, shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters." It is an ill sign in a wife, when she is not to be found in the house of her husband; and of one forsaking God, when his feet are giving up treading his courts.

STEP 10, *lastly*, Throwing away the form of religion, casting off the mask, and giving the swing to their lusts. Thus the forsaking of God is completed, 2 Pet. ii. 22, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Then the devil re-enters with seven worse than himself, into where he had gene out. Thus men come to the end of this wretched rout. Yet even in this case all are not alike. Some give up themselves but to some one abomination or other; others give up themselves to all manner of abominations that come in their way, swimming in a sea of wickedness, as the former in a pool. Some again continue indifferent as to others yet in the way of God: others are possessed with a rancour and spite against the way of God, and those that follow it; so in times of peace, they are cruel mockers, and will do any ill turn they can; and in time of the church's trouble, will turn down-right persecutors.

III. The *third* thing is, Why they forsake him? how it comes they do so?

1. There is a natural bent to apostacy in all men; saints and sinners, Hos. xi. 7, "And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." In saints it stirs, and often carries them very fearful lengths, as it did in Peter; in sinners it reigns, and so may carry them the full length. This woful set of heart is natural to us, Gen. viii. 21,—"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Our hearts, by Adam's fall, have got a bias to departing from God: there is need to take heed to it.

2. Many were never truly joined to the Lord, though they seemed to be so: so having never knit with him, no wonder they fall away from him; 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us." Professors, strangers to saving faith, in whom dwells not the Spirit of God, but of the world, lie fair to make apostates; Heb. x. 39, "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." An error in the first taking up of religion, often makes it come to a sorry and shameful account at the long-run; men building without a foundation, Luke xiv. 28—30.

3. They often have some idol of jealousy secretly reserved, when they are at their best; and that upon a proper occasion does the business; like the young man in the gospel, that went away from Christ grieved, because "he had great possessions," Mark x. 22. It was not without reason that Pharaoh would have Israel leave their cattle: for then he knew this would bring them back again. One son of a stranger was the death of Gideon's seventy sons. One just unmortified, and secretly spared, will be the death of a thousand good motions and inclinations. That proves the man's snare. So Judas' covetousness was sometimes peeping out, while he was following Christ; at last it broke out like a flood, and carried him quite away to betray his Master.

4. Their not pressing in to the sweet of religion, in an experimental feeling of the power of it. It is not for nought that exhortation is given with so much earnestness; Psalm xxxiv. 8, "O taste, and see that the Lord is good!" Experience is the best way to keep a sinner with God; he feels how good it is "to draw near to God," Psalm lxxiii. 28. Disappointment causes forsaking, as in the case of Israel in the wilderness. And they who press not in to the inner court of religion by faith, hope, and diligence, but satisfy themselves with the form of it, cannot miss these fatal disappointments.

5. The want of a living principle of grace in the heart, that may bear out in all changes of one's condition; Psalm lxxviii. 37, "For their heart was not right with him." It fares with sinners as with springs and pools; when there is a shower from the clouds, the pools are full; but then when drought comes, the pool dries up, there being no spring in it. But the spring-well bears out then as at other times. The newness of religion serves people a while, to keep the affections astir; but when that is over, and there is no living principle of grace, the affections are lost, and religion

turns unsavoury. They cool like a stone taken from the fire, and wither like a branch that takes not with the stock.

6. Unwatchfulness. Thereby men are stolen off their feet, Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life." Considering that we have a deceitful heart within, an ensnaring world without, and a busy devil going about us, no man can keep his feet without watching. By unwatchfulness there is a breach made in one's case, the conscience is defiled, and the heart is deadened; Eccl. x. 18, "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through;" and no care being taken to make up the gap, it grows still wider and wider: a strangeness gets in betwixt God and the soul; and that not being removed, they even wear out of acquaintance.

7. A conceit of being able to live without him; Jer. ii. 31, "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?"

8. *Lastly*, ill company carries many away from God; 1 Cor. xv. 33, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Joash kept the way of God as long as his good tutor Jehoiada lived; but when he was gone, and fell into the ill company of the princes, he went quite wrong, 2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18. Many an apostate has ensnaring company made; and therefore we find God's people resolute to cleave to the Lord, will beware of it, as of a pest-house; Psalm cxix. 115, "Depart from me, ye evil-doors; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

IV. The *fourth* thing here is, The ill, the ill of sin that is in forsaking God in Christ.

1. It is a downright perversion and deserting of the end of our creation. As God is the first cause of all things, so he is the chief and last end, whereunto all ought to have a tendency, Rom. xi. 36, "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things." When God made man, he gave him a disposition to bend towards him in all things, as his chief end; when he re-made the world in Christ, he set sinners on the same way again, Psalm cv. 4, "Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek his face evermore." To forsake him, then, is quite contrary to our chief and last end. And for a man to forsake God, is as much opposite to the order established in things at the creation, as if the sun should leave his giving light, and the earth its yielding its fruit to men; as if the fire should go downward and the waters run upwards, and the whole course of nature should be turned upside down.

2. There is in it a setting up another in the room of God ; therefore it is the first command, "Thou shalt have no other God." For what is the forsaking of God, but going away from him to another ? there is no mids : for seeking ourselves instead of God, is a deifying of self. So the scripture points it out as spiritual adultery, Ezek. xvi. 32 ; and idolatry, Phil. iii. 19. See it then as a pulling down of our sovereign Lord God from his throne over us, and setting up a creature in his room, to pay it that homage which we owe to him alone.

3. Fearful ingratitude for the greatest mercy and kindness, Jer. ii. 2, 12, "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wast after me in the wilderness ; in a land that is not sown. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord." God has condescended to vail himself with our flesh, that he might keep communion with us, with the safety of his honour ; "God was in Christ," that he might be a refreshing fountain to a starving world ; he has brought us to him by the gospel, to drink of the waters of his consolations, while many of the world have the fountain sealed to them. What monstrous ingratitude must it be for us to forsake him ! Jer. ii. 31, forecited.

