their families in the morning, others for several days in a week, have no family worship, sometimes in the year in the throng of business. Let conscience say, if that be "praying without ceasing." Is it not a contempt of God in his worship, and like the hypocrite; Job xxvii. 10, of whom it is said, "Will he always call upon God?"

Use II. Pray without ceasing. For, (1.) Satan never ceases to seek your destruction, 1 Pet. v. 8. (2.) Your need of the Lord's help never ceaseth; ye need direction, protection, life, strength, mercies of all kinds, spiritual and temporal. (3.) Lastly, Time never ceases to run, and ye know not when it may run out. There is good reason we pray always, since we know no time wherein death may not overtake us.

---

OF THE SPIRIT'S HELP IN PRAYER. *

Romans viii. 26,

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Somewhat of the nature of prayer in general, with the import of praying without ceasing, has been explained to you; but it is not every kind of prayer that is acceptable to God. Among praying people there is a twofold cry that goes to heaven, (1.) The cry of strangers, not known and approved there. That is prayer wrought out by ourselves, in virtue of a natural sense of want, by a gift of knowledge and utterance. (2.) The cry of children; that is prayer wrought in us by the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling and acting in us, and is accepted of God. Of this our text speaks. In which,

1. The connection is to be noticed, "likewise." This chapter is an inventory of the privileges of believers. (1.) Freedom from condemnation, ver. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (2.) Sanctification, ver. 5, "They that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit." (3.) Comfort against death, ver. 10, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness." (4.) Sonship to God, ver. 14, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (5.) Glorification abiding them, ver. 18, "For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time, are

* Several Sermons preached at Etterick, in the year 1727.
not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." From this high privilege the apostle looks down on the cross and afflictions here laid on believers, and shews there is no comparison betwixt these afflictions and that glory, they being but like a prick with a pin received by one in his way to a crown. And this is a first grand consolation against the cross laid on believers.

(6.) The help of the Spirit for the present, in the text. And this is the second grand consolation of believers under the cross. They have not only, under all their afflictions, eternal glory made sure to them in end; but for the present time, while they are going under their burden, they have the Spirit of the Lord helping them, and particularly in prayer, the noted relief of the distressed, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," &c. And that is a great consolation under the cross.

2. The words themselves, in which we may observe two things:—

1st, A general assertion of the Spirit's assisting of believers in the midst of their infirmities. And here, (1.) There is something supposed, namely, That they are compassed with infirmities while here. They are recovered of their deadly sickness of sin, but they are still weak; they are restored to life, but they have as yet little strength, and are much bowed down with pressures on them. (2.) Something expressed, namely, the Spirit's helping of them in that case. Weak people need help, especially under heavy burdens. And believers want not help under theirs; they have the best of help, the help of God himself, the eternal Spirit of the Father and the Son, the third person of the glorious Trinity, by whom the Father and the Son do act in them. He "helps our infirmities," i. e. helps us in our infirmities, to whatsoever we have to do or bear.

This help of the Spirit is a joint action, as the word imports. Q. d. He "together over-against" takes a lift of our burden. Where the Spirit helps, the man is not idle; but while the believer is going under his burden, he lifts the heavy end of it, and makes it the lighter to us; he does as the nurse with the child learning to go; the child moves his feet, but she holds him up and helps him, holding it by the arms.

2dly, A particular condescension, namely, his helping them in prayer, which brings great relief under the cross. And here,

(1.) We have a general infirmity that believers labour under, and that is little skill of praying. Whenever the grace of God touches their hearts, they are set a-praying; however, they are in it but like children beginning to speak; while unbelievers meanwhile are but like dumb people making a roar. Their weakness and unskillfulness in praying lies in two things:
[1.] In the matter of prayer, "We know not what we should pray for." We are apt, instead of bread, to ask a stone; instead of a fish, a scorpion; to pray for what would do us ill, and against what is for our good.

[2.] In the manner of prayer, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." We cannot put our prayers in right shape, even when we are right as to the matter of them. We cannot put our petitions in form, in the style of the court of heaven.

(2.) The Spirit's help afforded them in this case: "But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us," &c. Where we may notice,

[1.] The agent in this help, "the Spirit itself," rather "the Spirit himself;" the meaning certainly is so, for the Spirit here spoken of is a person, not a thing; though, by reason of the language the apostle wrote in, it is expressed neutrally.

[2.] The help itself, He "maketh intercession for us." Christ intercedes for us in heaven; the Spirit intercedes in us, by his effectual working in us, helping us to pray aright, and make intercession for ourselves. He forms our petitions for the court of heaven. No gifts could avail to this end. If the best gift without the Spirit were bestowed on a man, he could not make a prayer that would be acceptable to God, though it might be much admired of men.

[3.] An instance of a particular, whereto the Spirit helps in prayer "with groanings." Not that the Spirit's help in prayer appears in these only; but that even these groanings for divine aid, which believers have in their prayer, though they may be reckoned small things, yet are really great and prevalent with God, as proceeding from and produced in them by his own Spirit; and they are more forcible and expressive of the desires of the soul than any words; so they are "groanings which cannot be uttered." It is evident, that the Spirit of God in himself doth not groan; but groanings are attributed to him, so far as he causes us to groan, by exciting our affections. Therefore his intercession is to be understood of his causing and helping us to intercede in prayer for ourselves.

The following doctrines may be observed from the words thus explained.

Doctrino I. It is a comfortable case under affliction, where the party is helped from heaven to pray under their burden.

Doctrino II. It is the privilege of believers to have the help of the Holy Spirit, under the infirmities with which they are compassed while here.
OF THE COMFORT THAT IS IN HELP FROM HEAVEN.

Doctrine III. Such is the weakness of God's own children, that they have not skill to manage even their addresses to God by prayer aright, without the Spirit.

Doctrine IV. All our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work, his making intercession for us.

Doctrine V. ult. The Spirit helps believers to pray, particularly causing in them gracious groanings, which cannot be uttered.

Doct. I. It is a comfortable case under affliction, where the party is helped from heaven to pray under their burden. This doctrine arises from the connection and scope of the words.

In discoursing from it, I shall consider,
I. What is the help from heaven to pray under a burden.
II. The comfort that is in this case.
III. Make improvement.
I. What is the help from heaven to pray under a burden. I take it up in these two particulars.
1. Help to lay the case before the Lord, and to table petitions before the throne of grace upon the case. If any are thus helped it is a token for good, they may take comfort of it; Psalm lxvi. 16, 17, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was exalted with my tongue." Little do we know how to table petitions on our case at the court of heaven; but if a shower of trouble should fall on us, and withal the spirit of prayer be poured on us, we would have no cause to complain. Though the Lord press down a person with the one hand, and stir him up to the exercise of prayer with the other, it is a hopeful case, as was that of Jonah, chap. ii. 1.

2. Help to insist and resolutely to hang on and not faint, however longsome the hearing may be, Col. i. 11. Thus the Spirit helps the children of God in prayer; Psalm cxxxviii. 3, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul;" 2 Cor. xii. 9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The patience of others in applications to the throne of grace will soon be tired out; they cannot wait, so they drop the matter, Job xxvii. 10, and go to another door. But those in whom the Spirit dwells see no other door, John vi. 68, and the Spirit is a spring of living water in them, which causes them to hold on.

II. What is the comfort that is in this case. It is manifold. I instance in the following particulars.
TO PRAY UNDER A BURDEN.

1. That is comfortable in it, that the native effect of affliction is stopped in such a person by influence from heaven. Affliction in its own nature is a whip, a brier, a thorn; and the native effect of it is, to drive the sinner away from God, to harden his heart, irritate his corruption, and make his heart a hell; Job xxxvi. 13, "The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when he bindeth them." But, by divine institution, it is a medicine, having a promise annexed to it; Isa. xxvi. 9, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness;" and so it brings the believing sinner to God, as the bitter potion causes the sick man turn to his physician, who would all he could keep himself out of the way of an enemy that had given him such a bitter draught, Rom. x. 14.

2. It is comfortable, even that the party gets a vent to his full heart. Those in a trouble find a kind of relief in pouring out their heart into the bosom of a sympathising friend; and it is an aggravation of affliction, when the fire must burn in the bosom, and there is no access to give it a vent. How much more is it a solid comfort, to be helped to pour out one's heart unto a gracious God, able and willing to help in due time? Micah resolved to take comfort this way; Micah vii. 7, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." And Hannah got it; 1 Sam. i. 15, 16, "And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial; for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." Ver. 18, "And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad."

3. It is comfortable that the Lord takes that way to draw the sinner to him, and keep him about his hand, and it is effectual; Hos. v. ult., "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." We reckon in the world, that they are in the best case that hold all within themselves; but in respect of spiritual thriving, they are fairest for that who are kept from hand to mouth, and never want a new errand to God's door. The Lord loves to have his children always about his hand, but they would be like children at their play about meal-time, that would never mind home if hunger did not bite them; and so in effect it fairs with many.

4. That is comfortable in it, that it is a sign of eternal good-will and everlasting love to such persons; Luke xviii. 7, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though
he bear long with them?" They would be tired out, if they were not 
God's chosen, possessed by his Spirit. Do ye see a place which is 
always full of water, summer and winter, in the greatest drought? 
ye may be sure that is no pool, but a spring, John iv. 14. The 
man prays and wrestles against a body of death, cries and goes on 
under a weight of trials; he holds on notwithstanding of seeming 
fruitlessness. See the verdict; Matth. xxiv. 13, "He that shall 
endure unto the end the same shall be saved."

6. That is comfortable in it, that his prayers shall be heard at 
length to his heart's content, if it should not be till he get into heav-
ven; Luke xviii. 8, "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."
The help of the Spirit in prayer is a certain pledge of the hearing 
of prayer, Jam. v. 18. If a poor man were to petition the king, but 
had no skill to draw his petition; and the king should send one 
from about his hand to help that poor man, and draw his petition 
for him; would not that be a sign that the king had a good mind to 
grant it? So it is equally a certain sign of God's good-will to the 
praying person, and a certain token that his prayers shall be heard 
to his full satisfaction at length, that the Spirit now helps him in 
prayer, and, as it were, draws his petitions for him.

6. It is comfortable, that the party is now and then getting some 
off-fallings about the Lord's hand; otherwise he would give over. 
In the way of duty, wherein people are not formal, but truly serious, 
there is a concomitant reward; Psalm xix. 11, "In keeping of them 
there is great reward;" and particularly in prayer; Isa. xlv. 
19, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." 
Though the Lord does not give the main request for the time, yet he 
gives something that keeps the heart from fainting; Lam. iii. 57, 
"Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; thou saidst, 
Fear not." So we find it happened to Paul; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, "For 
this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. 
And he said unto me my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength 
is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather 
glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
From what is said on this doctrine, the following things may be 
shortly observed for improvement.

1. The Lord's cross on his people's back, is better than the world's 
crown on the head of his enemies. For there is more comfort in the 
one's being helped from heaven to commit their case to the Lord, 
and depend on him for it, than in all the prosperity of the wicked. 
For all is well that ends well; and the former will have a joyful 
end, the latter a sad one, Prov. i. 32, 33.

2. They are doubly to be pitied, who are under an afflicted lot,
and withal strangers to the duty and comfort of prayer. This world is a place wherein neither good nor bad will miss their share of crosses. But to see this world frowning on a man, and in the meantime him not seeking his comfort from heaven; to see a person full of matter of complaints, and yet having no heart to pour them out into the bosom of our heavenly Father, is a sad sight.

3. Let praying people beware of afflictions deadening them, and taking heart and hand from them in prayer. Satan will do his utmost to work up afflictions to this pitch; and when he has got it done, he has what he would wish, he has an envenomed arrow sticking in their flesh. Let them haste to get it away, as ever they would cast a coal of hell out of their bosom; and remember that "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16; that "the Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," Lam. iii. 33; and that "all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28.

4. Lastly, Let those who are helped to pray under their affliction be thankful, and acknowledge God has not forgotten them. When the Lord's people have plied the throne of grace long for a mercy, and yet it comes not, they are ready to think that the Lord regards them not. But if ye be helped still to hang on, that very thing is an evidence that it is not true; and is a token for good in your case.

Doctrine II. It is the privilege of believers to have the help of the Holy Spirit, under the infirmities with which they are compassed while here.

Here I shall shew,
I. What are the infirmities believers are compassed with here.
II. Why in the depth of sovereign wisdom, believers are left compassed so with infirmities while here.
III. Consider the Spirit's helping believers under these infirmities.
IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew what are the infirmities believers are compassed with here.

First, They are always compassed with natural infirmities.
1. Pure natural infirmities, which though they be their weights and burdens, yet are not their sins. There is a natural weakness inwrought with human flesh, though at its prime of vigour, Isa. xl. 6, so that it was found even in the man Christ, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. This makes God's children objects of their Father's pity, Psalm ciii. 13, 14, "Like as a Father pitieth his children: so the Lord pitieth them Vol. XI.
that fear him. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust." Such are the need of meat, drink, sleep, &c., whereby the tabernacle must be daily underpropelled, Matth. xxvi. 41. Even Samson was sore pressed with such infirmity, Judges xv. 18, "He was sore athirst."

2. Sinful natural infirmities, which are both pressures on them, and deslements of them, wounding and polluting.

(1.) Common to them all, namely, the remains of the corruption of nature, which makes them all a company of poor weaklings, groaning under their infirmities, Rom. vii. 24. Their sanctification is imperfect; every grace in them has the contrary weed of corruption growing by the side of it. Grace indeed has got the house, but dwells not alone in it; the Canaanites are left in the land, and they cannot quite drive them out. Hence is the struggle not only with those without, but those within.

(2.) Peculiar to every one of them, namely, the particular bias of corrupt nature in each of them, arising from their natural constitution and temper; and this is a cast of disposition to some particular evil, commonly called "the predominant sin, the sin which doth so easily beset us," Heb. xii. 1. Thus the peculiar infirmity of some is passion, of others vanity, worldliness, &c. Every one will know their own, for it will be that which costs most struggle than anything else, and in which they will find need of the peculiar help of the Spirit.

Secondly, They are often compassed with accidental infirmities.

1. Sinless ones. Such are afflictions, trials, and temptations, which though not their sins, yet are heavy weights to them, causing them much need of help, as in Paul's case, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9. Thus diseases and ailments of whatsoever nature go under the name of infirmities, as weakening body or spirit, Luke v. 15. Timothy had frequent attacks by them, 1 Tim. v. 23. And in the road to heaven such weights and pressures one way or other will not be missed, Acts xiv. 22.

2. Sinful ones, being wrong casts of spirit, arising from education or other circumstances, giving them as it were a second nature. Such was the infirmity of the disciples, whereby they were ready on all occasions to mind a temporal kingdom of Christ, and to be stumbled at his sufferings; and the bias towards the ceremonial law, which the believing Jews had remaining with them; Rom. xv. 1.

