

unburdened state, and makes him groan between the two, there is something there that is truly unspeakable. As the gift of Christ is unspeakable to those who truly see it, 2 Cor. ix. 15, and the joy in the Holy Ghost to those that feel it, 1 Pet. i. 8, so are the groanings by the Spirit unutterable to the groaners.

I conclude with two or three reflections.

1. God's people are a groaning people. For they have the Spirit of Christ, and he makes intercession for them with groanings; they have put on Christ, and he was a groaner. And those that are strangers to these groanings, their groaning time is coming; walking now in the vanity of your minds, will make eternal groaning.

QUEST. How are God's people regarded when they get leave to groan on? ANSW. They must abide the trial of their graces, and be conformed to the image of a groaning Saviour. In due time their burden will be taken off, and they will groan no more.

2. Prayer is a business of great weight and seriousness. It is one thing to say a prayer, another thing to pray indeed acceptably. Wherefore from this, and all that has been said,

3. *Lastly*, Learn to pray by the help of the Spirit, for no other praying is acceptable to God; look to him in all your addresses to the throne, and depend upon his guiding and influence; that through Christ Jesus ye may have access by one Spirit unto the Father, Eph. ii. 18.

OF PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST.*

JOHN xvi. 23,

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

OUR Lord Jesus is here comforting his disciples under the want of his bodily presence which they had so long enjoyed, showing them that it should be well made up to them. They should see him again after his resurrection, though not to return to that familiarity with them as before; they should see him by the Spirit, in his exalted state; and should find God so reconciled to them by his sacrifice of himself, that they should have a boldness of access to the throne in heaven, which they had not before; that in that day they should ask him nothing in that manner they used while he was with them in the days of his flesh; but in a manner more to his honour and their comfort. Here he declares,

* The substance of some Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1728.

1. What that manner is, and that in two things. (1.) They should apply themselves, in asking or petitioning, directly to the Father as their God and Father allowing them access to him, for the supply of all their needs. (2.) They should apply to him in the name of the Son, the exalted Redeemer, expressly, seeing more clearly the way of sinners treating with God through the Mediator, than either the Jewish church had done, or they themselves while they had his bodily presence with them.

2. The success of that manner of applying to God. It should be successful in all points. Whatsoever, in spiritual or temporal things, they should petition the Father in the name of Christ, he should give it them for his sake.

The following doctrine arises from the words.

DOCTRINE.—Whosoever would pray to God acceptably, must pray to him in the name of Jesus Christ.

In treating this point, I shall,

I. Shew what it is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

II. Give the reasons why acceptable prayer must be in the name of Christ.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I am to shew what it is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. That this takes in whatever is necessary in prayer, both as to matter and manner, is evident from the text, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name," &c. And no man can thus pray but by the Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 13.

Negatively, It is not a bare mentioning his name, in prayer, and concluding our prayers therewith, Matth. vii. 21, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." We must begin, carry on, and conclude our prayers in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 17, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." The saints use the words, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 57; but the virtue is not in the words, but in the faith wherewith they are used. But alas! these are often produced as an empty scabbard, while the sword is away.

Positively, we may take it up in these four things.

FIRST, We must go to God at Christ's command, and by order from him. This is the import of the phrase "in his name," Matth. xviii. 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." If a poor body can get a recommendation from a friend to one that is able to help him, he comes with confidence and tells, such a one has sent me to you. Our Lord

Christ is the friend of poor sinners, and he sends them to his Father to ask supply of their wants; and allows them to tell that he sent them; John xvi. 24. And coming that way, in faith, they will not be refused. This implies,

1. The soul's being come to Christ in the first place; John xv. 7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Sense of need brings the soul to Christ, as the poor man's friend, who has the favour of the court of heaven, that through his means the soul may get its wants supplied there. See Acts xii. 20. We must first come to Christ by faith, ere we can make one acceptable prayer to God.

2. That however believers in Christ are relieved of the burden of total indigence; John iv. 14, yet while they are in the world, they are still compassed with wants. God will have them to live from hand to mouth, and so to honour him by hanging on daily about his hand for their supply from time to time. In heaven they shall be set down at the fountain; but now the law of the house is, "Ask, and ye shall receive;" Matth. vii. 7.