4. Notorious unfaithfulness to our kindest Head and Husband ; Jer. ii. 20, "For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands, and thou saidst, I will not transgress : when upon every high hill, and under every green tree, thou wanderest, playing the harlot." We cannot forsake him, but we must be false to our profession, our solemn vows and engagements. Our forsaking of him is treachery with a witness, casting off the strongest bands taken on us with our own consent, to abide with him and cleave to him. It is an aggravation that is not in the devil's deserting him, nor the Pagans.

5. Notorious unfaithfulness to our own interest, and folly with a witness. It was a pertinent answer which Peter gave ; John vi. 68, "Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life." It were good for sinners under temptation to forsake God, to propose it to themselves, and stay till they get a satisfying answer. Will men forsake one they are with, if they cannot do better, or as well with another ? But we can never do as well with any other, 1 Sam. xii. 21, "Turn ye not aside from following the Lord : for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." Nay, whatsoever we go to, from God, will do us hurt, and not good, Ezek. xxix. 7. It is taking poison, leaving wholesome food. So those forsaking God sin against themselves, cutting the throat of their own interest, Prov. viii. 36, "But he that

sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul : all they that hate me, love death."

6. An affronting of God before the world, casting dishonour on him, bearing false witness against him ; Jer. ii. 31, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel ? a land of darkness ? wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee ?" That bears the language of their deserting to have been, that God had been to them as a wilderness. Those forsaking God are as the spies that brought up an ill report on the good land ; Rom. ii. 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you." What must the world say, seeing God's people forsake him, but that it is in vain to serve him, and that there is not that satisfaction and comfort to be found in him that the Word says there is ?

7. A practical commendation of the way of the world, contemning God, and seeking their happiness in things that are seen ; Prov. xxviii. 4, "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked : but such as keep the law, contend with them." Deserters of God do not only cease to give a testimony against the world lying in wickedness, but give testimony for them, as if "they only were the people, and wisdom would die with them." And thus they fly in the face of the testimony of God in the world.

8. It is a sinning against the remedy of sin, and makes one's case very hopeless ; Heb. x. 26, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." When man forsook God as God and his God in the first covenant, there was a way found for bringing him back to God ; 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ;" but if men shall forsake God in Christ, there is not another way to be expected for salvation. If the sinner fall at the Mediator's door, he must lie there, there is none to take him up. This is the last method of salvation ; those who spurn it cannot escape perishing.

9. *Lastly*, It is an opened sluice for all other sins. So the text holds it out as a mother-sin. The man that forsakes God, he exposes himself a prey to all temptations, to be picked up by the first funder, Prov. xxvii. 8, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest ; so is a man that wandereth from his place." He breaks off from communion with God in sanctifying, guiding, and strengthening influences ; his soul being rendered as a pipe laid short of the fountain. He casts off his guide and protector in the wilderness ; and no wonder to find him in all evil, who forsakes the fountain and only spring of goodness.

USE I. Then, let us be deeply humbled in the sense of our depart-

ures from the Lord, which we have had at any time in our life ; Jer. ii. 19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee ; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts." How often have our hearts been found in this way, gadding after other lovers ? Behold the wickedness, ingratitude, and unfaithfulness in it. What great lengths have we gone in affronting our God before the world, and causing his name to be blasphemed ? Matth. xviii. 7, "Wo unto the world because of offences ; for it must needs be that offences come ; but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh." It may be humbling to us,

1st, That we live in a land infamous for apostasies ; a covenanted land solemnly married to God, but which in a national capacity did forsake her covenanted God, pursuing even to death such as durst not go into the national apostasy. It is like, when God shall raise the process against the land for these things, it will be terrible, especially to those that are still forsaking him.

2dly, We live in a generation that is fast apostatizing, not going, but running away from God. The sluice of untenderness is opened among all ranks, wickedness abounds ; the current is so forcible, that it is taking away many, one after another, with it, stripping them of their form of godliness ; driving them into sinful courses that once a day would have said, "Am I a dog that I should do such things ?" And it is hard for any to keep their feet.

Let us be humbled under our own and the generation's forsaking of God, considering the dishonour to God thereby, and the danger to ourselves.

2. Beware of and watch against the beginnings of forsaking of God. We may apply that, Prov. xvii. 14, "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water ; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with." When the soul begins to decline from God, it is hard to say where it may stop ; but one step still makes way for another. I doubt not there are many, who, when they first left God, going out of his way, they did not think to have been so long away from him as they have been ; nor to have gone so far as they have gone. And it would have been a terror to them then, to have thought that they should run the length they are now at. But it is easier holding off the first step, than off the second, and so forward ; for men are like those going down a precipice, that cannot stop till they be at the bottom. Therefore watch against the beginnings, and "let him that standeth take heed lest he fall."

3. Ye that are far on, stop, and go no further ; 1 Pet. iv. 3, "For

the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," &c. Hold in time, lest ye run to the utmost, and lie at the end of it a sacrifice to your own wilfulness. God is calling you to return, and promising to take you home again; Jer. iii. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Are not your consciences convinced, that it was better with you before ye went away than it is now? say then as Hos. ii. 7, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." Proceed not then in your course, to make ill worse. Why will ye rush on "as the horse rusheth into the battle?" Jer. viii. 6.

4. *Lastly*, You forsakers of God, return, return; whatever length ye are gone, whatever step ye are in, return to God in Christ.

1st, Return by faith, and let the marriage-covenant betwixt Christ and you be renewed. There is access to it yet; Jer. iii. 1, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Many a time matters are gone such a length betwixt Christ and sinners solemnly espoused to him, that there must be as great a solemnity to the agreement and coming home again, as there was to the first taking them in; Rev. xix. 7, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

2dly, Return by repentance; Jer. xxxi. 19, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Return with the blush in your face, the tear in your eye, grief and sorrow in your heart, your hand smiting on your breast, and the rope of humiliation about your neck, for your going away. Rake through your departures, search your ways, and be converted from them. Many times matters go such a length in people's forsaking the Lord, that there must be a going over the road of conversion again, in the several steps of it, as at first, Matt. xviii. 3, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." There must be new conviction, compunction, humiliation, &c.