Hence the infirmities of believers may be taken up in the following particulars:—

1. They have weak heads for discerning and understanding sin and duty, snares, temptations, and proper means for eviting the one, and compassing the other, Jer. x. 23, "It is not in man that walk-
eth to direct his steps." The subtle enemy is ready to outwit them, and by his devices to triumph over their weakness. Therefore we are warned not to trust our own understanding; Prov. iii. 5.

2. They have weak hearts for venturing on difficulties, which make them ready to faint at the appearance of them, Isa. xxxv. 4. And the formidable enemy is ready to damp them, and discourage them. They know themselves how little strength they have; and their faith being weak withal, they are apt to sink in their courage for doing and suffering.

3. They have weak hands for doing of duties in the right manner, Isa. xxxv. 3. They are not in themselves man enough for the most ordinary duties of religion, and therefore being left to themselves, they quite mismanage them, John xv. 5, 2 Cor. iii. 5. And sometimes the Lord calls them to extraordinary duties.

4. Lastly, They have weak backs for bearing burdens, so that they are easily bowed down, yea and foundered under them, 2 Cor. ii. 16. Their suffering strength is small, considering the weak frame of their bodies, and the remaining distempers in their souls.

II. I come now to show why, in the depth of sovereign wisdom, believers are left compassed so with infirmities while here. Surely it is not for want of power in their Father to deliver them: for he is almighty, and in the moment he gave them grace, could have perfected them in soul and body. Neither is it for want of love to and concern for them; for he has the bowels of a Father, and gave them his own Son, which was more than all that. But so it is ordered,

1. That the members may be conformed to the head, Rom. viii. 29. Our Lord Jesus did not enter to his glory, but after a long track of sufferings, Heb. ii. 10. This was necessary in the case of Christ the head, for the purchasing of our salvation, Matth. viii. 17; Luke xxiv. 26. And it is necessary in the case of believers, that they may be conformed to him, bearing the image of his sufferings, for his glory.

2. That the emptiness of the creature may be discovered, and the pride of all created glory stained, and that the crown may be put on the head of free grace only; so that we may say, "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth," Isa. xxiii. 9. There-in a scene is opened, wherein there is a full display of the nothingness of the creature, that heaven may appear to be peopled with those that could have no pretensions to it, but on the score of mere free grace.

3. That all the graces of the Spirit in believers may be brought
forth into the field of battle, and exert themselves, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. There are some graces whose exercise is to be eternal, as love, reverential fear, &c. these will be exerted in heaven as well as here. But there are others that are occasional in their exercise, such as faith, hope, patience, watchfulness, &c. which agree only to a state of imperfection: and there they have occasion to shew themselves. So, for the exercise of these, and trial of both sorts, the Canaanites are left in the land. And therefore some are loaded with peculiar infirmities.

4. That the power of the grace of Christ may be magnified. The infirmities wherewith believers are compassed, make a scene wherein the power of Christ is signally displayed, as, says the apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 9, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God could have seated Israel in Canaan, without stroke of sword; but then Joshua's valour, which appeared in the conquest of that land, had lain hid. Believers are committed into Christ's hand, as the great Pilot, to guide them through the sea of this world, to the shore of Immanuel's land: and it will magnify the power of his grace, that by his conduct so many broken ships are brought safe ashore, through so many rocks and shelves, and suffering so many storms.

5. That the bruised serpent may be beat the more shamefully, and Christ's victory and triumph over him may be the more signal. He encountered Christ in person on the cross; and there he was over-come, the Son of God being an overmatch for all the powers of hell. But that his defeat may be more shameful, he is yoked with poor believers with a heap of infirmities about them; and by them too, after he has done his worst, he is baffled at length, Rom. xvi. 20. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

And here it is worth observing, that our Lord Jesus singles out some of his people to combat with Satan, loaded with some uncom-mon infirmity, whereby he has a peculiar advantage against them, that he has not against others: and all to make that malicious spirit's defeat yet more shameful. As if one, to pour contempt on his enemy, should say, I will take such an one of my children that are not quite recovered out of their sickness, and I will bind one of his arms behind his back, and yet make him throw you down, and tread on you. Thus Job was stript of all his comforts, his children, wealth, and health; nothing left him but his life, and his unkind wife that Satan had use for; and Satan makes a furious attack on him to blaspheme, when he had him at all this disadvantage. And yet he was baffled in the end, Jam. v. 11, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is
very pitiful and of tender mercy. And when the gospel was to be spread in the world, Satan had the power of the sword and the learning in the world engaged in the defence of his kingdom; and Christ singles out a few fishermen, neither swordsmen nor bookmen, Paul excepted, and they pull it down; notwithstanding all the magistrates could do by their force, and they learned by their subtility to support it.

6. Lastly, To screw up the glory of the exceeding riches of grace to a height, Eph. ii. 7, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." According to this dispensation, believers are drowned deeper in the debt of free grace, than otherwise they would have been, Rom. v. 20. By these infirmities wherewith they are compassed, it comes to pass that their accounts of pardoning and supporting grace are swelled with many items; the view of which will make them sing the praises of God in heaven, on a higher key than innocent Adam would have done.

III. We shall consider the Spirit's helping believers under those infirmities they are compassed with. And here I shall shew,

1. The import of this.

2. How the Spirit helps them under their infirmities.

First, I am to shew the import of the Spirit's helping believers under their infirmities. It imports in it,

1. A bent of heart in the believer toward his work and duty, set him by the great Master, Rom. vii. 22; for what people have no mind to, they need no help for. The heart of every child of God is reconciled to the whole law, Heb. viii. 10. And what God carves out for him either to do or suffer, he would fain come up to, Matth. xxvi. 41. Even when there is a felt averseness to it, this bent in the renewed part remains with him, to which that averseness is a burden, Rom. vii. 22, 23.

2. The infirmities hanging about the believer, make duty difficult to him: if it were not so, what need would he have of help? Matth. xxvi. 40, 41. These hang like weights on him, and draw him down, when he would mount upwards; so his executive powers cannot answer his will. He is at best like a bird flying with a stone tied to its foot; whereby it comes to pass, that it cannot fly far till it light, and the short way it flies is with difficulty.

3. The believer is sensible of his infirmities, for it is supposed that he is wrestling under them, Rom. vii. 23, 24. He sees, he feels, that he is not man enough for his work; that his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor his own back for his burden; this is what drives him out of himself to the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor.
iii. 5. And thus he lies open to the help of the Spirit, while proud nature in unbelievers is left helpless, 1 Pet. v. 5, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Isa. xi. 4, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

4. The believer aims at and attempts to do his duty, over the belly of his infirmities. For helping is a joint action, Phil. iii. 14, "I press towards the mark." Many feel a difficulty in the weightiest parts of religion, that makes them at length to give them over. They neither have ability in themselves to master such a lust, nor have the grace to betake themselves to Christ for the help of his Spirit. But they sit down contented under it, soothing themselves with this, that every one has his infirmity, and that is theirs; and so they discover their hypocrisy. But real saints wrestle with their infirmities, sit not down, but go on though they go halting.

5. Lastly, The spirit of the Lord comes in to the believer's help in this case, so as the work and duty is got done. "For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities." As the nurse helps the child attempting to go, or one helps a man attempting to lift up a weighty burden; so the Spirit helps the weak believer essaying his duty, to perform it. He stretches out the withered hand, and with the aiming to stretch it out, power is sent in from above.

Secondly, I am next to show how the Spirit helps believers under their infirmities.

1. He helps them by his influence in gifts. Here he does two things.

1st, He bestows on them gifts necessary for the performance of what the Lord calls them to, of whatever nature that be, temporal or spiritual, 1 Cor. xii. 8—11, "To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The gifts of believers are various, according to the variety of their stations in life, and the respective particular duties required of them in their stations. Every one has not all, nor will ever have all; because there are many of them which they have no necessity for, in respect of what God calls them to. But there are two things I would have you advert to.

(1.) Whatever good gift a child of God has, he will get use for it, for God, soon or late, 1 Cor. xii. 7; though for a time he may have
little or none for it. For in that case the Spirit lays in aforesight for their help. David had the gift of music in his younger years; the use of it for God appeared afterwards, when on that account he was sent for to Saul's court, and afterwards he ordered the temple service in that point. Paul had a gift of human learning; he got use for it afterwards, when he fought those at Athens with their own weapons, Acts xvii. 28. Moses had a gift of extraordinary meekness of temper, and Job of extraordinary patience; each got as much ado with them for God.

An unbeliever indeed may have a gift, which he never has any use for, for God. For he always does one of two things with it; either he hides it in the earth, and makes no use of it all, Matth. xxv. 25; or else he uses it to the service of his own lusts, Jam. iv. 3, 4. But God will not let any good gift in his own people lie by useless.

(2.) Whatever duty, in temporal or spiritual things, God calls a believer to, he will, in a way of believing, get the gift from God necessary for it, Prov. x. 29, "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright:" and iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." For it is the office of the Spirit to help his people's infirmities. And so a call from the Lord to any piece of work, imports a promise of a gift of ability for it, the sap of which promise is to be sucked by believing it; and it is withal a call to look to the Lord for the help of his Spirit. For the Lord treats not his children as the Egyptian taskmasters did, who would have the Israelites make brick without giving them straw. Moses is called to go Jehovah's ambassador to the court of Egypt; he is sensible of an infirmity, but the Spirit's help is secured to him, Exod. iv. 10, 12. Bezaleel and Aholiab must work the curious work of the tabernacle. Where should they have learned it, when they were slaves in Egypt at the brick-kilns? But the Spirit helps their infirmity, bestowing on them necessary gifts, Exod. xxxi. 2, &c.

But in case the believer do not go to God for the gift, in the way of believing, no wonder he want it. For is it anything strange that the help of the Spirit is not given a man, in a particular, wherein he does not look for it? as he is commanded to do, Prov. iii. 6.

2dly, He influences them to the exercise of these gifts, Matth. x. 19, 20, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. As every good gift is from the Spirit, so the same Spirit has not given them away so to any, but that he has still lock and key on them, opening them out, and shut-
ting them up as he will, Isa. xxix. 14. Therefore there ought to be
a dependance on the Lord, for the help of his Spirit, to the exercise
of any gift necessary for what the Lord calls one to. That unbeliev-
ers have a common influence of the Spirit, in the way of com-
munication, to the exercise of their gifts, though they look not to
the hand it comes from, is for the benefit of human society; but
even the Spirit's influence on gifts, coming to believers in the chan-
nel of the covenant, their blunders and mismanagements in the ex-
ercise of their gifts, are rebukes to them for their not looking more
to the help of the Spirit herein, and to bring them to their duty.

2. He helps them by his influence in grace. Here he helps their
infirmities three ways.

1st. He preserves the grace he has planted in believers, so as it
never dies out; 1 John ii. 27, "The anointing which ye have re-
ceived of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach
you; but, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is
truth, and is no lie; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide
in him." The quickening spirit of Christ being communicated to
the dead elect in the time of loves, they are made to live and believe
in Christ, and so are united to him; upon which union the same
Spirit takes of the treasure of grace in Christ, and plants in the be-
liever grace for grace in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 13, with John i. 16.
And this for all time after he preserves; 2 Tim. i. 14, "That
good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost
which dwelleth in us. John x. 28, "I give unto them eternal life,
and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my
hand." Deut. xxxiii. 3, "All his saints are in thy hand; and they
sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words," i.e. thy
Spirit. Luke xi. 20; with Matth. xii. 28. Now, this is a great help-
ing of their infirmities, if ye consider jointly these four things.

(1.) That holy quality called grace, is in its own nature a thing
liable to be lost. Adam at his creation was endowed with a far
greater measure of it than any believer has in this world; yet that
holy fire in him was quite extinguished; that heavenly plant, by
one bite of the venomous teeth of the old serpent, died out quite, and
withered away. How then is it preserved in believers compassed
with infirmities, but by the help of the Spirit? Free-will in Adam
lost it, but the free grace of the free Spirit preserves it in weak
ones of his family.

(2.) It dwells with an ill neighbour, even the corruption of na-
ture, that is quite opposite to it. The old man of sin had the first
possession, the new man of grace is brought in upon him, and meets
with a continual resistance, yet is preserved. There is the weight
of a body of sin and death pressing grace in the believer, yet is it not crushed to death. Whoso looks into his own heart, and sees what powerful lusts are there, must needs wonder to see the pearl kept in such a dung-hill, and the spark of holy fire kept in the midst of an ocean of corruption; and must own it to be entirely owing to the help of the Spirit; Gal. v. 17, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

(3.) The whole force of hell is bent for its extinction; 1 Pet. v. 8, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." The image of God repaired in a believer, though but in part, is an eye-sore to Satan, he cannot endure to look at it. Therefore he uses all his subtilty, power, and unwearyed diligence to rase it. He works against it incessantly, turns himself into all shapes that he may overturn it; employs his friends within and his friends without to the same purpose, yet it is preserved. How? but by the help of the Spirit; 1 John iv. 4, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

(4.) Lastly, The believer in himself is but a weak creature; he has a weak head, heart, hands, and back; is easily outwitted by a subtle enemy, discouraged, overthrown, and bowed down. Innocent Adam's strength and skill failed in preserving the grace received in his creation; yet the believer's grace received in his new creation is never lost; though of itself it is a perishing quality, is surrounded with corruption, and the whole force of hell is employed to extinguish it. For why? the almighty Spirit helps their infirmities.

2dly, He excites grace in them, and brings it forth into exercise; Phil. ii. 13, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If the exercise of gifts depends on a common operation of the Spirit, surely the exercise of grace on a special operation of the same Spirit. As the fire buried under the ashes will not serve the purposes of the family's provision, nor the tree with its sap retired into the heart and root bring forth fruit; so grace in the habit only is not sufficient for duty. The holy fire must be blown up, and through the return of the sap to the branches they must bud and blossom. And this is the work of the Spirit, Cant. iv. ult., "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out; let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Now the Spirit excites grace in believers,

(1.) Presenting objects to their minds fit to rouse it up; and so he acts as a teaching Spirit; John xiv. 26, "He shall teach you all
things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Corruption thrives most in darkness, because it belongs to the kingdom of darkness. But light let into the soul stirs up grace, therefore it is called the light of life, John viii. 12. Thus the Spirit presenting a man's sin to him in its ugly colours, stirs up the grace of repentance, Psalm li. 3; discovering the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it excites love; and discovering the creature in its emptiness, excites contempt of the world. And this is a great help, for,

(1.) We are apt to forget these things when we have most need to mind them; as to forget human frailty and divine might, when there is greatest need of confidence in the Lord, against the terror of man; and the Spirit in that case is the believer's remembrancer, and so excites grace; Isa. li. 12, 13, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?" Our weakness in such points makes us need a monitor, being often like Hagar, whose eyes saw not the well, though it was very near by, until God opened them, Gen. xxi. 19. So that when such a thing is suggested, one is often made to wonder how they saw it not.