3. That Christ sends his people to God by prayer, for the supply of their wants. This he does by his word, commanding them to go, and by his Spirit inclining them to go. For thus the whole Trinity is glorified by the praying believers, the Father as the Hearer of prayer, the Son as the Advocate and Intercessor presenting their prayers to the Father, and the Spirit as the Author of their prayers; Eph. ii. 18, "For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father."

4. That acceptable prayer is performed under the sense of the command of a God in Christ; Isa. xxxiii. 22, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." Men may pray, though not acceptably, with little or no sense of the command of God on their consciences; that is, not serving God, but themselves. They may pray under the sense of the command of an absolute God out of Christ; that is but slavish service to God. But the believer has the sense of the command, as from Jesus Christ, where majesty and mercy are mixed in it; and that is son-like service.

5. *Lastly*, That the acceptable petitioner's encouragement to pray is from Jesus Christ; Heb. iv. 14—16, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." It is Christ's

token that he has given them to carry with them, that affords them all their confidence with God; that is the promises of the covenant sealed with his own blood. Faith laying hold on these, carries them as Christ's token to the Father, upon which a poor criminal may expect to find acceptance and supply.

SECONDLY. We must pray for Christ's sake, as our motive to the duty. This also is imported in the phrase, "in his name;" Mark ix. 41, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ,—he shall not lose his reward." As we must be influenced by his command, as the reason of our praying, so with regard to him as our motive. As there is no coming to God but by him; so there is no kindly drawing of us to God, but by the allurements of the glory of God in the face of Jesus; 2 Cor. iv. 6. Any other sight of the glory of God would fright the sinner away from him, as from a consuming fire. So we must behold God in Christ, and go to him as the object of our love and adoration. This implies,

1. An high esteem of Christ in the acceptable petitioner; 1 Pet. ii. 7, "Unto you which believe, he is precious." No man's prayer will be acceptable to God, who wants a transcendent esteem of the Lord Christ; for God is honoured in his Son; John v. 23. And the more the esteem of Christ has place in one's heart, the more it will be found, he will give himself to prayer.

2. Complying with the duty out of love to Christ; Heb. vi. 10, "God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love." The soul must discern Christ's stamp on every duty, and so embrace it for his sake. The duty of prayer some embrace and use, because of the usefulness of it to themselves; but God's children embrace it for the sake of Christ; 2 Cor v. 14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Love natively leads to desire communion with the party beloved; and love to Christ recommends prayer to a holy heart, as a means of communion with God in Christ.

3. Complying with the duty out of respect to his honour and glory; Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live is Christ." Christ humbled himself, and therefore the Father has glorified him; chap. ii. 9—11. And every act of praying in his name glorifies him, being an acknowledgment before God of the unspeakable dignity of his merit and intercession, as procuring that access for sinners unto God, that no other way could have been obtained.

4. *Lastly*, Doing it with heart and good-will; for what is done for Christ's sake by a gracious soul, must needs be so done; Isa. lxiv. 5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." One praying indeed in the name of Christ, is acted by a principle of love to him, which,

oiling the wheels of the soul, sets all in motion, so that the heart is poured out like water before the Lord. And where that principle is wanting, there is acting by constraint.

THIRDLY. We must in praying to God act in the strength of Christ. This also is imported in the phrase; Luke x. 17, "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." So Zech. x. ult., "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name." We must go to prayer, as David went against Goliath; 1 Sam. xvii. 45, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." And here consider,

1. What this pre-supposes.
2. Wherein it lies.

FIRST, Let us consider what this acting in prayer in the strength of Christ pre-supposes. It pre-supposes,

1. That praying acceptably is a work quite beyond any power in us; 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." The want of this persuasion mars many a prayer, and makes many a rash and inconsiderate approach unto God. To manage aright an address to God on his throne of glory, cannot miss to appear such a work in the eyes of all, who have due thoughts of God's majesty, or of their own ignorance and weakness.

2. That there is a stock of grace and strength in Jesus Christ, for our help, as to other duties, so for this duty of prayer; 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Man at first had his stock of grace in his own hand, and he made a sad account of it. Now the Lord has lodged it in the Mediator, as the head of believers; Col. i. 19, "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." In him there is not only a fulness of sufficiency for himself, but of abundance for his people, as of water in a fountain, or of sap in the stock of a tree; John iii. 34, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."