MOTIVE I. If ye will continue to forsake God, he will forsake you utterly, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. We may say, God does not quite forsake us, though we have forsaken him; he is still doing us good, filling our hearts with food and gladness. But that will not last always so; the God that now follows us with mercy, will forsake us too, and give up with us, 2 Chron. xv. 2, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

MOTIVE 2. Heavy will be your case, if God shall forsake you; Hos. ix. 12, "Yea, wo to them when I depart from them." It is comprized there in a word of two letters; but men and angels cannot sufficiently unfold the import of it. Saul got a taste of it in this world, and what a dreadful weight was it on him? 1 Sam. xxviii. 15, "And Saul answered, I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams." How much more dreadful will it be in another world?

MOT. 3. It is a hell by choice; and when it comes to be felt in its vigour, it will be nothing the easier, but the hotter, that it was your own choice. The sentence of damnation runs in these terms, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matth. xxv. 41.

Now men will not stay with him, they will be away. The sending them to hell will be a giving them their will; a forcing them to that in a penal way which is now their sinful choice.

MOT. 4. *Lastly*, The Lord calls you to return, and is courting you to come back. He needs us not; but he sees that we are ruined if we do not come back.

Secondly, As to the *second* evil, The betaking one's self to the creature in God's stead.

In speaking to this, let us consider,

1st, The object taken up with in God's stead.

2dly, How sinners take up with the creature in God's stead.

3dly, Why sinners take up with the creature in God's stead.

4thly, The ill of this practice.

Lastly, Improve the doctrine.

I. *First*, Let us consider *the object taken up with in God's stead*. It is the creature: A sorry exchange, Rom. i. 25. "They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." It has two names in scripture, a negative and a positive one.

1st, It is not God; Dent. xxxii. 21. "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God." This is the name of all the cisterns, of the whole creation, chosen in God's room. Whatever it is, whatever excellency be conceived in it, it is a not-god. They take it for a god, and so they take it for what it neither is nor can be; and so they cheat themselves. We may take up this name in these two syllables.

1. It cannot satisfy; Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" There are a great many empty spaces in the hungry

heart, and it cannot fill them up. God's name is *All-sufficient*, Gen. xvii. 1; *Heb. q. d.* that which is commensurable. Hereby he is distinguished from all not-god; none of them all will measure out, nor all of them together, with the necessities of any of us.

2. It cannot profit; 1 Sam. xii. 21, "And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." Whatever not-god one betakes himself to, it can not only not do him good enough, but it can do him no good; Jer. ii. 11, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit. Yea, it can do him no good, even though it were a whole world gained; Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Paul was not out in his reckoning, when he said, (Phil. iii. 8.) "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;—and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." A cistern of one's own hewing out for the fountain, is not only scant of water, but the little that is of it is naught.

2dly, It is the world, 1 John ii. 15; the great bulky vanity, Eccl. i. 2; the passing world, 1 John ii. 17; the present evil world, Gal. i. 4; that there is a curse upon, whereby it is doomed to be burnt to ashes, and so can neither last, nor satisfy in the time it does continue. It is a name consisting of three syllables.

1. "The lust of the flesh," 1 John ii. 16, *i. e.* things grateful to the vile body. There is nothing in it for a pure holy soul, but what is noisome to it; as appears from the entertainment it gave to Christ. But the vile world affords for the vile body the pleasures of eating and drinking, of fleshly lusts, luxurious ease. It has wherewith to gratify the senses of touching, tasting, and smelling. And though "the Lord is for the body," 1 Cor. vi. 13, and can and will gratify its senses more than ten thousand worlds; yet men forsake God, and take up with the world and its lusts of the flesh.

2. "The lust of the eyes," 1 John ii. 16, *i. e.* things grateful to the covetous eye; Psalm iv. 6, "Who will shew us any good?" There is nothing in it for the single eye but grievousness, which makes them cry, Hab. i. 3, and makes it a weary land. But it has fuel for feeding the vitiated lusting eye; it affords silver and gold, houses and lands, farms and merchandize, cloths and ornaments, pompous and gaudy sights and shows, husbands and wives, children and servants, &c. And though there is a perfection of beauty in God in Christ, while he is represented as fairer than the sons of men, Psalm xlv. 2, and altogether lovely, Cant. v. 16; yet he is forsaken for the

lust of the eyes the world affords ; while in the meantime it never satisfies the eye, Eccl. i. 8.

3. "The pride of life," 1 John ii. 16, *i. e.* things grateful to the vain mind. There is nothing in it for the pure mind, but what is vain, or else vile; 2 Cor. v. 4, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." Phil. i. 23, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." But it affords abundant entertainment for the vain mind ; airy honours, credit, reputation, and esteem for this and the other fancied or real excellency in a person ; a variety for entertaining the musical, light, or malicious ear ; airy castles enough, for the fancy to rove up and down in at large, in vain projects, and vile desires, and dreaming enjoyments ; and enough to busy the curious, while they live, if they were to live as long as Methuselah, that with all their learning and researches they shall never come to the end of. In God in Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3, full satisfaction for the mind, 1 John iii. 2. But he is forsaken for the world's pride of life, that will fall in a moment like foam on the water, Hos. x. 7.

11. *Secondly*, Let us consider, "How sinners take up with the creature in God's stead." This is done by setting the heart on the creature, giving it the chief or supreme room in the heart which is due to God only. And so men take up with the creature in God's stead. The *steps* of it are these.

STEP 1. Raising their esteem of and value for the creature, till it come to overtop their esteem of God in Christ, like Eve with respect to the forbidden fruit, Gen. iii. 6. Men looking on the creature, are often as one standing looking over a precipice, till the head growing giddy, they fall over. Thus Achan came to forsake God for the wedge of gold, Josh. vii. 21. The creature grows more and more bulky and glorious ; and the beauty of a God in Christ is more and more veiled ; till in end the soul gives the preference to the creature, and determines it is best for it. Now the unhappy match is begun, and the soul is in a fair way to go off to the creature.