(2.) When we do mind them, we cannot command a lively sight of them, without the blowing of the Spirit, Hos. viii. 12. They lie before our eyes as so many dry bones, till the Spirit set them in motion, by setting them in a due light. Joseph's brethren could not forget that they had been guilty concerning him, nor David that he had sinned in the matter of Uriah; but till the Spirit set these things in another light to them, they were not moved to repent.

(2.) By touching their hearts and affections, and immediately bringing them forth into exercise. Thus the sleeping spouse was awakened; Cant. v. 4, "My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him." And so he acts as a quickening Spirit. The hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord, to turn them what way he will; and so he moves them by a touch in common things, as he did the band of men that went with Saul to Gibeah, "whose hearts God had touched," 1 Sam. x. 26; and he also moves them by a touch in gracious actions, as the spouse found; Cant. vi. 12, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. As the thaw wind makes the frozen waters to flow again, and the air in the bellows blows up the fire; so there is an influence of the Spirit on the hearts of believers, open-
ing them in the exercise of grace, Phil. ii. 13. This is a great help to believers; for,

(1.) Their hearts are oft-times very dead within them, when called to duty, either doing or suffering, Cant. v. 2, 3, "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on! I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Their affections are flat, and their souls indisposed for spiritual action. But when the Spirit touches their hearts, they are fitted for duty; their spiritual life is brought forth into liveliness and activity, Psalm lxxx. 18, "Quickens us, and we will call upon thy name.

[2.] They can by no art of theirs remove their deadness of heart and affections, 2 Cor. iii. 5, but they will lie windbound in the harbour, till the Spirit blow. They may be long toiling in rowing in the use of means, and yet be still but' where they were, for all they can do. But the influences of the Spirit rising and filling their sails, they will presently make way, Cant. vi. 12.

Now, this double action of presenting to their minds, and touching their hearts, whereby the Spirit excites grace, is signified to us by comparing the Spirit to fire, which has both light and heat with it, Matth. iii. 11. And there is a twofold mean the Spirit makes use of for that purpose, viz. the word and providence, of which afterwards.

3dly, He strengthens and increases grace in them, Eph. iii. 16, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man." Grace is a heavenly seed capable of growth, 2 Pet. iii. ult., and so admits of various degrees of strength, not only in different persons, in respect of which some are little children, others youth, others fathers, 1 John ii. but in the same person at different times, Is. xl. ult, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." And indeed of its own nature it is a growing thing, as a seed; grace hath a seminal virtue in it, that fits it for growing and receiving more strength, John iv. 14. Meanwhile the seed will not grow unless it be watered from above; so grace grows not, but by the influence of the Spirit, Hos. xiv. 5, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Now the Spirit doth strengthen and increase grace,

(1.) By frequent exciting it into action. The habits of grace, as well as others, are strengthened by the repeated exercise of them. The more it shines, it shines the brighter, Prov. iv. 18. It is for
this cause that God has bound converts also to the hearing of the word, whereby their graces are brought forth into one act after another, as the object is still anew proposed; and for this cause he tryst his people with a variety of incidents, afflictions, and trials, which bring their graces into frequent exercise, whereby at length they become strong.

(2.) By bringing forth into exercise one grace, he strengthens the rest, 2 Pet. i. 5, 8. “And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As a mason by laying on a new stone in his wall, fastens the rest under it; or the sheaves of corn stand the more firmly, that one is set at the side of another; so one grace is still the better of another joined to it in the exercise thereof. So humility strengthens meekness and patience, love strengthens obedience in all points, and faith strengthens altogether; like a band or key-stone in an arch, the more firm it is, the firmer is the whole arch; so the Spirit, by bringing forth one grace in the believer’s heart after another, strengthens the whole collection, and makes it the more firm and steady.

(3.) By affording them Christian experiences, whereby they find the truth and reality of what they have believed, and the blessed sensible advantage of the exercise of grace, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. “We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Experienced Christians are therefore always the strongest Christians, even as the spoil got in one battle helps the soldier to fight the more stoutly in the next, 1 Sam. xvii. 36, 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. Former experiences are the traveller to Zion’s way-marks in dark steps, and his cordials in difficult ascents. Every taste of divine goodness and grace refreshes and strengthens. Now it is the Spirit that gives these experiences, John xvi. 14, “He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”

(4.) By immediate supplies of grace, Phil. i. 19, “I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” As the lamp is preserved from going out, and is caused to burn more vigorously, by new oil poured in; so grace is strengthened by the Spirit giving new supplies thereof, Isa. xliiv. 3, 4. Hence the Spirit is said to “build us for an habita-
tion to God," Eph. ii. 1. He works the first grace; and all
the intermediate supplies of it, and the perfecting of it, are his,
Psalm cxxxviii. 1. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth
me." Now, this is a great help; for,

[1.] Weighty is the work that lies to the believer's hand; doing
work, suffering work. The Christian life is no easy life, however
men that go no further than the outside of it, may make it so to
themselves. It is a striving, taking by force, running, labour-
ing, fighting, &c. How could it be managed, without the helps
of the Spirit?

[2.] Great is the opposition that they must work against, Eph. vi.
12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against prin-
cipalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this
world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The wind will
be blowing in their face from hell at all times; and sometimes they
will meet with violent storms. How could they stand against it, if
the Spirit did not help?

[3.] Weak are the hands that work is put into, that has all that
opposition. There is a feebleness natural to them, that makes them
oft hang down. How could they ever do that work mangre so much
opposition, without the helps of the Spirit?

The means which the Spirit of God makes use of to preserve, ex-
cite, and strengthen grace in believers, and so to help them, are two.

1. Providences; Psalm xcvii. 4, "For thou, Lord, hast made me
 glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands." The
kingdom of providence is put into the hand of the Mediator, for
the behoof of the kingdom of grace; and he guides it by his Spirit.
The wheels of providence are managed by the Spirit; Ezek. i. 20,
and so managed as to help believers in their infirmities. And here
two things are especially to be noticed,

(1.) Seasonable turns of the wheel of providence, whereby the be-
liever's wain is often kept up when it is at the oversetting; 1 Cor.
x. 13, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above
that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to
escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Psalm xciv. 18, "When I
said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." Thus
many times the believer is brought to an extremity, as Isaac when
the knife was at his throat, when providence seasonably interposes
for his relief and outgate; Psalm cxxv. 3.

(2.) Seasonable intermixtures of providence. Thus the Spirit in-
termixes encouraging dispensions with difficult duties, Judg. vii.
13, 14., merciful incidents with their sharp afflictions; and, on the
other hand, afflicting incidents with their prosperity; and all that
they may neither be swallowed up with adversity, nor destroyed with prosperity.

2. Ordinances, Isa. xii. 3, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." These are instituted by the King of Zion, for the special means of grace, whereby his Spirit is to work, and to render them effectual. And the experience believers have of the Spirit's helping their infirmities by these, makes them very precious in their sight. And among these there are two especially used for this end.

1st, The sacraments. They are exciting and strengthening ordinances particularly, and consequently preservative of grace. The eunuch's experience witnesseth this as to baptism, Acts viii. 39, he "went on his way rejoicing." And the Lord's supper is "the communion of the body and blood of Christ," 1 Cor. x. 16., which, by the Spirit's working, has been to the experience of many a great help.

2dly, The word. This is the most special mean. Providence has its efficacy from the word, and so have the sacraments. It is their continual mean of help, their every-day's meal, which they can go to when providence is most lowring, and sacramental occasions offer not. And the Spirit uses it for their help three ways.

(1.) Preached, 1 Cor. i. 21, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." This affords to the attentive believer a continued occasion of the exercise of his faith and love, while a variety of spiritual truths and objects are represented to him, in their turn; which the Spirit makes use of to draw forth his graces into exercise. Whence believers go away instructed, warmed, strengthened, in a word, edified, by reason of so many actings of grace, during their hearing, like the two disciples going to Emmaus, when they said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32.

(2.) Read, 1 Tim. iv. 13, "Till I come, give attendance to reading." This has the same advantages attending it. Thereby the Spirit of God speaks immediately to the believer by his own word in his own express terms. And the experience of the usefulness of this mean has made saints prize their Bibles as their life.

(3.) Suggested, John xiv. 26, "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The bringing of the word to mind with a man is the office of the Spirit; and by that means he helps believers' infirmities, bringing a word suitable to their case, into their remembrance, whether to clear them in doubts, comfort them under pressures, direct them in difficulties, or check them for their debordings, &c. And herein he uses often the very
words of the Bible, always what is the sense and doctrine of the Bible. And,

[1.] Sometimes the Spirit barely suggests the word to the mind without any peculiar light about it, or power impressing it, John xiv. 26, just cited. Thus it is presented as an object for the believer to act faith on, and is a call to look up to the Spirit to enlighten it, and help to believe it, Acts viii. 30, 31. And thus a word at first coming in this way, comes afterwards to be illuminated by the Spirit's shining on it to the man.

[2.] Sometimes there is a peculiar light and power that comes along with it at the very first, clearly holding out the meaning of it, and impressing it so on their hearts, that they must needs believe and embrace it, John ii. 17, "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." There were many Old Testament passages speaking more clearly of Christ which they understood not, but the Spirit thus suggested this to them.

Meanwhile it is to be observed, that all suggestions of the word are not from the Spirit of God. That Satan may suggest scripture to a man, is evident from Matth. iv. 6. Therefore is that warning, 1 John iv. 1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." But the cloven foot may be discerned in such cases two ways.

[1.] They are always of a tendency to drive sinners away from Christ, 1 John iv. 2, 3, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And they tend to drive out of the road of duty, Matth. iv. 6, "And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." This was the design of the testimony he gave to Christ, and to his apostles; while the testimony was indeed true in itself, he gave it maliciously for an ill end. Therefore mark the tendency of suggestions of the word. Whatever tends to carry off from faith in Christ, or from any point of commanded duty, is not from the Spirit. For his work tends to faith and sanctification. Hence,

[2.] They are always applied by him contrary to their true sense and scope, forasmuch as the Lord's word cannot serve an ill purpose, unless it is wrested; as is evident from what the devil says to Christ, Matth. iv. 6, above cited, compared with Psalm xci. 11, 12, "For
he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” And therefore the scripture-passage is to be considered, and how it agrees with other scriptures as to the sense and scope in which it is suggested, Matth. iv. 7, “Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and leads to the true sense and scope of scripture, John xvi. 13.

I add one observe more on the means, namely, that sometimes the Spirit helps believers’ infirmities, by a particular providence trysting the word to their case. This often comes to pass in hearing the word preached, while the word in its ordinary course is brought directly to what is their case in the time; so that it is like the Midianite’s telling his dream, Judg. vii. 13, while Gideon, unknown to him, was overhearing; or they are providentially led to such a place, where such a word suitable to their case is handled, Cant iii. 3. The same particular providence appears often in the reading of the word, whether at family worship, or in secret, or by some providential casting of it in one’s way.* I think it dangerous to make a fortune-book of the Bible, as some under temptation have opened the Bible, to know their case by the first word that should cast up to them. This is an unwarrantable and dangerous practice, though a merciful God may sometimes condescend to outshoot the devil in his own bow as in the case of her who threw the glass at the wall, and it broke not. But when people are thus met in the way of their duty, or surprised, with a word suited to their case, the work of the Spirit is to be owned in it, as an accomplishment of the promise, Isa. xxx. 21, “Thine ear shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” Certainly the Spirit gives instruction, reproof, invitations, to unbelievers this way; and much more helps the infirmities of his people the same way, for so the word is in its true use, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. And this should recommend the reading of the word of God in an ordinary.

I shall now make some short improvement of this doctrine.

Use 1. Of information. This teaches us and shews,

1. That believers owe their spiritual strength and comfort to the same hand that they owe their spiritual life to. As the mother who

* Many instances of this are to be found; in the author’s own experience, in his Memoirs.
brought forth the child nurses it with her own breasts; so the Spirit, who is to the elect the Spirit of life to quicken them lying dead in sin, is likewise the Comforter to strengthen them under their infirmities when spiritually alive, John vi. 63, and xvi. 13; compare Psalm cxxxviii., ult.

2. The Lord calls none of his people to any duty, but they may get it done acceptably, however difficult it is. For the help of his own Spirit is their allowance; Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Here is the great difference betwixt those under the law and under grace. The law or covenant of works exacts duty rigidly, but affords no help; the covenant of grace affords the promise of help with the command; for the latter is, but the former is not, the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8.

3. How that gospel-paradox; 2 Cor. xii. 10, "When I am weak, then am I strong," is so often verified in the experience of the saints. Many a time when they are strong and well buckled in all appearance for a work, it miscarries; why, they do not go out of themselves in a way of believing, and so the Spirit withdraws. At other times they see themselves quite out of case and ability to manage such a work, and yet it succeeds; why, the Spirit comes in to their help, while they are sensible of need.

Usk II. Of reproof. It may reach a reproof,

1. To believers sometimes venturing on duties, more in confidence of their own abilities, than of the Spirit's help, as Peter did when he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended," Matth. xxvi. 33. This is the cause that the duty is marred; the bow so bended cannot miss to break. It is sometimes marred as to the very getting it done, and always as to its acceptance with God.

2. To unbelievers, who neither have the Spirit, nor are careful to have him dwelling in them, and influencing them. Their best works are dead works, having nothing of the quickening and sanctifying Spirit in them; and they themselves are but natural men spiritually dead, Jude 19. Whatever flourish they make with their gifts in duties, their best duties will no more be accepted of God than car- rion, or a beast that died of itself would have been accepted on the altar.

3. To those who press on men still this and the other duty, without leading them to Jesus Christ for his Spirit and grace. This is another gospel, that will never make men holy, Gal. iii. 2, for it is not the ministration of the Spirit. And the same veil they cast over the Spirit and grace of Christ, they will always be found to cast.
over the corruption of man's nature too, that they may with some
decency say to every man, Physician, heal thyself.

Use III. Of exhortation. And, 1. To natural men void of the
Spirit. Be concerned to get the Spirit first to quicken you, and
then to assist and help you. Ye can do nothing acceptable to God
in that state; and no wonder, for ye have not the gracious help of
the Spirit, without which ye can have no access to God, Eph. ii. 18.
So ye and your works are both dead carcasses before him.

Therefore come to Christ in the way of believing; for the fulness
of the Spirit is lodged in him to be communicated, Rev. iii. 1. So
uniting with him, ye shall receive the Spirit. The fire that was set
to the incense, was brought from the altar of burnt-offering. See
John xx. 22, and Gen. ii. 7.

2. To believers. (1.) Let this comfort you under, and reconcile
you to, the state of infirmities, wherewith ye are compassed; 2 Cor.
xii. 9, 10. Though sinless infirmities are not to be desired, and sin-
ful ones are much to be lamented; yet it is matter of rejoicing,
that in these the Spirit gives sweet experience of his help.