3. Sinners are welcome to partake of this stock of grace and strength in Christ; 2 Tim. ii. 1. For it is lodged in him as a store-house, to be communicated. The fountain stands open, and whosoever will may come and take; Zech. xiii. 1. They are very welcome; as it is an ease and pleasure for the mother to have the full breast sucked by her babe, so it is a pleasure to Christ to communicate of his fulness; Isa. lxi. 12, 13, "For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream; then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

4. We must be united to Christ, as members to the head, and branches to the vine, if we would act in prayer or any other duty in the strength of Christ; John xv. 5, "I am the vine ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." We cannot partake of the stock of grace and strength for duty in Christ, without partaking of himself; Rom. viii. 32. As the soul in a separate state doth not quicken the body, so the soul not united to Christ cannot be fitted for duty by strength derived from him. The graft must knit with the stock, ere it can partake of the sap.

SECONDLY. I am to shew wherein acting in prayer in the strength of Christ lies. It lies in two things :—

1. The soul's going out of itself for strength to the duty; that is, renouncing all confidence in itself for the right management of it; 2 Cor. iii. 5, forecited. Every duty is to be undertaken, begun, and carried on, under a sense of utter weakness and insufficiency for it in ourselves.

(1.) Gifts are not to be trusted to; Prov. iii. 5. That is the way to get gifts blasted, for they are but an arm of flesh; Jer. xvii. 5, 6. And though ye should have the free exercise of your gift; yet a bare gift can never make a man do a duty graciously. The work will still be but a dead work, without the life of grace derived from Christ the Lord of life.

(2.) Nay grace received and implanted in us is not to be trusted to for this end. Learn ye, that even of our gracious selves we can do nothing; 2 Cor. iii. 4, 5. There must be continued supplies of grace from Christ unto us, else we will bring forth no fruit; John xv. 5. It is true, grace is a seed that in its nature tends to fruit; but what will come of the seed, if the showers, and dew, and heat of the sun be withheld?

2. The soul's going to Christ for strength to duty, by trusting on him for it; Isa. xxvi. 4, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." This is the exercising of faith, by which the saints live; Gal. ii. 20, and derive grace and strength from Christ their head; John i. 16. Faith is that grace by which the weak soul fetches in strength and grace from the fountain of it in Christ. So he prays in the name of Christ, in this respect, who goes about the duty in confidence of, and trusting in Christ for, strength and ability to manage it acceptably; Psalm lxxi. 16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." To make this more plain, consider,

(1.) By faith a Christian sees, in the glass of the word, an utter

inability for duty in himself, believing, on the testimony of the word, that of himself he is unable to work any good work, Isa. xxvi. 12; nay, not to begin it well; Phil. i. 6, to will it; chap. ii. 13, nor so much as to think it; 2 Cor. iii. 5. In all which the Christian's faith is strengthened by experience.

(2.) By faith he sees also a fulness of grace and strength treasured up in Christ the head, to be communicated to the members of his body; 2 Cor. xii. 9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." And he beholds the promises he has made of it, as the conduit pipes by which it is conveyed unto them; 2 Pet. i. 4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." These things the Christian believes on the testimony of the same word of God; and thus he sees a sufficiency to oppose to his own emptiness, and a fulness of strength to remedy his own weakness.

(3.) By faith he trusts that this fulness in Christ shall be made forthcoming to him, in a measure of it, for the duty, according to the promise; Psalm xviii. 2, "The Lord is—my God, my strength, in whom I will trust." Hab. iii. 19, "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." Thus there is a particular application in faith, that the Christian trusts in the word of promise, that grace and strength shall be given to him. So the word holds it out for particular application by faith; 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and this is the way to bring in strength, as the Psalmist's experience testifies; Psalm xxviii. 7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped;" and so the promise secures it; Jer. xvii. 7, 8, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Take away that trust, that particular application, the soul is left helpless, having nothing to gripe to, and the communication of strength is blocked up; according to what the apostle James says, chap. i. 6, 7, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."