STEP 2. Bending their chief desire towards the creature, Psalm iv. 6, to obtain it, and the satisfaction they apprehend is to be found in it. The heart goes after it on the wings of desire, the soul flying after it as a ravenous bird on its prey, Prov. xxiii. 5. So the heart is boiling hot upon it, and grows cold towards God, and Esau, Gen. xxv. 30, 32. Then the man is making away to it as fast as he can.

STEP 3. Embracing and knitting with it in love, 2 Tim, iv. 10. So Demas loosed his gripes of Paul and the gospel, and fastened his gripes on the world. It gets more of his love than God in Christ,

and all the riches of Christ. He looks for his happiness from it, thinks he would be happy if he could be master of what is in it; and so he cleaves to it in love, till the love of God is extinguished in his heart, 1 John ii. 15. And thus the man has betaken himself to it instead of God, and the fatal new match is made up.

STEP 4. Seeking a rest for their hearts in it; Matth. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The man has a restless heart in his breast, that is gaping for something to satisfy it; and he carries it away to the creature, to rest there; to the cisterns, to drink there. And there he sucks at the breasts of the world's consolations, the consolations of God being now tasteless with him.

STEP 5. Trusting in it, and having their chief dependence on it, notwithstanding of the curse pronounced against such trust, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. It is their prop that supports them, the pillar they lean on. Happy had they been, if they had had such trust to God as they give to the creature. Though it frowns on them, they trust it will yet smile, and they will wait on; it has disappointed them often, and yet with the greatest confidence they will promise on its head. God's promises, that might be deferred but never failed, they can trust nothing to; but the deceitful promises of the world they trust in.

STEP 6. Using their chief and most earnest endeavours for it. Their trust in it is backed with suitable endeavours; they spare no cost, to get out of the creature what they are seeking; Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" They will spend their money on their lusts, and what is better than either gold or money, they will spare no pains; they will labour for it; they will labour in the very fire, and that to weariness, Hab. ii. 13. It is not the sinner's fault, that he gets no satisfaction in the creature; if it were in it, he would surely have it out of it. Meanwhile, as is his trust and dependence on God, so are his endeavours that way; his trust nothing, and his endeavours languid.

STEP 7. Rejoicing most in their enjoyment of it, and delighting most in it. It is no more God, but the creature that is the man's chief joy; 2 Tim. iii. 4, "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." The joy of the corn and wine, the crop and cattle, is more to them than the light of the Lord's countenance. They can relish no other joys but what are carnal; let the world smile, the heavens may lower for them, they can be easy; and reign as kings without God, if the kind world will but set a fading crown on their head.

STEP 8. Sorrowing most of all for the want of it, under the frowns of it; 2 Cor. vii. 10, "The sorrow of the world worketh

death." They can bear the frowns of the God that made them, better than the frowns of the creature; for the latter has more of their heart than the former. Though God's displeasure is burning against them, forsaking of him is not their grief; it will not mar their joy in the world, but their joy in the world will be an antidote against it; Hos. xii. 7, 8, "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance; in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin." But all the joys of the gospel will now weigh down their sorrows from the creature, Exod. vi. 7—9.

STEP 9. Still cleaving to it, under never so many disappointments from it; nor forsaking it, but trying another mean, when one mis-gives; Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope; thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved." When their expectations in God were deferred, they said, "Why should we wait on the Lord any longer?" and so they forsook him. But do they treat the creature so? No indeed; but when it raises their hope in one thing to the very foundation, they shift about from one creature to another, but never come back to God; when one cistern runs dry, they go to another, but return not to the fountain.

STEP 10. *Lastly*, Following the creature whithersoever it goes, even quite over the hedge of the law of God; Eccles. x. 8, "He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and whose breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." The man that has betaken himself to the creature, he may hold within the compass of lawful enjoyments, and perish by them, Matth. xxiv. 38, 39, "For as, in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." But the sinner, disappointed of the satisfaction expected in lawful things, takes at length the liberty of unlawful; like a beast, that, having ate up all to the red earth within his pasture, breaks over the hedge, and eats up that which is not allowed. Thus the sinner is come to the last step, giving himself the swing in his lusts.

III. The *third* thing is, Why sinners take up with the creature in God's stead.

1. Because the heart of man is naturally wedded to the creature; and that bond not being truly broken, it is apt to return upon occasion to its natural bias. Adam, sinning, left God, and joined the creature; so there is the natural bond, there is the object that gets our first

love. Hence, though the sinner seem to join himself to the Lord, he is apt to return to the creature ; and will do it, if the power of grace prevent it not, Hos. xi. 7, " And my people are bent to backsliding from me ; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him.

2. Because man's corrupt nature finds a suitableness and agreeableness in the creature to itself, Isaiah lvii. 10, forecited. Corrupt lusts, which otherwise must starve, find an agreeable entertainment in the creature, an entertainment they can relish or favour, while they cannot favour the things of God, Rom. viii. 5. Even as a swine brought into a palace will get back into an unclean place, where it will get mire and dirt which it cannot get there.

3. Because the creature takes by the eye and other senses ; God and his favour is the object of faith, which is rare in the world. Men are naturally much addicted to sense, and apt to be led thereby, and are most feelingly touched by objects of sense ; while it requires the exerting of a supernatural power on them to raise on them the faith of things invisible. Hence the natural cry, Psalm iv. 6, " Who will shew us any good ?" And therefore God gives his people a spiritual sensation to balance it ; ver. 7, " Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

4. Because the creature promiseth a present good, whereas the greatest things of God are reserved to another world. Though God does offer great things in hand to the sinner, Psalm xix. 11, yet the greatest is in hope ; but the world's good is offered as a present good ; as that which is soon rotten is ordinarily soon ripe too, and contrariwise. Hence the sinner, making the comparison, looks on the spiritual good as the bird in the bush ; on the temporal as the bird in hand, and so grips to it, letting the other go.