(2.) Learn to look habitually for the help of the Spirit under
your infirmities. While ye consider what ye have to do or bear, it is
reasonable you cast one eye on your infirmity, but another eye up-
ward for the Spirit's help. And by this means you will get his help.
Luke xi. 13, "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto
your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the
Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Doctrine III. Such is the weakness of God's own children, that
they have not skill to manage even their addresses to God by prayer
aright, without the Spirit. For we know not what we should pray
for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." They
are like children putting their hand to a work, but with so
little skill, that they must needs have one to stand over them, and
direct them at every turn.

In discoursing from this point, I shall shew,
I. What is implied in this truth.

II. Wherein believers are ready, through their weakness, to mis-
take, go wrong, and mismanage in their prayers.

III. Lastly, Apply.

I. I shall shew what is implied in this truth. It implies,

1. That they are not of themselves able for what is to be done
and borne in the Christian life; 2 Cor. iii. 5. So far from it, that
they do not well know what is necessary for their help, what to seek
of God for that end, and how to seek it. If a duty is to be done, a
cross to be borne, they are at a loss there through weakness and infirmity; that sets them to their prayers: but then they are at a loss there again, they know not what, and how to ask.

2. That the children of God are all praying persons; Zech. xii. 10. If they can speak at all, they will speak to God by prayer; and even when they either cannot speak, or have no access to speak, if they have the exercise of judgment, they will pray in their hearts; 1 Cor. xiv. 15. So the habitual neglect of prayer is none of the spots of God's people. There is no child so unnatural, as to be still in his father's presence, and never to converse with him.

3. A gift of prayer, without the Spirit of prayer, cannot be sufficient to make one right prayer, that will be acceptable to God; John iv. 24. Gifts of prayer are bestowed on believers, as well as others; but still they know not what to pray for as they ought, without the Spirit prompting them. The prayer that is the mere exercise of a gift, may indeed be edifying to the hearers, but cannot be acceptable to God.

4. Nay, habitual grace is not sufficient for praying aright; for still there is a necessity of actual assistance from the Spirit; Psalm lxxx. 18, "Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." Life is not sufficient for making a discourse to our prince; a man may have life, and yet not be able to speak a word; but some vigour and liveliness is necessary to such a purpose. So spiritual life never departs wholly from the believer; 1 John iii. 9, but it must be breathed on anew to fit him for praying; Cant. iv. ult. New influences are still necessary; hence is the promise; Isa. xxvii. 3, "I will water it every moment."

5. Lastly, Prayers are marred so far as the Spirit of God does not assist the party in them; they are marred so far in point of acceptance with God; Eph. ii. 18. As no prayer can be accepted but through Christ's intercession, so none will be offered to God by the Intercessor farther than it is the product of the influence of his own Spirit. Nadab and Abihu's hearth-fire offered with the incense, was a costly lesson of this; Lev. x. 1, 2, 3. So if, through the whole prayer, the Spirit's assistance is wanting, the whole will be unaccepted; if in any of it, that wherein it is wanting will be so.

II. The next head is to show, wherein believers are ready, through their weakness, to mistake, go wrong, and mismanage in their prayers. They are ready to do so both in the matter and manner of them.

First, In the matter of prayer, "We know not what to pray for." Even the things to be prayed for, they are not so well versed in them, but they are ready to go wrong therein. So that they need the
Spirit's teaching, to tell them and make them take up their errand, when they are going and come to God in prayer; they need to be set right, and kept right in the very matter of prayer. Their weakness in this point appears, in that,

1. They are apt to pray against their own mercy. Thus did Job, chap. vi. 8, 9, "O that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off." When Satan was permitted to take all from him, there was an express reserve of his life as the greatest mercy; but he prays very earnestly against it, though no doubt at long-run Job blessed God from his heart that he did not hear him in that. We are so weak, that in God's dispensations many times we take our friends for our foes, and call what is for our good, evil, as Jacob did when he said, "All these things are against me," Gen. xlii. 36.

2. They are apt to see what is not so good as God has a mind to give them; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." To be freed from the messenger of Satan was good, but to have God's grace poured in sufficiently to maintain the combat, was better. And therefore Paul upon reflection takes God's way to have been better than what he himself proposed, ver. 9, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Narrow asking oftimes makes narrow receiving. It fares with believers sometimes as with Joash; 2 Kings xiii. 18, 19, "Elisha said unto him, Take the arrows; and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground; and he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." They are straitened in their own bowels in asking, and therefore they come not speed.

3. They are apt to seek what would be for their hurt. So did Jonah, when he wished in himself to die, and said, it is better for me to die than to live; chap iv. 8. It would have been very ill for Jonah to have died in such a bad frame and temper of spirit, as he was then in. And if God had struck him immediately, it is like he would immediately have changed his note. David prayed for the life of the child, 2 Sam. xii. 16, but God took it away, for it would have been a living blot upon him. As a foolish child seeks a knife to play with, which he can do nothing with, but hurt himself; so we are apt to seek from God, what in mercy he keeps from us.

4. They are apt to seek food for their corrupt lusts and affections;
Matth. xx. 20, 21, "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom." James and John were tickled with a lust of ambition, and they seek honour to satisfy it. And it is God's goodness to his people in such a case, not to do with them as he did with the lusting Israelites; Psalm cvi. 15, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." Men may go wrong here, and not see their error, till the Lord correct it; for they may take lust for love; Luke ix. 54, 55, and so seek to feed their enemies whom they should starve.

5. They are apt, through ignorance or inadvertency, not to pray for what they really need for their case; as the children of Israel, when they "went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?" Judg. xx. 18. To pray for God's presence with them, was not in their head; but that they really needed it, they afterwards felt to their cost. Many sad experiences praying people may have of this, which may shew the need of the Spirit's assistance. Hence general and formal prayers, little suited to the particular cases and exigences of the party; which is but trifling in so solemn and serious a matter as prayer to God.

6. Though they do know and advert to it before they go to prayer, they are ready to forget it in the time. There is a forgetting of particular petitions designed or coming of course, which is an effect of the Spirit's influence; in that case the forgotten petition is from one's own spirit, not from the Spirit of God, as in the instance of the prodigal son, Luke xv., what he designed to say to his father, ver. 19, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," when he came to him, he forgets, ver. 21. There is such a forgetting which is an effect of our own weakness; in that case the petition forgotten is from the Spirit of God, the forgetting it from ourselves, Heb. ii. 1.

Thus going to God sometimes, we forget much of our errand, whether by wandering of heart or being left to ourselves in the matter. In a word,

7. Lastly, They are apt to pray for things not agreeable to the will of God, that there is neither precept nor promise for. The many petitions in which they are not heard evince this; because "if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us," 1 John v. 14. There is so much remains of corruption in the best, that it is hard even in our prayers to keep within the compass of what is agreeable to his will.
I shall now endeavour to assign the reasons why God's own children are so apt to mistake and go wrong, even in the matter of prayer.

The great reason is, the remains of darkness that are on the minds of the best, while here; Job xxxvii. 19, "Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness." It is true, God's children are not in midnight darkness, but their light is but a twilight, in which they are apt to mistake their way. And the more sensible they are of this, the more need they will find of the Spirit's help in prayer. More particularly, we know not what we should pray for, but are ready to go wrong in the matter of prayer,

1. Because we have at best but little knowledge of our own case; and no wonder that they who are not thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the disease mistake as to the remedy. The blind man, Mark viii. 22—25, is an emblem of the natural man, the true convert, and the glorified saint. The child of God while here, "sees but in part," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Every believer is a mystery, Cant. iii. 6, a mystery to the world, a mystery to himself. There are many folds and plies in his case, which he himself cannot unfold; plies of grace, sin, temptation, danger, &c.

2. Little knowledge of what is good and best for us, Gen. xlili. 36. We see the weakness of understanding in children makes them often to desire of parents what really is not for them; even so it is with God's children, and therefore it is fatherly love that denies some of their petitions; as in the case of Job, Jonah, and others. We are apt to think that that is best for us that is most pleasant and most easy, but that is often a very deceitful rule.

3. Little acquaintance with the word, particularly the commands and the promises, the measure of our petitions. There is much need of the Spirit's help in that matter, John xiv. 26. We are ready to measure our petitions rather by our own inclinations than by the word; and many read the Bible often, that have but very little skill of making a practical improvement thereof in their prayers, Mark x. 35, 37.

4. We are apt to take the subtle cravings of lust for the cravings of grace or innocent affection, Luke ix. 54, 55. And thence good people unwittingly are made intercessors for their spiritual enemies; which, if they did discern, they would confess their error, and retract their request. Sin dwells in the believer together with grace, and that so closely that the language of the one is often taken for that of the other.

5. Believers are liable to prejudices and wrong notions of things,
which they have drunk in from their education, manner of life in the world, &c. Such was the disciples' notion of the temporal kingdom of Christ, that was the spring of that rash petition of James and John; Mark x. 37, "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand in thy glory." Such was that of the case of Gentiles among the believing Jews, that was the spring of the offence taken at Peter; Acts xi. 2, 3, "They that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." An erring conscience will mislead men under pretence of divine authority, John xvi. 2; Acts xxvi. 9. No wonder then it form wrong requests in prayer, Luke ix. 54.

6. Lastly, They are subject to much confusion in prayer, both through natural and spiritual indisposition, Psalm lxxxvii. 4. Hence they are ready as Job did, chap. xxxviii. 2, "to darken counsel by words without knowledge." The exercise of their very gift is not always ready at hand with them, far less the exercise of their grace. An influence of the Spirit is necessary both for the one and the other. And when it is wanting, so that they are in no case for praying, no wonder they know not what to pray for.

Secondly, Believers are ready to go wrong in the manner of prayer; "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." It is not in vain our Lord gave his disciples a direction in that point; Matth. vi. 9, "After this manner pray ye," &c. The prayer may be right as to the matter, that yet may be mismanaged in the manner of performance, 1 Chron. xv. 13. And therefore there is need of the Spirit's help in this point too; not only to teach us what, but how to pray. Their weakness in this point appears, in that,

1. They are apt to slip the best season for managing their address before the throne. Thomas missed an opportunity of communion with Christ, that left him under the feet of unbelief, while the rest were delivered from theirs, John xx. 24, 25. The best season is, when the signal is given from heaven to the petitioner, to come forward; sometimes the door is as it were cast open to him, and there is a sign given by some inward motion of the Spirit, or some providential call moving him to come forward. The spouse missed this; Cant. v. 2, 3, "I sleep, but my heart waketh," &c., and she smarred for it; ver. 6, "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; my soul failed when he spake: I sought him but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer."

Moses was very careful to fall in with it immediately; Exod. xxxiv. 8, 9, "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace
in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us (for it is a stiff-necked people) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance."

2. They are apt to enter on prayer with a temper of spirit very unfit for such a holy exercise; being either entangled with worldly cares, or discomposed with unruly passions, Luke xxii. 34; 1 Tim. ii. 8. They both make the Spirit of a man like troubled water, unfit to receive the image of the sun, unfit for divine communications. Jonah's prayer behaved to be marred when he was in a fret. Therefore the apostle exHORTS married persons to take heed to their behaviour one towards another, that their prayers might not be hindered, 1 Pet. iii. 7, nothing being more apt to do it than domestic jars, Mal. ii. 13.

3. They are apt to be formal, lifeless, and cold in prayer, Cant. iii. 1; Rev. iii. 2. We are called to be "Vervent in spirit, serving the Lord." But even where the fire of grace is in the hearth, unless it be blown up by the influence of the Spirit of God, the prayers will be mismanaged, Psalm lxxxi. 18. There will be bands of iniquity on the heart which they will not be able to loose, more than to dissolve the ice with their breath; but "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the liberty."

4. Their hearts are apt to wander in duty, and will do so if the Spirit fix them not. Therefore David prays, "Unite my heart to fear thy name," Psalm lxxvi. 11. When Abraham had divided the carcases, the fowls came down on them; so when one is conversing with God, evil spirits will be at work, to cast in something that may divert him from the present duty, Rom. vii. 21. Many a prayer is lost this way, while the heart steals away after some other thing than what it should then be on.

5. They are apt to content themselves with exercising their gift, without exercising their grace. Therefore Paul warns the Ephesians, chap. vi. 18, "to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance." Hence many petitions, confessions, thanksgivings, all of them just; yet lost for want of suitable affections coming along with them. For it is the exercise of praying graces, reverence, faith, love, humility, &c., and not the exercise of praying gifts without them, that is pleasing to God.

6. They are apt to disproportion their concern to the weight of the matters they pray for. This is carefully guarded against in the Lord's prayer, Matth. vi. 9, &c., where the glory of God has the first place, and there is but one petition for temporals, and two for spirituals. But how ready are we to be more concerned for our own interest, than for the honour of God; more fervent for temporal
than for spiritual mercies? This makes the prayers like the legs of the lame that are not equal, the affection being disproportioned to the matter.

7. They are apt to be too peremptory in circumstances, without leaving a due latitude to sovereignty. That is limiting the holy One of Israel. This is often done as to time, the timing of mercies, in which we are too apt to take upon us to prescribe to the sovereign manager, John ii. 3, 4, as to the manner of bringing about a mercy, which, short-sighted as we are, we are very ready to determine. And the same may be said as to the measure of mercies.

8. They are apt to mix their own wild fire with the holy fire in prayer. So did the disciples, Mark iv. 38, when they say, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" The language of passion is sometimes mixed with the language of grace in the prayers of saints; which when they discern, they will be ready to correct, Psalm lxvii. 7—10. Hence there are expressions of saints unto God, recorded in scripture, not for our imitation, but for our warning of this corrupt bias of the heart; as Job xxx. 21, "Thou art become cruel to me; with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me." Jer. xv. 18, "Why is my pain perpetual? and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" These he looks on as the ravings of his sick children.

9. They are apt to lay too much weight of their acceptance in their prayers, on what will bear none of it. It is certain, that there is nothing will bear any weight of that, but the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; Rev. viii. 4. But the natural bias of the heart lies another way, to lay weight on the very performance of the duty, and the way how it is performed, as with such affection, pointedness, length, nay the very voice, as insignificant a thing as it is before the Lord. Hence our Lord cautions against "using vain repetitions" in prayer, "as the Heathen do; for they think (says he) that they shall be heard for their much speaking;" Matth. vi. 7. And that the Heathen laid much stress on a loud voice in prayer, appears from what Pharaoh says to Moses; Exod. ix. 28, (Heb.) Make ye supplication to the Lord, and much, i.e. Make much supplication. Compare 1 Kings xviii. 28, where it is said of Baal's prophets, that "they cried aloud." There are remains of that legal bias in the hearts of God's own children; Matth. xix. 27. And it is only by the Spirit that saints are brought to lay their whole weight on Jesus Christ; Eph. ii. 18; Phil. iii. 3. Otherwise their deceitful hearts will be found disposed to slip aside that way, they being very ready to believe the acceptance of some fluent prayer of theirs, and hard
to believe the acceptance of one that goes not so fluently though seriously; yet the blood of Jesus is still the same security.