FOURTHLY. We must in praying to God pray for Christ's sake, as the only procuring cause of the success of our prayers; Dan. ix. 17,

"Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake." Going to God in prayer, we must as it were put off our own persons, as not worth noticing in the sight of God, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ; come and receive the blessing in the elder Brother's clothes, having all our hope from the Lord's looking on the face of his Anointed. This is the main thing in the text, a relying on the Lord Jesus for the success of our prayers in heaven. Here I shall shew,

1. What is pre-supposed in this.
2. Wherein it consists.

FIRST. I am to shew what is pre-supposed in praying to God for Christ's sake. It pre-supposes,

1. That sinners in themselves are quite unacceptable in heaven, even in their religious duties. Not only are the wicked so; Prov. xv. 8, but even the saints considered in themselves; Isa. lxiv. 6. The reason is plain, God is holy, we are impure and defiled. There is such a rank smell of sinful pollution about us, that the opening of a sinner's mouth in prayer is like the opening of an unripe grave; Rom. iii. 13. It is too strong, that we cannot sweeten ourselves. The loathsome savour of the sins about the best, cannot be mastered by any sweet savour of their duties, but only by the sweet savour of the sacrifice of Christ; 2 Cor. ii. 15, with Eph. v. 2.

2. Christ is most acceptable there; he is the darling of heaven, the prime favourite there; Matth. iii. ult., "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He is acceptable there as God, the only begotten of the Father from eternity; but that is not it. He is acceptable as God-man, Mediator, who has in our flesh fulfilled his Father's will, by his obedience and death; Eph. v. 2, "Christ—hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. And he is acceptable to the Father,

- (1.) In himself; Matth. iii. ult., above cited. The Father is well pleased with his person, and delights in him, as the brightness of his own glory, and his own express image. He is well pleased with his undertaking the work of our redemption, and his management of that work; he is pleased with his holy birth, righteous life, and complete satisfaction; so pleased with his humbling himself, that he has "highly exalted him;" Phil. ii. 9.

- (2.) He is so well pleased with him, that he accepts sinners for his sake; Eph. i. 6, "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." For his sake rebel sinners are accepted to peace and favour, criminals, to eternal life, their performances, mixed with much sinful imperfections, are accepted as pleasing in his sight. The sweet

smell of his sacrifice so masters the rank savour of sin about them, that they are for his sake brought into his presence and made near. The Father knows not to refuse him any request; John xi. 42, "I knew that thou hearest me always."

3. Sinners are warranted to come to the throne of grace in his name; Heb. iv. 15, 16, "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." It is sinners of mankind, not of the angel tribe; chap. ii. 16, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Whatever be our case, he will do for us to the uttermost; Heb. vii. 25. He is an Advocate that will take our most desperate causes in hand, carry them through, and that in a way agreeable to justice; 1 John ii. 1, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The petitions put into his hand cannot miscarry.

SECONDLY, I am now to shew wherein this praying to God for Christ's sake consists. And,

First, In general, it consists in our relying on the Lord Jesus only, for the success of our prayers in heaven. And,

I. Consider what we are in this matter to rely on him only for.

(1.) We are to rely on him only, for access to God in our prayers; Eph. iii. 12, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." In vain do we pray, if we get no access to the prayer-hearing God; and there is no access to him, but through Christ; John xiv. 6. Whoever attempt to draw near to God otherwise, will get the door of heaven cast in their face; but we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his back, who is Heaven's favourite and the sinner's friend.

(2.) For acceptance of our prayers; Eph. i. 6, forecited. Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift; Heb. xiii. 10, 15. If we lay the stress of our acceptance on any person or thing, but Jesus Christ, the crucified Saviour, we cannot be accepted. For our best duties being mixed with sinful imperfections, cannot be accepted of a holy God but through a Mediator; and there is no Mediator but he; 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(3.) For the gracious answer of prayer in granting our petitions. So the text, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." We have forfeited all other pleas for Heaven's favours, by Adam's fall. And now no prayers can be heard and answered in heaven; but for Christ the second Adam's sake. A

sinner cannot have the least favourable glance from the throne of God, but what is given for Christ's sake. What men get otherwise, they get with a vengeance, an impression of wrath on it; Hos. xiii. 11; Psalm lxxviii. 29.