5. Because, by the power of a strong delusion, conveyed into the nature of man by the serpent in paradise, they expect a satisfaction and happiness in the creature, Gen. iii. 5, 6. It is represented to them in a magnifying glass, as the forbidden fruit was to our first parents ; and so strongly is this hope rivetted in them, that though they meet with thousands of disappointments, yet still in new hopes they renew their endeavours to extract it out of them ; Isa. lvii. 10, " Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way ; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope.

6. *Lastly*, Because they must needs betake themselves to something without themselves, not being self-sufficient ; so, having lost God, they fall of course to the creature in his stead ; Eph. ii. 12, " At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, hav-

ing no hope, and without God in the world :” compared with ver. 3, “ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind.” The sun being gone down on them, they set up their candles to enlighten their darkness, and compass themselves about with their own sparks. When the prodigal wanted bread, he fed on husks : when bread was not in Samaria, asses’ heads and doves’ dung were used.

IV. The *fourth* thing is, The ill of this practice, taking up with the creature in God’s stead ; the ill of sin in it.

1. It is an egregious wrong done to God, and his infinite excellency, Jer. ii. 11, “ Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods ? but my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit.” To take up with the creature in God’s stead, is to affront him, cast dishonour on him, and, as far as lies in us, to ungod him. To pull down the king from his throne, and to put a beggar from the dung-hill upon it ; to pull down the sun from the firmament, and set up in its room a twopenny candle ; the angels from their seats, and set glow-worms in their stead—would be no such injury as here ; for the distance betwixt these is but finite ; but that betwixt God and the creature, infinite.

It is a heap of practical blasphemies against God, and vilely misrepresents him, as if he were not,

(1.) The chief good. He is originally good, and the fountain of all goodness that is to be found in any creature ; Matth. xix. 17, “ There is none good but one, that is God.” Therefore he is the chief good. But this practice says, the creature is better than he ; else why do men take up with it in his stead ? What is our choice, in a plurality of things, one of which we may have, will always be reckoned the best in our judgment.

(2.) All-sufficient. He declares himself all-sufficient in himself, and to his creatures, Gen. xvii. 1. There is enough in him to make all the world of men, yea, a thousand worlds of men, happy ; for his perfections are infinite. But the taking up with the creature in his stead, says, There is not enough in him for us. If it is not so, why do not we hold by him ? if there is enough for us in God, why are we found at the creature’s door ? if the fountain is not dry, why at cisterns ?

(3.) The most lovely. God is the perfection of beauty and excellency ; for whatever is lovely in the creature, is a ray of beauty darted from him ; James i. 17, “ Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” Every thing has its spots ; only “ he is altogether lovely,” Cant. v.

16; so he is "fairer than the sons of men," Psalm xlv. 2; and nothing is so desirable. But the taking up with the creature gives the lie to this testimony. If the water is sweeter in the fountain than in the cistern, why is the cistern chosen instead of the fountain?

(4.) Communicative, willing to impart of his goodness to his creatures, Matth. xxv. 21. He has parted with his own Son for us, and is willing "with him to give us all things," Rom. viii. 32. And this is the testimony of the gospel of God. Yet sinners by this practice give it out, that all this is false; that they must needs take up with the creature, since the Creator looks up himself from them.

2. It is a wrong done to the creature, as being a putting it out of its proper place. It is a rape committed upon it, a violence done thereto, which makes it groan, Rom. viii. 21, 22. When Rachel put her husband in God's stead, he complained bitterly of it, saying, Gen. xxx. 2, "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" So did the king of Israel, when the king of Syria, he thought, treated him so; 2 Kings v. 7, "Am I God, (said he), to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" So would the whole creation complain of men, if they had a mouth to speak. It exposes the creature to the fire of God's jealousy, Ezek. xxiv. 25. As there is not a readier way to break a bow, than to overbend it; so there is not a readier way to ruin the creature, than to make an idol of it. Nothing sits safe that sits in the seat of God.

3. It is a wrong done to the whole generation of the saints. Asaph takes notice of this in his case, Psalm lxxiii. 12—15, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children." As it affronts their God, it grieves them to the heart; as it declares them to have made a foolish choice, it dishonours them, and proclaims them fools. Thus they sadden the hearts of those whom God has not made sad; and hold them for fools whom he counts wise.

4. *Lastly*, It is an egregious wrong to the sinner's own soul, putting the arrantest cheat upon it that one is capable to do, Prov. viii. 36, "But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." It is the putting one in the hand of the soul, for an end it will never be able to answer. God says, He will be for a God to the sinner; but behold, the sinner says to his own soul, Let the creature be for a God to thee. This is, instead of bread, to give a stone; instead of a fish, to give a serpent.

USE. Then have a horror of taking up with the creature in God's room and stead: look on it as a signal evil, and tremble at the very thoughts of it. And,

1. Look back on your guilt of that kind, and repent. O what of this idolatry has there been, and is there among us! See it, and be convinced and humbled under the sense of it.

(1.) Has not some creature or other had your chief affection set upon it? 1 John ii. 15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." How warmly have your hearts been carried towards it, while nothing for God but coldrife love, languishing desires? &c. The heart has been like a common inn, so thronged with strangers, that there was no room for the Master.

(2.) Have you not served the creature more than God? Rom. i. 25. Ye have all been at pains for the world, and to serve that interest; but so long as ye have lived, what have ye done for God and his interest? Alas! are there not many who set themselves in opposition to it? and at best they think they do very well if they do not act against it; but how few set themselves to advance it. Do ye serve the creature so? No. Then do ye not serve the creature more than the Creator?

(3.) Has not your greatest care been to please another rather than God? yourselves, your lusts, this and the other person, whose favour ye have valued rather than a God in Christ; Gal. i. 10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." How often have sinners pleased themselves and others, at the expense of God's high displeasure; and made their way to their own pleasure, over the belly of all the intimations of God to the contrary.

Look back on these things, see how ye have set up another in God's stead; be ashamed, loathe yourselves, mourn, and repent for these things.