10. Lastly, They are apt to faint and give over, upon the Lord's delaying to answer; whereas it is a chief piece of right management of business at the court of heaven, resolutely to insist and hang on, Luke xviii. 1, 8. We are naturally hasty, and long trials are apt to run us out of breath. There is need of much faith, that patience may have her perfect work; and that is not to be reached without the help of the Spirit; Rom. xv. 13.

I shall now give the reasons why believers are so apt to go wrong in the manner of prayer. They are the following:—

1. Because of the sublimity of the work, that is so far above our reach, that we can by no means know how to manage it, but as we are taught by him with whom we have to do in it. To say a prayer in a formal uttering of words, is no such hard work indeed. But rightly to manage an address at the throne of heaven, on which sits the Sovereign Majesty; and that about the weightiest of all concerns, is such sublime work, that it passes the skill of the greatest orator on earth to do it without the Spirit; Eccl. v. 1, 2. Were any of us to go on business to our earthly king, would we not need to be directed by some knowing the way of the court? How much more do we need direction from the Holy Spirit in our addresses to the throne of grace?

2. Because of the remain of corruption that yet hang about them; Rom. vii. 24. This is a clog at their heels at all times, and will not miss to exert itself in holy duties, ver. 21, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." There is much darkness yet in the minds of the best, as to spiritual things; no wonder they know not how to pray as they ought. Much perverseness there is in the will, both with respect to God's precepts and providences. There is much carnality and disorder in the affections, as they all soundly feel, that are concerned to get the heart fit for praying, kept right in it, and kept right after it.

3. Because there is a subtile adversary busy to mar them in that their work; Zech. iii. 1. He well knows that all the hope in their case is from the divine help; and therefore while they are before the throne of mercy, he will bestir himself effectually to mar their application. He is an enemy to prayer, and therefore he will keep back from it if he can; if he cannot, he will do his utmost to mar it.

4. Lastly, Because of the weakness of grace in them. Grace disposes men to pray; Zech xii. 10. But the weakness of that grace leaves them in hazard of mismanaging in it. Sometimes it is not in exercise; at best it is but weak, and mixed with corruption, in
the struggle with which it will be overcome, if the spirit come not in to its help.

I shall now make some practical improvement.

This doctrine may be of use, both unto strangers to God, and to his own children. And,

First, Ye that are strangers to God, yet in your natural state, without the Spirit, and therefore children of Satan, we may take you up in these two sorts to be spoken to, viz. prayerless natural persons, and praying natural persons.

First, Prayerless natural unconverted persons, such as are living in the state they were born in, and withal living without praying to the God that made them. I have two things to say to you from this doctrine.

1. Learn from it, that this prayerless life of yours declares your case a very sad one. It declares you,

(1.) None of God's children; for whatever mismanagements of it they fall into, they all practise the duty of prayer. So of you that is verified: Deut. xxxii. 5, "Their spot is not the spot of his children." And if so, ye are the children of the devil; John viii. 44, of the family of hell. And his possession of you remains undisturbed to this day, since ye have never been so far awakened, as to set you to, and keep you at prayer.

(2.) Without the Spirit of God; Jude 19. And being without the Spirit, ye are spiritually dead in sin; for so are all naturally; Eph. ii. 1, and it is "the Spirit that quickeneth;" John vi. 63. So that whosoever are without the Spirit are dead still. You are then dead souls in living bodies. It is plain you are dead, for your speech is laid, your senses are gone, there is no moving nor breathing towards God in you, and the Spirit of life is departed from you.

2. Be exhorted from it to reform. And,

(1.) Set about prayer, 1 Thess. v. 17. Remember ye are God's creatures, and therefore obliged to worship him. Ye are men, and not beasts, and therefore should distinguish yourselves from them by religion, Isa. xlvi. 8. Ye have souls that will not die, and therefore ye should be concerned to pray for them, that ye live not in eternal misery.

(2.) Be concerned to partake of the Spirit, and come to Christ for that end, who "hath the seven Spirits of God," Rev. iii. 1. Ye say ye cannot pray. If the Spirit of Christ were in you, it would not be so, Zech. xii. 10, Gal. iv. 6. Ye say ye have no time for prayer, or ye have no place to pray in. If the Spirit of Christ were in you, ye would have a heart to pray; and if ye had the heart for it, ye would find both time and place.
Secondly, Praying natural unconverted persons. People may be praying persons, and yet in the gall of bitterness, and none of God's children; praying persons, and yet profane, Isa. i. 15, 16; formal hypocrites, Matth. xxiii. 14, 27, 28. They may have a gift of prayer, that are void of the spirit and grace of prayer. To such I would say from this doctrine, Then,

1. Certainly ye can pray none at all aright; an evidence of which is, All your prayers are rejected of God, Prov. xv. 8, John ix. 31. If God's own children cannot pray aright without the Spirit, how is it possible ye should do so, who neither have the Spirit, nor yet are children of God? If the weak man cannot go without help, sure the man void of life cannot move at all. View your own case in the case of the true saint, and think, if it be so in the green tree, what must it be in the dry? They are God's children, yet cannot pray aright to their Father without the Spirit; how much less can ye who are none of his family, and therefore never have the Spirit? They always have the Spirit dwelling in them as a Spirit of life, yet cannot pray aright without actual influence from him; how, then, can ye ever pray aright, who are so far from his actual influence, that he is not so much as in you, since ye are not in Christ?

Hence,

(1.) Your praying, though continued never so many years, without coming to Christ by faith, is but like so many ciphers, which being without a figure at their head, the value is just nought. There is never one right or acceptable prayer among them all, Heb. xi. 6. They are all lost labour. And such a life of duties is but a wandering in the wilderness of duties, like Israel's wandering forty years in the wilderness, where they died at length, and never entered Canaan.

(2.) All your prayers are turned to sin, Psalm six. 7. If ye have never prayed aright, ye have always prayed wrong, spilled and marred that duty, profaned that holy ordinance. And so what ye reckon so much praying to God, God will reckon so much taking of his name in vain, for which he will not hold you guiltless. Wherefore let praying persons look well to their state.

2. Think not much of your gifts of prayer, for a gift of prayer will go short way before God. If it were never such a ready, full, and taking gift, it cannot make a man pray one petition aright without the Spirit, John iv. 24. Yet how are men puffed up with such a gift, that have it, and have not grace to keep them humble under it? They think themselves something on account of their gift, while God knows they are nothing, as being without the Spirit; for they see wherein they excel others, but see not wherein
ADDRESS TO PRAYING UNCONVERTED PERSONS.

they come short of true prayer in the sight of God, Gal. vi. 3, 4.

I have four things to say of a gift of prayer without the spirit of prayer.

(1.) It is a "good gift" of God indeed, James i. 17. But it is a left hand gift, which may be lost and taken away from him that has it now; Zech. xi. ult., "We to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock: the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened;" compared with John x. 12, for the prophecy relates to the Scribes and Pharisees. It is of that sort that is common to Christ's sheep and the devil's goats. The spirit of prayer is a grace-gift, a right hand gift, which can never be quite lost; Rom. xi. 29, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

(2.) It may be useful to others for the profit of their souls, but in that respect it is useless to yourselves, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3. Others may have communion with God in your exercise of your gift, but you yourself can have none, Prov. xv. 8. Gifts are bestowed on hypocrites for the good and behoof of the saints, as the purse bearer to a young prince gets his purse filled for the needs of the prince, 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. The raven, though an unclean creature, was employed to feed Elijah. The gift the carpenters had that built the ark, was of use to the saving of Noah and his family, but they themselves perished in the deluge, for all their skill of ark-building.

(3.) It cannot but be hurtful to your own souls; which hurtfulness is not from the good gift itself, but from the light and foolish heart it is lodged in, Prov. i. 32. The very gospel, 2 Cor. ii. 16, is hurtful that way; yea Christ himself is a stumbling-block by that means. A man with a gift of prayer, without the Spirit, is like a ship without ballast; the more sail she has, she is in the greater danger of being overwhelmed.

(4.) You may perish for ever, for all that gift. Judas had a gift of praying doubtless given him with the gift of preaching; yet for all it he fell from his ministry, and is gone to his own place, Acts i. 25. The light of a gift without the warmth of the Spirit of grace, serves to show the way to outer darkness. And such a gift will aggravate the condemnation of the possessor, being like a bag of gold on a drowning man, that makes him only to sink the sooner and the deeper.

3. Lastly, Come forward then another step in religion, and be concerned for a higher attainment in it, than ye have yet reached. Ye have come the length of praying, that is good, but it is not all; if ye stick there, ye perish; come forward to Christ, out of all confidence in your prayers, by believing, uniting with the Son of
God. Ye have attained to the gift of prayer; come forward till ye reach the Spirit of prayer, which Christ communicates to all his members, John i. 12; with Gal. iv. 6.

Secondly, Ye that are God's own children, to you I would say,
1. Surely many a mismanaged prayer hath gone through your mouths, so that ye may say, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” Isa. lxiv. 6. So much prayer as has been made by you without the Spirit, so much mismanaged unacceptable prayer has there been, for which ye need pardon. Ye may here view,

(1.) The many prayers of yours, that have been the mere lifeless exercise of a gift without the Spirit from the beginning of them to the end. All which have been lost prayers by the lump. Since ye were acquainted with Christ, ye have kept a constant course of praying daily; but at this rate it will be found there have been many days, and perhaps weeks and months, wherein ye have prayed none at all aright and acceptably. So that if ye seek your prayers in heaven, which ye think ye have sent thither, it will be found that many of them never came there; they wanted the wings of the Spirit's influences, and so fell upon the earth, and are lost.

(2.) The many parts of some of your prayers, and some parts of the best of them, that have been the mere product of your own spirits, and not of the Spirit of God. How much of the prayer has been over many times, ere your lips have been touched with the live coal? And perhaps ere ye have done, ye have quenched the coal, provoked the Spirit to depart. And when it has been best with you, the deceitful heart has made a sinful mixture in it. At this rate seeking many a long prayer before the throne, ye would find that but a short part of it came thither; perhaps but a few sentences. For alas! the skin and dung of our sacrifices are often more bulk, than the flesh that comes on the altar.

2. Be humbled under a sense of your mismanagements in the prayers ye have prayed all along to this day; “for in many things we offend all,” Jam. iii. 2. See the need ye have of the blood of Christ to purge away the guilt of your prayers, and apply it by faith for that end, Rev. vii. 14. Lament the too little concern ye have had to get the Spirit's help to your praying, and see for the pardon thereof.

3. Lastly, Learn that praying is a more solemn serious work than it is generally looked on to be; and that it is not such an easy thing to pray to purpose, as we are apt to imagine. Take these three warnings then.

(1.) Trust not to your gift of prayer, neither be vain of it, Prov.
ADDRESS TO GOD'S OWN CHILDREN.

iii. 5; 1 Cor. i. ult. Oh! it is sad to think of that vanity, and airiness, and self-seeking that is to be found in some people's exercise of their praying gift. It is an argument that the person forgets both God and himself. And nothing can be more contrary to the help of the Spirit in prayer. The heart is deceitful in this point, and we have need to watch it.

(2.) Trust not to your frame. One may have a good frame before he go to prayer, and yet when he comes to the work, may not find his hands; hence often least is got when most is expected; because it is expected rather on what we have, than what we look for from the Spirit. A person may have a good frame in prayer, that may quickly leave him; the wheels of the soul in swift motion may suddenly stop, 2 Tim. ii. 1; Prov. xxviii. 26.

(3) When ye go to prayer, be impressed with a sense of your inability to manage it aright, Josh. xxiv. 19; and then, and all along in prayer, lay yourselves open, and look for the help of the Spirit. Lay the sacrifice on the altar, and look to the Lord for fire from heaven to consume it, as Elijah did, 1 Kings xviii. 33, 37, 38. The Spirit is that fire.

I proceed to another doctrine from the text.

DOCTRINE IV. All our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work, his making intercession for us.

In handling this point, I shall shew,

I. What is to be understood by praying aright.

II. That all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit.

III. In what respects our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work.

IV. What is the Spirit's work in our praying aright, or what his making intercession for us is.

V. Lastly, Apply the whole.

I. I am to shew what is to be understood by praying aright.

Negatively, 1. It is not praying aright in a legal sense, without any imperfection in the eye of the law, attending the prayer. There was never a prayer in the world of that sort since Adam's fall, except the prayers of the man Christ. The best prayers of the best saints have always been attended with blemishes visible to the eyes of God, though not to ours, Isa. lxiv. 6. Such praying is our duty indeed, Matth. v. ult., but the attainment of none in this life, by any measure of grace to be expected, Phil. iii. 12.

2. It is not praying aright in a moral sense, wherein the most rigid hearer can discern nothing contrary to the precepts of morality.
ADDRESS TO GOD'S OWN CHILDREN.

A prayer may be so far right as no unlawful thing may be prayed for in it, and yet may be naught, Luke xviii. 11. The matter may be very good, where the manner of praying spoils all. If that were enough, the book-prayers of formalists would be sufficient help, in some cases, to pray aright.

3. It is not praying aright in a rhetorical sense, a well-worded prayer, with a suitable delivery. Words, voice, and gesture are of little moment before God, 1 Sam. xvi. 7; 1 Cor. ii. 4. It may be a right prayer, where the expression is far from being polite, where sentences are broken off before they make a complete sense; as in Psalm vi. 3, "My soul is also sore vexed; but thou, O Lord, how long?" The Lord himself knows what is the mind of the Spirit, though the words do not fully express it. And where all these things are accurate and exact, the prayer may be all wrong before God: where there is not a wrong word, there may not be one right affection.

Positively, It is praying aright in an evangelical sense, so that in the eye of the gospel it passes as acceptable prayer before the throne. This implies two things.

1. Sincerity in prayer, 1 Chron. xxix. 17, in opposition to formality and hypocrisy, 2 Tim. iii. 5; Psalm xvii. 1. The righteous God loveth uprightness of heart in duty, Prov. xv. 8; and though there may be many blemishes in the duty, where the man is sincere in it, the Lord will regard it, notwithstanding of these blemishes. Hereby the heart is really for God as the chief good, and goes along with the tongue in prayer.

2. A perfection of parts in prayer, though not of degrees. That is to say, praying aright is,

(1) Praying for things agreeable to God's will revealed in his word of command or promise, 1 John v. 14. Nothing can make praying for things without the compass of the command and promise, to be praying aright. For there faith has nothing to bottom itself upon, and "without faith it is impossible to please God." Heb. xi. 6.