2. Consider how we are to eye Christ as the object of this reliance. We are to eye him in it as our great High Priest; Heb. iv. 15, 16, forecited. A believer is to eye Christ in his prayers, in all his offices. We are to eye him as our Prophet, teaching us by his Spirit how and what to pray for; as our King, having the office of distributing Heaven's favours to poor sinners; but in point of our access, acceptance, and hearing, we are to eye him as a Priest; for it is in that office only we can find what to rely on before God, for these ends. And here we find,

(1.) The infinite merit of his sacrifice to rely on; Rom. iii. 25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Man by sin lost himself, and all Heaven's favours from the greatest to the least, from heaven's happiness to the least drop of water to refresh him. Accordingly Christ redeeming sinners by his blood, paid the ransom not only for their persons, but for all Heaven's favours to them, from the greatest to the least. Therefore he says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David; Isa. lv. 3. He bought their seat in heaven, their peace, and pardon, yea and their seat on earth, their bread, and their water; Isa. xxxiii. 16, "He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." Now, would we pray in his name?

Then in prayer eye Christ on the cross, bleeding, dying, and by his bloody death and sufferings paying for the mercy thou art seeking. Is it a spiritual mercy, or a temporal mercy? It is a purchased mercy, the purchase of the blood of Christ; seek it of God as such, as the purchase of the blood of Jesus.

(2.) His never-failing intercession to rely on; Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Our great High Priest having offered his sacrifice on earth, is now gone into the heavens, presenting there the blood of his sacrifice in the infinite merit thereof before his Father; that he may obtain the purchased mercies for his people. So that the supply of the needs of his people, is his business in heaven, as well as it is theirs on earth. And he offers their prayers to his Father; Rev. viii. 4. Therefore if ye would pray in his name,

In prayer eye Christ as your Intercessor at the right hand of God,

Rom. viii. 34. If the price of his blood was extended to the purchasing of all the mercies we need ; surely his intercession extends from the greatest to the least of them also. And therefore we need not stick to put our petitions for any mercy we need, in his hand. Hence it may appear,

Secondly, More particularly, wherein praying in the name of Christ, and for his sake consists,

1. Renouncing all merit and worth in ourselves, in point of access, acceptance, and gracious answer, saying with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." If we stand on personal worth, from the consideration of our doings or sufferings, or any thing in or about ourselves, we pray in our own name, and will speed accordingly. Self-denial is absolutely necessary to this kind of praying, that stopping our eyes to all excellencies in ourselves or duties, we may betake ourselves to free grace only.

2. Believing that however great the mercies are, and however unworthy we are, yet we may obtain them from God through Jesus Christ; Heb. iv. 15, 16. There can be no praying in faith without this. If we do not believe this, we dishonour his name, whether our unbelief of it arise from the greatness of the mercy needed, or from our own unworthiness, or both. For nothing can be beyond the reach of his infinite merit and never-failing intercession.

3. Seeking in prayer the mercies we need of God, for Christ's sake accordingly. So we present our petitions "in his name;" John xvi. 24. We are to be ashamed before God in prayer, ashamed of ourselves, but not ashamed to beg in the name of his Son. Our holy shame respects our unworthiness ; but Christ's merit and intercession are set before us, as a ground of confidence.

4. Pleading on his merit and intercession ; Psalm lxxxiv. 9, "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed." We are not only to seek, but to plead in prayer, as needy petitioners whose pinching necessity makes them fill their mouths with arguments ; Job xxiii. 3, 4. Christ's merit and intercession is the fountain of these arguments ; and to plead on mere mercy, mercy for mere mercy's sake, is too weak a plea. But faith founding its plea on Christ's merit, urges God's covenant and promise made thereupon ; Psalm lxxiv. 20, his glorious perfections shining in the face of Jesus, the honour of his name manifested in Christ.

5. *Lastly*, Trusting that we shall obtain a gracious answer for his sake ; Mark xi. 24, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." The

soul praying according to the will of God, is to exercise a faith of particular confidence in God through Christ, which is not only warrantable, but necessary; Jam. i. 6, 7. This glorifies the Mediator, and glorifies the faithfulness of God in the promise; and the want of it casts dishonour on both.