2. Reform, pull down your idols of jealousy; whatever it is that has had God's room with you, cast it down from the throne, and set it in a low place at his footstool; Hos. xiv. 3, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Restore the throne to your Sovereign Lord, reduce the usurper; let a God in Christ command, and let all things else be at his disposal, and modelled according to his will and pleasure, 2 Cor. x. 5.

3. *Lastly*, Watch, and beware of any creature's stepping at any time into the room of God; Prov. iv. 23, "Keep thy heart with all

diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Keep a jealousy of this sort over your hearts at all times; for there is a propensity in it to fall into this course; and it will be off to the creature, if ye do not guard against it; and in special at some times, particularly,

(1.) When the Lord delays to answer. This is a time when the unbelieving heart, being in a haste, is ready to make its address to the creature instead of God, that it may do for the man what God defers to do. This was the ruining thing to those in the wilderness. God was not like to bring them into Canaan, and therefore they were for going back to Egypt. Resolve ye with the church, Lam. iii. 49, 50, "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not without any intermission; till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven."

(2.) When the creature courts, and the world smiles; Prov. i. 32, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." We are ready to hang by a frowning world; how much more dangerous is it when it smiles on us. Many have been hugged to death thereby. When, therefore, things go according to your wish, take heed ye be not ruined, as the scum the higher it rises, the sooner it runs over and is lost.

DOCTRINE. II. To forsake God in Christ, and take the creature in his stead, is a wretched exchange.

For clearing of this doctrine I shall take it up in these four points:—

POINT I. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for a cistern.

POINT II. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain made ready to our hand, for a cistern that remains to be hewed by ourselves.

POINT III. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for many cisterns.

POINT. IV. *ult.* Forsaking of God for the creature is an exchanging of a fountain for cracked and broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

I return to the first of these, viz.,

POINT I. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for a cistern. This is a wretched exchange, if ye consider,

1. The water in the cistern is borrowed water; that in the fountain is from itself. Mark x. 18, "There is none good but—God;" none good essentially, underivedly, but God himself. All the cisterns of created enjoyments must be filled from God as the fountain, or else remain empty. The fountain has a spring in itself, the cistern none. If God communicate not to the creature, it is sapless and foysonless. The whole creation shines with borrowed light. Wha

ever sweetness is in any person or thing created, it is a drop from the fountain, from God. Would one exchange the sun for the stars?

2. The water must needs be sweeter and fresher in the fountain than in the cistern. Who would not drink rather from the spring, than from a vessel of water within the house? The enjoyment of God in Christ is far sweeter than of the whole the creation can afford; Psalm iv. 6, 7, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Every thing is best in God as in the fountain. Heaven's riches, the riches of Christ, are better than worldly riches, which are but a stream from the other; Psalm civ. 24, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." The beauty of Christ surpasses all created beauties; Psalm xlv. 2, "Thou art fairer than the sons of men." The knowledge of Christ is more excellent than all other knowledge, Phil. iii. 8, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;—and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The comfort of the creature is often unsavoury, in God it is ever sweet.

3. The water in the cistern is no more but a certain measure; in the fountain it is unmeasurable. Whatever perfection or goodness is in any creature, there is an end of it which one may reach unto; Psalm cxix. 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection? but thy commandment is exceeding broad." But God's perfections are infinite, there is no end of them. So in all created things there is a want, and therefore the heart cannot find true rest in them; but in God there is no want, the heart may rest in him, Heb. iv. 2, "For we which have believed, do enter into rest." No creature is commensurable to the boundless desires of man's heart; but God is; so in him sinners may be happy for ever.

4. The water in the cistern is mostly very scanty; the fountain is ever full. There is a want in the creature at its best; it cannot satisfy the desires of the heart of man, Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." But even what may reasonably be expected from it, oft-times cannot be had from it; it sinks far below the measure of what it promises; so that often it is as Hag. ii. 16; "When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the press-fat, for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty." But there is a perpetual fulness in a God in Christ, that one can never

come amiss to him, if he should come never so oft. How wretched an exchange must it then be, to exchange the fulness of a Godhead for the empty creature?

5. The water of the cistern is always dreggy; the fountain clear and pure. Hence the end of the one is sorrow, but the other not so; Prov. x. 22, "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." There is a thorn of uneasiness in the softest bed one can make to himself in the whole creation; and the fairest rose wants not its prickles. Lawful enjoyments leave behind them a sting in the heart; and the more comfort one has in them, the more bitter is the parting with them, which cannot be evited. Unlawful ones leave a sting in the conscience, which will sting through eternity, if bitter repentance prevent it not; Prov. v. 8, "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house." See Isa. i. 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." A devil of covetousness, uncleanness, &c., rages in some; but bitter will be the dregs of it. But whoso hold by a God in Christ, shall swim in joy unspeakable for ever.

6. *Lastly*, The water of the cistern is soon dried up; the fountain, never. A few days or years will put an end to all our lawful and unlawful comforts in the creature. A touch of the hand of God, by some heavy disease on the body, may soon make the now healthiest incapable of comfort either of these ways. And if such should spend their days in health and wealth, the moment they go to the grave, the candle will be put out, and they will pay for their folly by everlasting bitterness. But a God in Christ will be an eternal spring of comfort to those that are his.

USE. See then the wretchedness of this exchange, and repent that ye have made it. The result of it in end will be,

1. Cutting disappointment, Luke xii. 19, 20, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" No body forsakes God for the creature, but they think to better their condition thereby: but that is impossible; therefore they must be disappointed, and their expectations frustrated. Isa. xx. 5, 6, "And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whether we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?" They

may get an offputting for a while with the creature to which they betake themselves in God's stead; but the day will come when they shall complain of it, as Job vi. 15, "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away."

2. Bitter remorse, Prov. xxiii. 32, "At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." What comfort had Judas of his thirty pieces of silver, when he saw the end? the rich man of his faring deliciously every day, when in hell he lift up his eyes? Since there is a God, and a judgment to come, he will certainly make those who swill down the cup of sin with so much pleasure now, wring out and drink the dregs thereof too at long run, Psalm lxxv. 8, "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red: it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."