(2) Praying in a right manner in a gospel-sense, Jer. xxxix. 13, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Hereunto are required praying graces and affections in exercise, as faith, fervency, humility, reverence and the like. These are the soul and life of prayer, whereas the expressions of the lips are but the body of it. Where these are wanting, the duty will be reckoned but bodily exercise, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Such praying is right in so far as it is acceptable in the sight of God, i.e. capable of being accepted according to the rule of the gos-
pel. It is a sacrifice fit to be laid on God's altar; a prayer which may be put in the Mediator's hand, that through his intercession it may be actually accepted. For it is not anything in our prayers themselves for which they are accepted, but only the intercession of Christ, for the best things in them are mixed with sin. Only such prayers are fit to be put in the Mediator's hands, and he will take them off the sinner's hand to present them to the Father, and the Father will accept them at his hand; whereas other sorts of prayer, wherein the petitioner is not sincere, or where they are wrong as to the matter of them, or are not made in the right manner, they cannot come into the Mediator's hand, he will never present them for acceptance; and so it is impossible they can be accepted.

Hence it is evident that none who are out of Christ, unregenerate, unconverted, can at all pray aright, or pray as they ought. For what sincerity can be there, where converting grace has never touched? What faith, fervency, or humility can be exercised by unbelievers dead in sin, whose stony heart is not yet removed? Therefore the form of prayer, Matth. vi. begins, "Our Father," &c., shewing that none can pray aright or acceptably but God's own children, or those who have an interest in him as their Father; and it is the Spirit that teaches them so, Gal. iv. 6.

II. I am next to shew that all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit. This is to be understood as comprehending these two things.

1. It is done by the help of the Spirit dwelling in us, Gal. iv. 6. Ye are not to think that the Spirit as an external agent helps us to pray aright; nay, but the Spirit helping to pray is as a Spirit of life, dwelling in the man as a member of Christ, 1 John ii. 27. So that till we have the Spirit dwelling in us we can never pray aright.

2. It is done by the help of the indwelling Spirit actually influencing us, Gal. iv. 6, "Crying, Abba, Father," i. e. so influencing us as to make us cry. Even the indwelling of the Spirit is not enough for that effect; but there is requisite an agency of the Spirit in us, whereby we may be acted in prayer, which is called "the blowing of the wind," John iii. 8, Cant. iv. ult.

Now that all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit indwelling and influencing, is clear,

1. From scripture-testimony. The Spirit is the author of our whole sanctification, whereof praying aright is a part, 2 Thess. ii. 13, particularly of all our acceptable worship, Phil. iii. 3. It is by him we have access to God in worship, Eph. ii. 18. And prayer by name, if of the right sort, is owing to his help, Eph. vi. 18, and that
as an indwelling Spirit, a Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15, with Gal. iv. 6, and an influencing Spirit, 1 Thess. v. 17, 18, 19.

2. We are spiritually dead without the Spirit indwelling, and spiritually asleep without the Spirit influencing, Eph. ii. 1, Cant. v. 2. Neither a dead man, nor a sleeping man is fit to present a supplication to the king; so neither is a dead sinner, nor a sleeping saint capable to pray aright. The former, praying, is like a ghost walking and talking; the latter, like a man speaking through his sleep. It is the Spirit that quickens the dead soul, John vi. 63, who coming to dwell in the heart makes the first resurrection; and it is he also who awakens the sleeping saint, Cant. v. 4.

3. There is no praying aright without sanctifying grace, nor without that grace in exercise, John ix. 31, Cant. iii. 1. Where sanctifying grace is not, the filth and pollution of sin remains, and defiles all, Tit. i. 15. So that such a man's praying is like the opening of an unripe grave, Rom. iii. 13. Accordingly the praying Pharisees are called "whited sepulchres," Matt. xxiii. 27. Where grace is not in exercise, there is incense indeed, but no pillar of smoke ascending from it to heaven; spikenard indeed, but no smell thereof. Now it is the indwelling Spirit that works sanctifying grace, 2 Thess. ii. 13, puts that grace in exercise, Cant. iv. 16, and so fits men to pray, Zech. xii. 10.

4. Lastly, To praying aright is required light and warmth, a light of the mind, and warmth of affections; the former for the matter, the latter for the manner. And it is a false light and warmth that makes some natural men think that sometimes they pray aright, Isa. lviii. 2. But all genuine light, and vital warmth comes from the Spirit, Eph. i. 17, 18; 2 Tim. i. 7. Hence the emblem of the virtue of the Holy Spirit was "cloven tongues, like as of fire," Acts ii. 3, 4. And the effect thereof is someway compared with that of drunkenness (which excuses it no more than Christ's being compared to a thief excuses stealing, Rev. xvi. 15); for as the liquor being received to excess, influences the man, so that things come in his head which otherwise would not, and the affections and passions are wrought up by it, Prov. xxiii. 33. so the Spirit indwelling and influencing, presents to the mind matter of prayer, and works up the affections suitable thereto, Eph. v. 18, 19, Cant. vii. 9.

III. I shall shew in what respects our praying aright is so far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is justly reckoned his work. That it is so reckoned in scripture, is evident from the text, where his interceding for us with groanings cannot be understood of himself as the subject, but of us according to the analogy of faith. It is plain also from Gal. iv. 6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent
forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." Now the Spirit's crying Abba, Father, is meant certainly of our crying so, by the help of the Spirit, not of a crying whereof the Spirit is the subject; for God is not the Father of the Spirit, because it is the second person, and not the third, who is the Son of God; and Father and Son are the relatives. And thus the apostle explains it, Rom. viii. 15, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Now the reasons of this are,

1. Because all that is right in our prayers is from the Spirit, and all that is wrong in them from ourselves, either as to matter or manner, 1 Cor. xii. 11; 1 Pet. i. 22; with 2 Cor. iii. 5. In the incense of our prayers there is smoke that goes up towards heaven, ashes that remain behind on the earth; it is the fire from the altar that sends up the smoke, it is the earthly nature of the incense that occasions the ashes. The flesh of any such spiritual sacrifice is wholly owing to the Spirit, the skin and dung is our own, and ours only. Therefore all our right praying is justly reckoned the Spirit's work.

2. None pray aright but as they are members of Christ, and children of God, Gal. iv. 6, Rom. viii. 15, John xv. 5. Now it is the Holy Spirit of the Head that dwells in and actuates all the members acting as members, 1 Cor. xii. 11, 12. Therefore as the soul sees by the eye, and hears by the ear; so whatsoever the members of Christ do aright as members, is justly ascribed to the Spirit that actuates the mystical body, and is the Spirit of adoption. But there may be a defect in seeing by the eye, and hearing by the ear; these are not to be ascribed to the soul, but to some disease in the eye or ear. So whatever defects may be in the members of Christ, these are not to be ascribed to the Spirit, but to the remains of corruption in them, and their state of imperfection while here.

3. The Spirit is the principal cause of our praying aright, we are but the instrumental causes of it. The act of praying in heart and expression is done by us; but the grace, ability, frame for prayer, and the exciting and bringing forth into exercise that grace and ability, is from the Spirit, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Hence prayer is said to be inwrought in us, Jam. v. 16. If the wind blow not, the spices send not forth their pleasant smell, Cant. iv. 16. As the sound of the horn ceases as soon as one ceases to wind it, so does our praying aright on the withdrawing of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

4. Lastly, All our praying graces, as all others, are in their exercise the product of the Spirit, and his work in us, Gal. v. 22, 23. There is a root and stock of grace in the believer, implanted and preserved by the Spirit, 1 John iii. 9. In prayer these are brought forth into exercise, the man acts faith, love, &c., and therein the soul of prayer.
lies; but look on them as they are so brought forth from the stock, and they are the fruit of the Spirit, though the believer is the tree they hang on. For the Spirit is the vital fructifying sap of the trees of righteousness, Isa. xlii. 3, 4. Thus the holy lustings, longings, and desires of a believer against sin, are called "the Spirit's lusting," Gal. v. 17 (compare ver. 16, 18), in the same sense as the groanings in our text. See 1 John iv. 4.

**Object.** If our praying aright is the work of the Spirit, what need have we of the intercession of Christ, for the acceptance of our prayers? Surely the Spirit needs no intercessor betwixt him and the Father. **Ans.** Though it is the Spirit's work, it is not his work separately by himself without us; but it is his work in us, and so our work too, Gal. iv. 6, with Rom. viii. 15. And so far as it is done by us, we groaning, lustng, crying in prayer, every thing has a sinful mixture from us at best; so there is need of Christ's intercession still. The water comes pure from the fountain, the Spirit; but running through a muddy channel, such as every saint here is, it cannot be accepted in heaven, but as purified and sweetened by the intercession of Christ.

IV. I come now to consider, what is the Spirit's work in our praying aright, or what his making intercession for us is. And here I shall shew,

1. The difference betwixt Christ's intercession and the Spirit's.
2. The help of the Spirit in prayer.

**First,** I am to shew what is the difference betwixt Christ's intercession and the Spirit's.

1. Christ intercedes for us in heaven at the Father's right hand; Rom. viii. 34. The Spirit intercedes in our hearts, upon *et*; Gal. iv. 6. We have no intercession made for us in heaven, but *by* Christ the only intercessor there.

2. Christ's intercession is a mediatory intercession, wherein he mediates or goes between God and us; an office peculiar to him alone; 1 Tim. ii. 5. But the Spirit's intercession is an auxiliary intercession to us, whereby he helps us to go to God in a right manner, prompting us to intercede for ourselves aright.

3. The Spirit's intercession is the fruit of Christ's intercession, and what is done by the sinner through the Spirit's intercession, is accepted of God through the intercession of Christ. Christ by his death purchased the Spirit for his people, and through his intercession the Spirit is sent into their hearts, where he helps them to pray for themselves; and these prayers are accepted of God by means of the Mediator's intercession, John xiv. 16, and xvi. 7, 13; Rev. viii. 4. In a word,

The difference is such as is between one who draws a poor man's petition for him, and another who presents it to the king, and gets it
granted. The Spirit does the former, and Christ does the latter, for us.

_Secondly_, I shall consider the help of the Spirit in prayer, which is his making intercession for us, in the style of the scripture. We shall view this work of the Spirit, more generally, and more particularly.

_First_, More generally, and that in two things. He acts in it,

1. As a teaching Spirit; John xiv. 26. It is our infirmity in point of prayer, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." He enlightens our minds, and helps our ignorance as to the matter and manner of prayer, 1 John ii. 27. He is the great Teacher of the church, and none teacheth like him. He will teach them who are so weak that no other can teach them; so that hearing some of God's weak children pray, one must needs say, "This is the finger of God."

2. As a quickening Spirit; Psalm lxxx. 18. Therefore the Spirit is compared to fire, which gives both light and heat. He removes spiritual deadness, and stirs up praying graces in the heart; whence his influences are compared to the blowing of the wind, that puts things that were at rest in motion. Thus he is said to "make intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered," setting the gracious heart a labouring and working towards God, with the utmost earnestness, as one groaning.

_Secordly_, More particularly, the work of the Spirit in our prayers lies here.

_First_, He excites us to pray, Rom. viii. 15, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." He prompteth us to go to the throne of grace, who otherwise would be negligent of it, and backward to it; Cant. v. 2, 3, 4, "I sleep, but my heart waketh, &c. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him." Thus he leads us to God (Eph. ii. 18, Gr.) as an internal moving principle. This lies in two things,

1. He impresses our spirits with a sense of a divine call to it, and so binds it on our consciences as duty to God, Psalm xxvii. 8. _Heb_. "My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek thy face, when thou saidst, Seek ye my face." Thus he applies the general command for praying to particular times, that the man is made in effect to say, now God is calling me to this duty; and so he sees he cannot slight it without disobedience, but must go to it from conscience of duty. This cuts off the low motives to prayer, of custom, credit, regard to the commands of men, &c.

2. He disposes our hearts for it, inclines us to the duty, that we willingly comply with it. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek," Psalm
Men may have a sense of the command on them, who for want of a disposition to the duty commanded, either neglect the command, or else are but dragged to obey it. But the Spirit powerfully inclines the will to the duty, so that the man obeys out of choice, Psalm ex. 3; Cant. vi. 12. This cuts off the low motives of fear of man, and slavish fear of God too, which move many.

Secondly, He gives us a view of God as a gracious and merciful Father in Christ; Gal. iv. 6. Without this there can be no acceptable prayer. Where there is no spiritual view of God at all in prayer, we worship we know not what. Where we view him as an absolute God out of Christ, we may be filled with terror of him, but can have no true confidence in him. But by the Spirit viewing him in Christ, we have at once the sight of majesty and mercy. And hereby he works in us,

1. A holy reverence of God, to whom we pray, which is necessary in acceptable prayer, Heb. xii. 28. By this view he strikes us with a holy dread and awe of the majesty of God, whereby is banished that lightness and vanity of heart, that makes such flattering in the prayers of some, as if they were set down on their knees to show their gift, and commend themselves.

2. A holy confidence in him, Eph. iii. 12, "Abba, Father," speaks both reverence and confidence, whereof the Spirit is the author, Rom. viii. 15. This confidence respects both his ability and willingness to help us, Matth. vii. 11. Without this there can be no acceptable prayer, Heb. xi. 6; Jam. i. 6. This is it that makes prayer an ease to a troubled heart, the Spirit exciting in us holy confidence in God as a Father. Hence the soul, though not presently eased, draws these conclusions. (1.) He desig-nys my good by all the hardships I am under, Rom. viii. 28. (2.) He pities me under them, Psalm ciii. 13. (3.) He knows the best time for removing them, and will do it, when that comes, 1 Sam. ii. 3.

Hereby is cut off that unbelieving formality, whereby some expect nothing by prayer, and get as little; as also the despondency, where-with others are struck, from the sense of God's justice, and their own sinfulness.

Thirdly, He gives us a view of ourselves in our own sinfulness and unworthiness, John xvi. 8. This always accompanies the view the Spirit gives of God, Isa. vi. 5, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." We are very ready to become strangers to ourselves, and to lose sight of our sinfulness. But the Spirit of prayer, according to the measure of his influence, opens out the man before his own
eyes, casts abroad the many foul plies of his heart and life, Luke xviii. 13; Isa. lxiv. 6. Hereby he works in us,

1. Humiliation of heart before the Lord, fills us with low thoughts of ourselves before him, Gen xviii. 27; makes us see ourselves unworthy of the mercies, that either we have got, or desire to have, Gen. xxxii. 10; fills us with holy shame, and self-loathing, Luke xviii. 13; Ezek. xxxvi. 31. This fits us for the receipt of mercies of free grace; and the want of it makes sinners to be in their prayers, as if they came to buy of God, and not to beg, and so to be sent empty away.

2. Cordial confession, that comes away natively from seen and felt sinfulness, Psalm lxxii. 8. Thus the influence of the Spirit in prayer causes full and free confession of sin with the mouth, to the honour of God, and our own shame. And the things thus being impressed on the heart, there follow natively words to express them by; and where they fail, groans do well compensate them before the throne. This cuts off the formal, half-hearted confessions of sin, wherewith prayers are often vitiated.