II. The second general head is, to give reasons why acceptable prayer must be in the name of Christ. I offer the following:—

1. Because sinners can have no access to God without a Mediator, and there is no other Mediator but he; Isa. lix. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 5. Innocent Adam might have come to God immediately in prayer, and been accepted; for while there was no sin, there was no need of a Mediator. But now the justice of God bars the access of sinners to him; and there is none to mediate a peace betwixt God and the sinner but Christ; John xiv. 6.

2. Because the promises of the covenant were all made to Jesus Christ, as the party who fulfilled the condition of the covenant; Gal. iii. 16. The promises are the measure of acceptable prayer; what God has not promised, we cannot warrantably pray for. In prayer we come to God to claim the promises; and we cannot claim them, but in the right of Christ the head of the covenant, to whom they were made; that is to say, we cannot pray acceptably but in his name.

3. Because our praying in the name of Christ is a part of the reward of Christ's voluntary humiliation for God's glory and the salvation of sinners; Phil. ii. 9, 10. He gave his life a ransom for sinners, and a price of redemption of their forfeited mercies; therefore God has statuted and ordained, that sinners shall crave and receive all their mercies in his name, that they shall kneel in him to receive the blessing, as his members.

4. Because it is not consistent with the honour of God, to give sinners a favourable hearing otherwise; John ix. 31, with 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. Where is the honour of God's justice, if Heaven's favours be bestowed on sinners otherwise than on the account of a satisfaction?—the honour of his holiness, if they may have communion with him as they are in themselves?—of his law, if they may get their petitions of mercy answered, but in the name of one who has answered its demands? They dishonour God, his Son, and his mercies, that ask any thing but in the name of Christ.

5. Nothing can savour with God, that comes from a sinner, but what is perfumed with the merit and intercession of Christ; 2 Cor. ii. 15; Eph. i. 6. It is not the inward excellency of the prayers of the saints, that makes them acceptable in God's sight; but the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith on the praying saint praying in faith; Heb. xi. 4. The merit of his righteousness, presented

in his intercession, with the prayer, makes it acceptable; Rev. viii. 4. It savours in heaven out of his mouth.

6. *Lastly*, The stated way of all gracious communication between heaven and earth, is through Jesus Christ, who opened a communication between them by his blood, when it was blocked up by the breach of the first covenant; John xiv. 6. Whatever favour is conveyed to us from heaven in a way of grace and love, whatever we offer to God in a way of duty or desire, must go through him. This was represented in Jacob's ladder; Gen. xxviii. If we would come to God, or present a petition to him, it must be through Christ; Heb. x. 19, 20. If the Lord comes to us, or sends us a gracious answer, it is through him; 2 Cor. v. 19.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject.

USE I. Of information. From this doctrine we learn,

1. What a holy God we have to do with in prayer, who hath said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified; Lev. x. 3. He sits on his throne of majesty, and we can have no access to him, being sinners, but through Christ. His very throne of grace, from which he breathes love and good-will to sinners, is founded on justice and judgment; Psalm lxxxix. 14. We must come to him under the covert of the Mediator's broad righteousness and efficacious blood; otherwise we cannot stand before his spotless holiness.

2. Let us prize the love of Christ, in making an entrance for us into the holy place, through the veil of his flesh; Heb. x. 20. The flaming sword of justice, which guarded the way to the tree of life, was bathed in his blood, to procure us access to God. He bought again the estate that Adam forfeited for us, and he bought it with his precious blood; that since we could not have it again in our own name, we might have it in his.

3. There can be no acceptable praying to God but by believers united to Christ, having on the garment of his righteousness; John ix. 31, "God heareth not sinners." An unregenerate man, living in his natural state, may pray; but can never pray acceptably, while in that state; for he cannot pray in the name of Christ, which is not the work of the tongue using these words, but the work of the heart by faith relying on Christ, his merit and intercession.

4. Even believers cannot pray in the name of Christ, and so not acceptably, without faith in exercise. It is not enough for this end, that one have faith in the root and principle; but faith must be exercised in every duty; Gal. ii. 20, "The life which I now live in the flesh," says Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." It is as necessary to every acceptable performance, as breathing to the common actions of life; John xv. 5.