POINT II. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain made ready to our hand, for a cistern that remains to be hewed out by ourselves. The wretchedness of this exchange does appear in that,

1. The fountain is always ready for us, the cisterns often are unready. There is access at any time to be had unto God, through Christ, by faith, Psalm xli. 1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The man that came to his friend at midnight, had access, and was served of all he wanted, Luke xi. 5—8. God in Christ is that friend, and he will help early, Psalm xli. 5. But the creature is an unready help; so that the man's case is often past cure, ere help can be had from that airth.

2. The fountain is made ready for us by another hand, the cisterns must be prepared by our own; Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness." Jesus Christ has opened the fountain of the divine fulness, that we may come to it and drink. It is set wide open in the gospel, John vii. 37.—"Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Adam's sin stopt all the wells of creature-comforts to us; so that we find much ado to get them so far opened, as thence to get a little to quench our thirst: and O what pains it costs men to open them again!

3. At the fountain one has nothing ado but to drink, John vii. 37, but it is no little pains that is necessary to fit out the cistern for us. It is a labour, Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend—your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Matth. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour," and oftentimes a weary labour; Hab. ii. 13, "Behold, it is not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire,

and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" For the cisterns must be hewed out, as out of a rock; and this hewing work is the work that fills most men's hands all the days of their lives, till death make their tools drop out of their hands. Hewing work is,

1. Hard and sore work. But no hewing is harder than hewing out cisterns of creature-comforts in God's stead. Others may rack the whole body; but this racks the soul and conscience always, and sometimes the body too, Hab. ii. 13, forecited. How is the heart racked with anxious desires and impetuous lustings! the mind racked to contrive how to gratify them; the executive faculty, how to bring it to pass; and the conscience, to make way over its belly for them; and the body itself treated in the pursuit, as they would be loth to treat their beast? Psalm vii. 14, "Behold he travelleth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood."

2. Longsome work, that one comes but little speed in. The truth is, it is so longsome, that it is never at an end with men, till either God's grace reaching the heart cause one give it over as vain work, or else death drag him away from it; Job xv. 20, "The wicked man travelleth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor." It is a cursed work that one can never by their labour get to the end of. The worldly man must still be hewing; Eccl. iv. 8, "There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? this is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travel." The sensual man must be hewing, to please his fleshly lusts; Prov. xxiii. 35, "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." The proud man must be hewing, till he get his nest set among the stars; Obad. ver. 4; though ere he gets there justice will throw him down.

3. Weary work on these accounts; sore and long toil, and that many times for nought, makes weary work, Hab. ii. 13. forecited. O it is an ungrateful world men set their hearts on, that causeth them to go many a foot to no purpose. It is a hard rock, the creature, to work upon, where many a stroke is given for no effect. The man is thirsty, and he hews, but can get no water, Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way." Many a man has much toil, and weary on-waiting, to get his own soul ruined, Jer. ix. 5; the mischievous man wakes while others sleep, Psalm, xxxvi. 4; the murderer, the adulterer, and the thief wake also, Job xxiv. 14—16.

Three things make this work about the cisterns such a hewing work.

(1.) The emptiness of the creature, brought into it by man's sin. There is an original emptiness in it, which took place in the state of innocence, that it could never afford a rest to the heart of man. There is an accidental emptiness in it by sin; the scripture calls it vanity, Rom. viii. 20, that it cannot now afford the satisfaction it sometimes could have given, being like an empty husk, a dry and parched ground, in comparison of what it once was, Psalm cii. 26. Now here lies the case; there is less in the creature now, than some time there was; yet men's hearts eagerly seek out of it, and expect from it more than ever was in it. When, then, men in these circumstances fall a-hewing at it, how can it miss to be hard, long-some, and weary work.

2. The curse lying upon it for man's sin; Gen. iii. 17. This has so locked up the little comfort that is in it, that it is made hard work to get at it. Hence so many disappointments, so often falling short of the comfort that otherwise it might really give. Thus, whereas God in Christ is an open fountain, the creature is a sealed cistern many times; Mal. ii. 2, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart." And no wonder one find hard work in breaking through Heaven's seal on the creature.

3. *Lastly*, The opposition from Heaven the sinner must lay his account with in this work of his. It is a work which is against God, and God will be against it, and it is hard to kick against the pricks; Acts ix. 5. Providence may let the man thrive in it a while, as the builders of Babel did; but they shall be sensible at length of God's working against them; Hos. ii. 6, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." They shall plant, and God shall pluck up; build, and he shall destroy; they shall beautify, and he shall blast; fill their cisterns, and he empty them. They may find God working against them, and the effect of it on their wicked hearts may be, to cause them how the more forcibly and eagerly, as if they would carry on their work in spite of opposition from Heaven; but assuredly God shall dash them to pieces that contend with him; 1 Sam. ii. 9. 10, "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces, out of heaven shall he thunder upon them."

USE. Sinners, then, lay by your work of hewing out cisterns to

yourselves in God's room and stead. Ye are at a great deal of work in seeking to get the sap and foyson of the creature, in lawful and unlawful enjoyments, for a meal to feed your hungry hearts; and neglect God in Christ. Repent, and come drink of the fountain ready to your hands, and cease your hewing.

MOTIVE 1. Consider, it is unblessed work, Psalm cxxix. 6—8, "Let them be as the grass upon the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord." God never set man to it; but Satan, and the corrupt heart, and they, are cruel masters, that fill the hand with self-ruining work. You cannot look to God for a blessing on it.

MOT. 2. It is vain and fruitless work, where ye will never get worth the pains and cost wared on it; Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Ye are seeking out of the creature what is not in it; ye are waring your all upon it; and the cost will quite overgo the profit; Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Hard work may be the better borne that has a proportionable advantage following it; but see the emblem of this; Hab. ii. 13, "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity.

MOT. 3. Ye have found it heavy work already; why will ye insist when God calls you to leave it?

(1.) Have you not in your hewing given many a fruitless stroke? sought and found nothing? Yea we may say as Isa. xxvi. 18, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen;" having been like those hewing at a rock, where no impression could be made.