3. Hearty thanksgiving for mercies received, Psalm cxvi. 11, 12. Hereby the smallest mercies appear very big; and the sinner, that wondered at other times how he came not to get more mercies, begins to wonder he has any at all left him, Lam. iii. 22. But without a discovery of our sinfulness by the Spirit, all our thanksgivings for mercies are but empty compliment, like the Pharisee’s, Luke xviii. 11.

4. A high value for the Mediator, and his righteousness, which lies out of the view of the unhumbled heart, Phil. iii. 9. As the stars are best seen from the bottom of a deep and narrow pit, so Christ crucified is best discovered in his excellency and suitableness, by the humbled soul. The lower the soul is in its own eyes, the higher will the Mediator be in its eyes; and the higher the Mediator is, the more fit one is to pray.

Fourthly, He gives us a view of our wants, and the need we have of the supply of them, Luke xv. 17. This may be seen, comparing the Pharisee’s and Publican’s prayers, Luke xviii. 11, 12, 13. The Spirit taught the one, and not the other. The want of this man’s prayer, Luke i. 53, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." Here he acts,

1. As an enlightener, opening the eyes of the mind, to discern the wants and needs we are compassed with, Eph. i. 17, 18. The Spirit’s shining in on the soul, as the sun on a moth-eaten garment holden up betwixt us and it, the soul gets a broad sight of its wants; whence it is made to say, as Isa. lxiv. 6, "We are all as an unclean
thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Luke xviii. 13, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Psalm xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors?" This the Spirit doth by opening up the law in its spirituality, and giving us a view of our own circumstances in a present evil ensnaring world.

2. As a remembrancer, bringing seasonably to mind the wants we have, or might have adverted to, John xiv. 26. To everything there is a season; but oftentimes in the season of getting supply at the throne of grace, our wants and needs escape us, they come not in mind, till the market is over. The Spirit is a remembrancer in this case, seasonably suggesting to us our needs for ourselves or others. So he sets things before us in time of prayer.

3. As a forewarner of what we may need, John xvi. 13. So we find Job not only offering sacrifice, with a view to what he could not know, chap. i. 5; but also possessed with a fear of a trial before it came, chap. iii. 25. Thus men are led to lay up for what they may meet with, and in prayer to have a view to the grace that may be needful in such and such emergents. Hereby he helps us,

(1.) To matter of prayer, sets before us things to be prayed for. Where the Spirit is thus at work in the soul, persons will be taught to pray, and it will supply the want of a form; and therefore they that sooth themselves with that, they cannot pray, do but bewray themselves to be void of the Spirit of God.

(2.) To the right manner of praying; for hereby he,

[1.] Impresses us with a sense of need, that we are made to pray feelingly, that the tongue does but express what the heart feels, Luke xv. 17, 18, 19. Insensibleness of our needs makes us formal in prayer, and therefore to be sent empty away. A mere rational sight of our wants will not cure it; but the light of the Spirit is the light of life, John viii. 12; that will not miss to affect the heart.

[2.] Hereby we are rendered sincere in our addresses to God, Psalm xvii. 1. Feigned lips in prayer proceed from a dark and insensible heart. He that really sees his disease, and is persuaded of the need of the Physician, there is no doubt of his being in earnest for his help.

[3.] Hereby we are made importunate in prayer. Necessity has no law, and hunger breaks through stone walls, as we see in the woman of Canaan, who did hang on, over the belly of discouragement, and would take no refusal. Importunate praying is prevailing, Luke xi. 8; and felt need that one cannot bear without relief, makes importunity.

[4.] Hereby we are made particular in prayer, laying our hand on our sores, and laying out our particular wants before the Lord, Luke
xviii. 41. General prayers, like general preaching, have little of the Spirit in them. They that go where help is to be found, being indeed pinched, will readily tell where they are pinched.

Fifthly, He gives us a view of the grace and promises of the covenant, Psalm, xxv. 14; John xiv. 26. Without this, the sinner, pressed with a sense of need, has nothing to support him, and therefore cannot pray in faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased all the grace and promises of the covenant for his people, and there is enough there for all they can need. It is the office of the Spirit to open them out before their eyes, and apply them. And here the Spirit,

1. Brings to their remembrance the grace and promises suited to their case, Gen. xxxii. 11, 12. The promises are the rule and encouragement of prayer; but while they lie out of our sight, we can neither have suitable direction nor encouragement from them; but when the Spirit draws near with the promise to us, there is help at hand in prayer.

2. He unfolds that grace and these promises, causing to understand them in a spiritual and saving manner, 1 Cor. ii. 12. The letter of the promise can only help to words in prayer; but the Spirit shining on the promise, will help to pray in a gracious manner, for the demonstration of the Spirit is always with power. Hereby,

(1.) The Spirit teaches what to pray for, according to the will of God. While the promises rightly understood regulate our prayers, and they are agreeable to the grace of the covenant, we may be sure we do not err in the matter, 2 Sam. vii. 28, 29. These are God's bills and bonds to his people, and by them he shows what he allows us to ask of him. What he is debtor to his faithfulness for, we may crave.

(2.) In what terms to pray for it, the terms of the promise, terms agreeable to the grace of the covenant. And this is the rise of some expressions of God's children in prayer, which may seem strange and uncouth to others, that have not their view of the grace of the covenant, which want makes them appear unseemly to them; yea, they may seem strange to themselves. And hence also is the agreement to a nicety, that is sometimes to be found betwixt the answer of prayer, and their expression in prayer.

(3.) Hereby he fills our mouths with arguments, helping us to plead and pray, Job xxiii. 3, 4. The grace and promises of the covenant, held before the eyes by the Spirit shining on them to the soul in prayer, is such a fountain of heavenly oratory that will make a weak and unlearned Christian plead and pray at the rate that others are strangers to, and which themselves at another time are quite unable to reach.
(4.) Hereby he stirs up in us a faith of particular confidence as to the thing prayed for, so that we are helped to pray believingly, and not doubtingly and distrustfully. The necessity of this faith in prayer is evident from the scriptures, Matth. xxi. 22; Mark xi. 24; 1 Tim. ii. 8; James i. 6; and the Spirit is the author of it, 2 Cor. iv. 13. He gives a view of the promise and grace of the covenant with relation to that thing, and helps to regulate the prayer thereby, strengthens to believe the accomplishment of the promise in that particular for the Mediator's sake, and consequently the hearing of prayer in that particular. Hereby it appears what this faith is, namely, a confidence agreeable to the promise as demonstrated by the Spirit; absolute as to the particular thing, where the promise is demonstrated absolute, or by the Spirit particularly applied to the thing, Psalm cxix. 49, which may be in things not absolutely necessary, as Mark v. 27, 28, 34. Or indefinite, where the promise is left so by the Spirit, that is to say, a confidence of the thing itself, or of what is as good. And hereby also this faith is distinguished from presumption, in that it is founded on a word of God, and the merit of Christ.

(5.) Lastly, Hereby he works in us a holy boldness in prayer, Eph. iii. 12. Faith coming before the throne, and spreading out the word of promise with the grace of the covenant, makes bold there for a gracious answer. How bold was Jacob in that case, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?" Gen xxxii. 26. Foolish men have ignorantly censured this boldness in the prayers of God's children, but God is well pleased with it, when he says, "Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me, Isa. xlv. 11; though the counterfeiting of this holy oil must needs be dangerous. It is distinguished by its attending humility, as in 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."

Sixthly, He raiseth in us holy desires for the supply of our wants; "groanings which cannot be uttered." The Spirit working as fire, fires the heart in prayer, sets it in motion, Cant. v. 4, a lasting, longing, panting for what may tend to the perfection of the new creature, either removing the impediments of its growth, or supplying it with fresh incomes of grace for its growth. Of this more afterwards. But thus we are made to pray fervently, Jam. v. 16; Rom. xii. 11.

Seventhly, He gives us a view of the merit and intercession of the Mediator, Eph. i. 17. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, without whose illumination Christ will be a hidden beauty to us. He shewed Zechariah the intercessor, at his work, Zech. i. 12, and Stephen,
Acts vii. 56, and he shews believers the same sight for substance by the eye of faith, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Hereby,

1. He points us to the only way of acceptance of our prayers, John xiv. 6; while hypocrites overlooking Christ lose all their requests. He teaches us to pray as we ought, and so to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, depending on his merit and intercession allenarly.

2. He lays before us a firm foundation of confidence before the Lord; 1 John ii. 1, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" an Advocate who never loses the plea he takes in hand, John xi. 42, having an undisputable ground to go upon, namely, the purchase of his own blood. A fresh view of this makes faith in prayer renew its strength, and fills with confidence; Eph. iii. 12, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

3. Lastly, He furnishes us with an answer to all objections, that an unbelieving heart and a subtle devil can muster up against us, in prayer; Rom. viii. 33, 34, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Are we sinful and vile? The merit of Christ is of infinite value. Are we unworthy for whom God should do such a thing? Yet the Mediator is worthy. Can our prayers, smelling so rank of sinful imperfections, not be accepted at our polluted hands? Yet being perfumed with his merit, they can be accepted at his hand, Rev. viii. 4.

Eighthly, He manages the heart and spirit in prayer, which every serious soul will own to be a hard task; Jer. x. 23, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Gal. v. 16. Therefore the psalmist says, Psalm xxxi. 5, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit." And,

1. He composes it for prayer; Psalm lxxxvi. 11, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." He frames the heart, that is out of frame for it; commands a heavenly calm in the soul, whereby it may be fitted for divine communications; saying to the heart tossed with temptations, troubles, and risings of corruption, "Peace and be still; and he blows up the fire of grace into a flame, 2 Tim. i. 7. So the preparation of the heart is owing to him; Psalm x. 17, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."

2. He fixes it in prayer, that it wander not away in the duty; Ezek. xxxvi. 27, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."
There is need not only of quickening grace in duty, but of establishing grace; for the heart itself is apt to wander off from the serious purpose, and the powers of hell exert themselves to divert from it. But the supply of the Spirit in prayer keeps the heart fixed. And, in the case of wandering,

3. He reduces it from its wanderings in prayer; Psalm xxiii. 3, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." It will always cost a struggle to hedge in the heart in duty, and the help of the Spirit is necessary to maintain the struggle, Rom. vii. 21; Gal. v. 17. But sometimes the heart is quite carried off by its wandering disposition, that the prayer is quite marred, the heart leaving the tongue. In this case the Spirit convinces and humbles the soul under the sense of that sin, and so makes it more serious than before, from thence shewing the corruption of nature, Rom. viii. 37.

Ninthly, and Lastly, The Spirit causes us to continue in prayer from time to time, till we obtain a gracious answer; and so makes us pray perseveringly, Eph. vi. 18. The Lord may keep his people long hanging on for an answer ere they get it. The promise may be big with the mercy prayed for, and yet it be not only many months but years ere it bring forth, as in the case of Abraham and David. This is a sore trial, and there would be no keeping from fainting if the Spirit did not help our infirmity. But he helps to hang on,

1. By accounting for the delay of our answer, in a way consistent with God's honour and our good, and so satisfying us in that point; Psalm xxii. 2, 3, "O my God, I cry in the day-time but thou hearest not; and in the night season and am not silent. But thou art holy O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." He helps to discern the unsoundness of the subtle reasonings of unbelief, tending to despondency, and so hinders from making rash conclusions; Psalm lxxvii. 10, "I said, this is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." And so he keeps up in us kind thoughts of God's dispensations.

2. By strengthening faith and hope, which have the battle to fight in this case, Eph. iii. 16. Hangers on at the throne of grace may get a long stand, but they will get their strength renewed, Psalm xxvii. 13, 14. This the Spirit does, by shining anew on the promise; adding other promises to it tending to the same scope; giving some present experience and off-fallings from the Lord's hand, whereby the soul is refreshed in the time; and helping to observe the signs of the approaching day while yet the night continues.

3. Lastly, Continuing and reviving on our spirits the sense of our need, which, pinching us anew, obliges to renew our suit for relief
until the time we get it, 2 Cor. xii. 8. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." If in this case we were left to our own spirits, we would seek our help from another quarter, than hanging on about the Lord's hand, and our sense of need would wear off, and we would drop our petition. But the Spirit perfects what he begins; Psalm cxlviii. ult., "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject.

Use I. Of information. This may let us see,

1. That men in this world are under the influence of that part of the other world which they are in the road to. If ye are in the road to the happy part of the other world, ye are under the conduct and influence of the Holy Spirit, prompting and helping you to do your duty to God. Whence ye may gather, that they are in the road to destruction, who are under the conduct and influence of the spirit of the world, prompting and helping them to a course of sin. Consider the prevailing course of your lives, and trace it to the spring, and ye will find it is the spirit ye are acted by, 1 John iv. 4. One part of men is led by the Spirit of God, and they are holy, heavenly, and spiritual; another by the evil spirit, and they are unholy, hellish, and carnal. He is a spirit of covetousness in some, of uncleanness in others, &c.

2. Praying is another thing than men generally take it to be. It is not the exercise of a gift, but of grace; not a piece of task laid on men, but a privilege they are advanced to; not a work to be done in our own strength, but by help from heaven; not a piece of the form of religion, but of experimental religion. Consider prayer in this scripture view of it, and among many that bow their knees in prayer to God, there will be found few really praying persons; many whose hearts must say on what they have heard of it, Ezek. xx. 49, "Doth he not speak parables?"

3. True praying will always make people holy and humble; for the Spirit by which it is done is the Spirit of holiness and light, Matth. iii. 11. Does a man value himself upon, and appear proud and conceited of himself on the account of his good praying? still continue in his profane, untender, unholy course? His prayers are his own, they are not by the help of the Spirit in him. God regards them not.

4. Great is the encouragement that poor sinners have to apply themselves to serious and spiritual praying. The weakest are left inexcusable, if they neglect prayer still; and the formal professor, if he continue with his formal task-work of praying still. We have the Hearer of prayer to go to, the Father of our Lord Jesus, with
our petitions; an Intercessor in heaven, to present them; and an Intercessor on earth, to draw them for us, and help us to make our petitions. This is the office of the Holy Spirit. Therefore,

Use II. Of exhortation. Set yourselves for praying in the Spirit, Eph. vi. 18. Prayerless persons, give yourselves to praying, and to this kind of praying. Praying persons, satisfy not yourselves without this kind of praying. Stand not still in the outer court of prayer, with hypocrites and formalists; come in to the inner court, with God's own children. Look for the help of the Spirit, employ the Spirit in all your duties, and particularly your prayers. Remember that all the prayers are lost that are not done in the Spirit.

I shall give you some advices, how to get the help of the Spirit in prayer.