5. *Lastly*, We have great need not to be rash in our approaches to God in prayer, but that we prepare our hearts and compose them aforehand for such a solemn duty; Eccl. v. 1. We should beware lest custom in these things, and particularly in the more frequent and less solemn approaches to God in prayer, at our meals, turn us to formality; but should labour to impress our hearts with the holiness of God, the necessity of a Mediator, and stir up grace in our hearts.

USE II. Of reproof to all those who approach unto God in prayer, otherwise than by and in the name of Jesus Christ. The idolatrous Papists allow other mediators of intercession, besides the one only Mediator; and pray to, employ, and rely on saints and angels, to intercede in heaven for them, though religious worshipping of the creature is directly forbidden; Matth. iv. 10, and angel-worship; Rev. xix. 10, and the saints departed are not acquainted with our particular cases; Isa. lxiii. 16. But those also among us are to be reprov'd, as approaching to God in prayer otherwise than in Christ's name,

1. Who make approach unto God in prayer, as an absolute God, without consideration of the Mediator. This is the effect of the natural blindness and ignorance of men's minds; not knowing God, nor discerning the flaming sword of justice guarding the tree of life, they rush forward on the point thereof to pull the fruits. Let such consider their dangerous rashness, and reform; Heb. xii. ult., "For our God is a consuming fire;" knowing they can never worship God acceptably in that way; John v. 23, "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." Hence the knowledge and belief of the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all acceptable worship, without which it cannot subsist; Eph. ii. 18, "For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father;" and the Christian church is thereby distinguished from the rejected Jews; 1 Thess. i. 1, and it must be practically improved in every piece of true worship.

2. Those who, in their approaches to God, put other things in the room of the Mediator, or join other things with him. For as there is no access to God without a Mediator, so there is none but by the one Mediator only; John xiv. 6, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." But who do that? Even all those who in their approaches by prayer, lay the stress of their access and acceptance with God, in whole or in part, on any thing but Christ. Whatever thou reliest on for these ends, besides Christ, has his room, and so mars the duty; Phil. iii. 3, and provokes God; Jer. xvii. 5, 6. There is a bias in the hearts of the best this way.

There are four things which men are apt to put thus in the room of Christ, in whole or in part,

(1.) Their own worth, in respect of their qualifications and good things done by them; *Judg. xvii. ult.* This the proud Pharisee relied on in his approach; *Luke xviii. 11, 12*, "God, I thank thee," says he, "that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." So proud and conceited professors go to their prayers, and with their money in their hand miss the opened market of free grace. They say they beg for Christ's sake, but yet in reality they have more expectation from their own personal worth, than from the merit of Christ's blood. Their want of a humbling work of the Spirit raises the value they have for themselves; and the want of saving illumination sinks the value of Christ's merit with them.

(2.) The mercy of an unatoned God, that is, mercy considered in God without a view to the satisfaction of his justice by the Mediator. This the ignorant and profane are apt to stumble on, whose eyes are open to the mercy of God, but blind to his justice, which therefore they are in no concern about the satisfaction of. It never enters into their hearts, to question, how it is consistent with the honour and justice of God to accept them; but the notion they have framed of the mercy of God answers all their difficulties. Howbeit, no such mercy is proposed to sinners in the gospel; *Isa. xxvii. 11*; *Psalms lxxxv. 10*. It is true, it was a good prayer of the publican, *Luke xviii. 13*, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" but his words bear an eye to mercy through a propitiation; and so was the mercy of God held forth to the Old Testament church in the mercy-seat, as well as to the New.

(3.) The manner of their performing the duty itself. Great weight is laid here, as if a well-said prayer were sufficient to recommend itself and the petitioner too. Cain laid such weight on his sacrifice; *Gen. iv. 4, 5*. A flash of affections and seeming tenderness in prayer, is in the eyes of many a prayer that cannot be rejected; *Isa. lviii. 3*, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" Enlargement in duty raises the value of it so in their own eyes, that they cannot think but it must be valuable in the eyes of God too. So in the earnestness of the prayer, and many words used; *Matth. vi. 7*. Let men examine their expectations, and they will be fair to find more weight laid there than on the merit of Christ, though this only can bear weight.