(2.) Have not the chips in your hewing flown out upon you, to your wounding? Instead of the good and comfort ye have sought from the creature, ye have got hurt by it; Ezek. xxix. 7, "When they took hold of thee by the hand, thou didst break, and rent all their shoulder; and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand." Where ye have expected your greatest comfort, thence has arisen your greatest cross; where the soundest rest, there greatest vexation.

(3.) Have ye not often found, that all your cistern could hold

when ye got it, was not worth the pains ye had been at in hewing it out? How often has your comfort in the enjoyment of the creature sunk vastly below the expectation ye had of it?

(4.) Has not one touch often broke your cistern all in pieces, after ye had been at all pains in hewing it out; and so ye have in a moment lost all your expectation together, with all your pains. How many fine projects for this world do misgive, just when one is looking for the fruit of them? Sometimes a little providential incident, or a piece of one's own mismanagement, breaks all to pieces.

MOTIVE 4. *Lastly*, How will ye answer it, that ye are at so great pains for the cisterns, and will not be at pains to go to the fountain? Men refuse not to labour, to hew for the creature; but they will be at no tolerable pains for the enjoyment of God. O how well might it be with men, if they would be at as much concern to seek their happiness in God, as they are at in seeking it in the creature! But the opened fountain is slighted, while the cistern is hewn out of the hard rock.

POINT III. Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchanging of a fountain for many cisterns. When one forsakes God, and betakes himself to the creature, can he hold himself with one creature, as a man with one God? No, he cannot; he must have a plurality, a variety, a multitude of them, in his room; because,

1. None of them are sufficient, but all of them defective. All-sufficient, is a name peculiar unto God alone, Gen. xvii. 1, not communicable to the whole creation, in which, Eccl. i. 14, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting, cannot be numbered." So the man must needs have a second, to make up the want of the first, and a third to make up the want of the second, and so on without end. This labours under one defect, that under another; so there is no rest in any of them.

2. There is something disagreeable and vexing in them all; Eccl. i. 14, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." There are some prickles in the fairest rose, except the Rose of Sharon; some thorn of uneasiness in the softest bed, except the bed of the covenant, the true Solomon's. Did ever anything bear so much delight, but it had withal something to fret you in it or attending it? The agreeableness of it is seen afar; but when one comes near he is made to feel the vexation too. So recourse must be had to one cistern, to put away the bitter taste or unsavouriness of another.

3. They enlarge the appetite, but do not satisfy it; Hab. ii. 5, "Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as

death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people." The more men drink of the cisterns for satisfaction, the more they would drink. As one draught of salt water makes the necessity of another, so the gratifying of a lust doth but open its mouth wider; as is evident from the case of those, who having once given themselves loose reins, nothing can prevail to bind them up, till the grace of God change them. They go from ill to worse.

Now, this is a wretched exchange; for,

(1.) The access to one fountain is far more ready than to many cisterns. He that has but one door to go to for sufficient supply, is certainly in better case than he that must go to many; so he that has the fulness of a God to satisfy himself in, is in circumstances a thousand times better than he who must go from creature to creature for that end. In God you would find happiness, as corn in a heap; whereas in the creature you would have it to pick up here and there, as corn that is sown abroad.

(2.) The water is better that is altogether in one fountain, than that which is parted into many cisterns. United force is strongest; and that which is scattered, the farther it is scattered abroad, it is the weaker. So the consolations of God are mighty, as liquor kept together in one vessel; while the comfort of the creature is comparatively weak, as water spilt on the ground.

(3.) It is with greater ease of mind that one may apply to the one fountain, than to the many cisterns. The multitude of the cisterns to go to for what we need, fills the heart with much perplexity and distracting cares; while the oneness of the fountain creates ease; Jer. xvii. 5—8. O what ease has the man that goes to God's door for all, in comparison of him who begs at the doors of the creatures, ranging up and down among them!

USE. Repent then of this folly, and take the one fountain instead of your many cisterns; go to one God instead of the multitude of created things.

MOTIVE 1. This will contract your cares now so diffusive, lessen your labour, and spare you many a weary foot,

MOTIVE 2. Ye shall find enough in God, that ye shall see no necessity of seeking any happiness without him; John. iv. 14.; more than shall supply the want of the corn and wine; Psalm. iv. 7.; that shall be commensurable to your whole desire; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

MOTIVE 3. *Lastly*, Heap up as many cisterns as ye can, they shall never do for you what the one fountain can, never make you easy or satisfied.

POINT IV. *ult.* Forsaking of God for the creature, is an exchang-

ing of a fountain, for cracked and broken cisterns that can hold no water. A cistern as a cistern holds but little ; the broken cistern spills the little put into it. Every created comfort is a cistern containing little at best ; but withal it is cracked and broken, that cannot keep the little it has at any time.

(1.) At its best it is cracked ; has such rifts in it, as that it begins to lose of the little that is in it. There is a powerful mixture of corruption in the best of persons in the world, whereby no body wants some remarkable defect ; and in the best of things there, there is a defect with respect to the heart of man.

2. At length it is broken in pieces. Being always cracked, it is easy broken. All persons here are liable to death, all things to corruption or destruction, whereby they become useless as to our comfort ; Matth. vi. 19, " Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." These cisterns can hold no more water for us.

So this exchange is a wretched one ; for,

1. The fountain is always certain to go to, the cisterns always uncertain ; and worldly men here quit certain for uncertain hope. It is certain, we can never come amiss to God ; but as for the creature, it is so uncertain, that there may be nothing in it at all but mud and mire, when we come to drink.

2. The fountain is lasting ; the cisterns being broken, guide as we will, will last but a short while. God is an everlasting fountain of comfort ; the creature is but for a time, and draws to an end. The whole universe is a cracked vessel, and in a little time it will be all in pieces by the general conflagration.

USE. Come away then from the broken cisterns of the creature, to the fountain of happiness in God. Seek no more your happiness in any thing below the sun ; but seek it in a God in Christ.