(4.) Their own necessity; *Hos. vii. 14*, "They have not cried

unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds; they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me." Sense of need is a necessary qualification in acceptable prayer; but pinching necessity, where the heart is unhumiliated, is apt to be set in a room higher than becomes it, as if of itself it were a sufficient plea. When it is thus abused, may be known by this, That on the not hearing of the prayer, the heart riseth against God; a sign that the petitioner is not as a needy beggar craving an alms, but a needy creditor craving his own. Our necessity should quicken us to seek, but it is the merit and intercession of Christ alone that is to be relied on for our access.

USE III. Wherefore rely on Christ, and on him only, for access to God in, and acceptance of, your prayers; that is, pray in the name of Christ.

MOT. 1. In this way of praying ye may obtain any thing ye really need. So says the text, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." There is no mercy so great, nor any sinner so unworthy, but he may have it, coming to God this way; Heb. vii. 25, with John xi. 42. God can bestow it in that way with the safety of his honour, the sinner may confidently expect it on good grounds. For Christ's merit is infinite, his intercession always prevalent.

2. There is no access to God, nor acceptance of prayer another way; John xiv. 6. It is through him our persons can be accepted, Eph. i. 6; and through him our duties can be so; Heb. xi. 4. Every sacrifice not offered on this altar, however valuable it seems, will be rejected. There is no return of prayer in a gracious manner otherwise.

I conclude with giving you a few directions for praying in the name of Christ.

1. Labour to impress your hearts with a sense of the spotless holiness and exact justice of God, Psalm lxxxix. 7. This will shew the necessity of a Mediator to interpose, as in Israel's case.

2. Be sensible of your need of, and look for, the help of the Spirit in every approach, Rom. viii. 26. As the sending of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's merit and intercession; so the Spirit being come leads back to the Mediator, Eph. ii. 18.

3. Shake off all confidence in yourselves, and see your utter unworthiness of the least mercies, how great soever your need of them be, Gen. xxxii. 10. As Jacob put off his own raiment to put on his elder brother's for the blessing, so do ye cast off your own filthy rags, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Satisfy not yourselves with bare seeking for Christ's sake; that

is not enough : but be confident that ye shall get access, acceptance, and a gracious return for his sake, Mark xi. 24. Raise a believing expectation in him.

QUESTION, How may one reach that ? ANSWER, (1.) By a believing view of Christ on the cross purchasing, and at the Father's right hand, interceding for, our mercies ; and particularly eying his sufferings, agreeable to your wants, as in the case of your want of light, the darkness came on him ; in the case of your want of bread, his hunger, &c. (2.) By a believing application of the promises suitable to your needs. (3.) Considering this as God's ordinance for communication between heaven and earth, Gal. iii. 8.

5. *Lastly*, Watch against your hearts going off to any confidence in the duty itself ; for that is to dishonour the name of Christ, and will provoke the Spirit of the Lord to depart from you.

OF GOD'S HEARING OF PRAYER.*

PSALM lxxv. 2,

O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

WHAT avails prayer, if it be not heard ? But God's people need not lay it aside on that score. Our text bears two things with respect to that matter.

1. A comfortable title ascribed to God, with the unanimous consent of all the sons of Zion, who are all praying persons, "O thou that hearest prayer." He speaks to God in Zion, or Zion's God, that is, in New Testament language, to God in Christ. An absolute God thundereth on sinners from Sinai, there can be no comfortable intercourse betwixt God and them, by the law ; but in Zion from the mercy-seat in Christ, he is the hearer of prayer ; they give in their supplications, and he graciously hears them. Such faith of it they have, that praise waits there for the prayer-hearing God.

2. The effect of the savour of this title of God, spread abroad in the world, "Unto thee shall all flesh come ;" not only Jews, but Gentiles. The poor Gentiles, who have long in vain implored the aid of their idols, hearing and believing that God is the hearer of prayer, will flock to him, and present their petitions. They will throng in about his door ; where by the gospel they understand beggars are so well served. They will "come in even unto thee," (Heb.) They will come in even to thy seat, thy throne of grace, even unto thee thyself, through the Mediator.

* The substance of some Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1728.