1. Come to Christ in the way of believing the gospel. The fulness of the Spirit is lodged in Christ, Rev. iii. 1. He communicates the Spirit to dead sinners, 1 Cor. xv. 45, with John xx. 22, and this in the word of the gospel, Gal. iii. 2. It is vain to expect the help of the Spirit in prayer, till once we have received the Spirit to dwell in us, Eph. iii. 17, with 1 John iii. ult. To receive the word of the gospel as an engrafted, quickening word, whereby we close with Christ for all, is the necessary foundation for all this.

2. Beware of maltreating the Spirit. And so,

(1.) Resist not the Spirit, Acts vii. 51. Do not stave off convictions, and awakenings out of a state or course of sin. Beware of sinning over the belly of light, and persisting in sin against calls to repentance. That is to resist the Spirit, and so to provoke him to leave you.

(2.) Quench not the Spirit, 1 Thess v. 19. If this holy fire begin to burn at any time, so as you see the light and feel the heat of it, do not withdraw fuel from it by neglecting the motions and operations of it, not taking care to cherish them; do not smother them; by not giving them vent in prayer: far less drown it out, by taking your swing in any sinful course; Luke xxii. 34, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life."

(3.) Grieve not the Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. The Spirit is grieved by undervaluing his graces, comforts, influences, and his means of communicating them; by sins gross in their nature or aggravations, whereby the conscience is wasted and signally defiled, whereby some have quite withered away, the Spirit leaving them.

(4.) Vex not the Spirit; Isa. lxiii. 10. Vex him not by your still relapsing into the same sins; Numb. xiv. 22, especially after
convictions of the ill of them, confessions thereof, resolutions against
them, and smarting for them. This is the great trial of the divine
patience, whereby men are in hazard of being given up of God,
Numb. xiv. 27.

(5.) Blaspheme not the Spirit in his operations, particularly
praying in the Spirit. Take heed of making a mock of religion,
preaching, praying, seriousness, talking slightly of these things,
and of making persons the objects of your derision and spite on
these accounts. Sometime these things were only to be found among
malignants and persecutors; but now they are to be found among
people that pray themselves, and partake of the Lord’s table. These
Satan is training up for greater service, when such times shall come
again. But take heed, it is a dangerous course, as these young blas-
phemers of the Spirit in his operations felt; 2 Kings ii. 23, 24, “As
Elisha was going up by the way, there came forth little children
out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou
bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked
on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord; and there came
forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children
of them.”

3. Walk tenderly and circumspectly; Eph. v. 15. A loose and
untender walk, wherein people set down their watch over the frame
of their heart, and the course of their life in words and actions, pro-
vokes the Spirit to withdraw; when a tender walk is followed with
the tokens of his favour; John xiv. 21, “He that hath my com-
mandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that
loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and
will manifest myself to him.”

4. When ye go to prayer, be convinced of your absolute need of
the Spirit. Look for him, and wait, and lay yourselves open to his
influences; Luke xi. 13. Labour to revive that conviction at every
occasion of prayer, and to keep it up throughout it. Look for the
Spirit in the promise, believing it with application; Ezek. xxxvi.
27, “I will put my Spirit within you,” &c. Lay yourselves down
at his feet, to be enlightened, quickened, &c., Jer. xxxi. 18, as one
lays open himself to receive the fresh air.

5. Be habitually concerned for answers of prayer. They that are
in good earnest to have their petitions granted, will be careful to
have them right drawn; but they that are indifferent in the one,
will be so in the other too; Psalm v. 3, “In the morning will I di-
rect my prayer unto thee,” says David, “and will look up.” If ye
be concerned for Christ’s intercession for you in heaven, so will ye
be for that of the Spirit in your own heart.
6. Let the Bible be dear to you, and look on it as God’s word to you in particular, Rom. xv. 4, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” Rev. iii. ult., “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” The word is the vehicle wherein the Spirit is conveyed to us; it is the channel of communicating his influences to us; and the instrument he works by in us, in all the parts of his working in us, exciting, enlightening, &c. Isa. lix. ult, “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.”

7. Be careful observers of providence, Psalm cvii. ult., “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.” The spirit is in these wheels; and the more people are set to observe their motions, the more they will readily get to observe. This is a way to carry you off formality in prayer, and give you an errand in good earnest to the throne of grace, whether in the way of petition, confession, or thanksgiving.

8. Lastly, Be watchful in prayer, Eph. vi. 18. The evil spirit watches against us at all times, and in a special manner the fowls come down on the carcasses of our spiritual sacrifices. When ye sit down on your knees, the heart will be apt to fall a-wandering, and it will be much if before the end it do not give the slip. The Spirit of the Lord only can manage our spirits, and he will be provoked by our wanderings to withdraw. Therefore take that watchword, Prov. iv. 23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

I shall now proceed to the last doctrine observable from the text.

Doctrine V. ult. The Spirit helps believers to pray, particularly, causing in them gracious groanings, which cannot be uttered.

In discoursing this point, I shall,

I. Consider the nature of these groanings caused by the Spirit in believers.

II. Show how the Spirit makes intercession for believers with groanings.

III. In what respects these groaning are groanings that cannot be uttered.
IV. Conclude with two or three reflections.

I. We shall consider the nature of these groanings caused by the Spirit in believers. And here I shall shew,

1. Of what kind they are.
2. The moving causes of them.

First, I am to shew of what kind these groanings are. There is a twofold groaning.

First, A natural groaning, the effect of pain, and any heavy pressure that lies on men's spirits, Jer. li. 52, "Through all her land the wounded shall groan." This is common to men with beasts, Joel i. 18, "How do the beasts groan?" And men may groan so, without any gracious movings of heart towards God; therefore they are none of the groanings in the text, Job xxxv. 9, 10, "By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?"

Secondly, Spiritual and gracious groanings, whereby the gracious soul natively expresses its movings towards God under some heavy pressure, 2 Cor. v. 4, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." These are they with which the Spirit helps believers, and which he causes in them. When men are in a swoon, they groan none; but when they are recovering, they will discover it by groaning; an argument that their sense and feeling is returned. So by these groanings believers are distinguished from the dead in sin.

These spiritual groanings of believers speak,

1. Their feeling of a weight and pressure upon them, 2 Cor. v. 4, above cited. Such is the imperfection of our state in this life, that if there is life in a soul, it must groan, because there is no escaping of pressures, from an evil world without, and an evil heart within. And the easy jovial life that men lead without these groanings, they owe it to spiritual death, which has taken away their feeling, Eph. iv. 18, 19.

2. Their labouring under these pressures, like one under a burden, Psalm vi. 6, "I am weary with my groaning, (Heb.) "Laboured to weariness in my groaning." This imports,

(1.) An earnest endeavour to get them off, or to bear them while they are kept on. The new creature is surrounded with weights of various kinds, which in their own nature tend to hinder its growth, and coming to perfection; and there are mighty labourings and workings of it against them, that it may get forward to its desired perfection; Phil. iii. 14.

(2.) Great difficulty in that labouring, so that the man is as it

Vol. XI.
of the groanings caused by the spirit in believers.

were out of breath wrestling with his burden which natively issues in a groan, Eph vi. 12. There is difficulty in the Christian life, that will try what metal men are of, and will put them to the exerting of their utmost vigour; and therefore it is compared to the exercise of wrestlers and runners.

3. The working of their affections under them; especially,

(1.) Grief of heart, Jer. xliv. 3. Groaning is the natural expression of sorrow: and sighs, sobs, and groans, are what a heart pierced and weighed down with grief naturally vents itself in. Christ was "a man of sorrows, and so we find him groaning, John xi. 38; and true Christians, whatever their natural temper is, will be found to resound as an echo to a groaning Saviour.

Particularly, groans are the more heavy, when they arise from a double grief, a grief for such a thing, and a grief that it is beyond our power to help it; and of this sort mostly are the groans of believers, Rom. vii. 24.

(2.) Earnest desire of help and relief, 2 Cor. v. 2. Here the heart of the believer in these groanings moves directly towards God, with eyes lifted up to heaven. And hence these groanings are prayers in effect, and are so reckoned before God, Rom. viii. 27. Whence it appears how the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings, that helping to groan before the Lord, he helps to pray. These groanings may be considered two ways.

[1.] As they are joined with solemn prayer. When a Christian is seriously praying, and is so weighted, that his prayers are here and there interrupted with groanings; these groanings which the prayers are interspersed with, are in God's account parts of the prayer, and as acceptable parts as are in it all; whether they come in when a sentence is closed, or come in before it be perfected, Psalm vi, 3, "My soul is sore vexed; but thou, O Lord, how long?" Men know not distinctly the meaning of such groans, but the Lord sees it as plain as if expressed by words.

[2.] As they are separate from solemn vocal prayer. And thus we may also consider them two ways.

(1.) As they come in the room and stead of vocal prayer intended. I believe it is very possible, that a child of God may go to his knees to pray, and may rise again without having been able to speak a word, but only to groan; and though he thinks he could pray none at all, he is mistaken; as far as the Spirit helped him to groan, he helped him to pray, though none could understand that prayer of his but God himself who searcheth the heart, Rom. viii. 27. As a full bottle does not orderly empty itself, so a heart may be too full to empty itself by words, but by groans, Psalm lxxvii.
4, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking; I am so troubled that I cannot speak."

(2.) As they are without any design of solemn prayer. When a man is walking or sitting, musing on the sinfulness of his own heart and life, or on the wickedness that is done in the world, with the dishonour that comes on the holy name of God thereby; till his heart, swelling with grief, natively vents itself in a groan; that groaning is in God's account a prayer, and a prayer that shall be heard at length, as proceeding from the influence of his own Spirit. What was it that set the wheel of providence in motion, to stop the wicked career the Egyptians were in, Exod. ii. 24? Why, God heard the groaning of the children of Israel.

Secondly, I come now to shew the moving causes of these groanings of believers. Believers by the Spirit, have their groanings unto the Lord,

1. Under a pressure of trouble. While they are here, they cannot miss so much of a suffering lot, as will make them groan; Rom. viii. 18, 23; and by the Spirit, these groans are directed towards God, as those of a child, under the difficulties of the way, are directed to his father.

(1.) Sometimes they are groaning to him under outward troubles. So Israel groaned under the Egyptian bondage; Exod. ii. 23, 24; yea Christ himself; John xi. 33, 38. These are weights that press their spirits, make them to groan, and look upward for relief; Rom. viii. 23, longing for the day when they shall be beyond them.

(2.) Sometimes they are groaning under inward troubles; Psalm xxx. 7, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." While here they are liable to spiritual desertions, wounds in their spirits under the apprehensions of the Lord's anger against them. And they groan out their case towards the hand that smites them. Both outward and inward troubles often meet together, as in the case of David; Psalm vi. 2, 3, 6, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed; but thou, O Lord, how long? I am weary with my groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears;" and in that of Job: chap. xxiii. 2, "Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning."

2. Under a pressure of temptations. These are a heavy weight to a gracious soul; they made Paul to go groaning to God again and again; 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8. Our Lord Christ had experience of an hour of the power of darkness; Luke xxii. 53, "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." And his followers
will not want experience of the same, wherein temptations come on thick and vigorous. These cause groanings,

(1.) Because of their disturbing the peace of the soul; they turn the calm into a storm, that the soul is tossed thereby as on a raging sea, which makes them cry, "Lead us not into temptation."

(2.) Because of the difficulty of one's keeping his ground against them; Eph. vi. 12, 16. Every temptation has a friend within us, and men's nature is unto temptation as tinder to sparks of fire, apt to take fire; so that it requires hard wrestling to keep our ground.

(3.) Because of the danger of falling thereby into sin. Temptation is the precipice, and sin is the devouring gulf; and they who have a sense of their danger, no wonder they groan, groan under the pressure, and groan for relief.

3. Under the pressure of sin. This is a light burden to the most part of mankind, but it is the heaviest burden to a child of God, and causes in him, through the Spirit, the heaviest groans. For it is of all things the most contrary and opposite to the new nature in him, whence are these continued strugglings; Gal. v. 17, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Many troubles Paul met with; but did any of them all ever cause in him such an exclamation as that; Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now the children of God groan,

1st. Under the weight and pressure of their own sin, the sin of their nature, and the sin of their life; Psalm li. 3, 5, "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." It lies on them heavy as a body of death, while others being dead in sin, it is no burden to them; no burden to their heart, though sometimes it may be to their conscience. And there are three things in their sin that press them sore.

(1.) The filthiness of it, that deformity that is in it, being the quite contrary of the holiness of God expressed in his law. The soul seeing the glory of the holiness of God, and how its sin is the very reverse of that glory; that fills it with shame; Ezra ix. 6, and self-loathing; Ezek.xxxvi. 31. Beholding itself in the glass of the pure and holy law, as a polluted and defiled creature, it groans under it as one pressed down to the earth with a burden; Jer. iii. ult., "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God."

(2.) The prevailing power of it; Psalm lxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me, (Heb.) Have been mightier than I." The new na-
ture struggles against sin; Gal. v. 17. The new man of grace and the old man of sin are engaged in combat; and oftentimes the old man prevails, and the new man is cast down. Now the believer taking part with grace against corruption, groans under this prevailing power of corruption (Rom. vii. 23, 24.) as an insupportable tyranny that he longs to be rid of.

(3.) The guilt of it; Psalm li. 4, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." In the eyes of a believer, life lies in the favour of God, the shinings of his countenance; but their guilt binds them over to his anger, and overclouds his countenance. And that is a weight that makes them groan; that when it is removed, they rejoice as one that has got a burden taken off his back; Psalm xxxviii. 4, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." Compared with Hos. xiv. 2, "take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips."

2dly. Under the weight and pressure of the sin of others; Ezek. ix. 4, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." As one cannot but loathe an abominable thing on another as well as on himself; so sin, wherever it appears, on others, as well as on ourselves, will be a burden to a gracious soul, that will make it groan; Isa. vi. 5, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Thus Lot was under a continued burden in Sodom, while he was among them; 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. And none groan spiritually under their own sin, that do not groan also under the sins of others amongst whom they live. There are three things in the sins of others that make them groan.

(1.) The dishonour to the holy name of God that is in them; Rom. ii. 23, 24. To see men trampling under foot the holy laws of God, and, by their profane courses, affronting the God that made them, and walking after their own lusts, cannot but be a burden to any who truly love the Lord, and are concerned for the honour of his name; Psalm cxix. 136, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes," says David, "because they keep not thy law." Zeal for the honour of God, as it is native to his children; so, where it cannot prevail against sin, natively vents itself in groaning under the burden; Psalm lxix. 9.

(2.) The ruin to the sinner's own soul that is wrapt up in it; Jer. xiii. 17. There needs no prophetical eye, but an eye of faith in the Lord's word, to foresee the ruin of those that go on impenitently in
their sinful course; Rom. vi. 21. When sinners are fighting against God, by going on in their trespasses; it is easy to see whose head must be wounded in the encounter; Psalm lxviii. 21, and who must fall at length, however long they keep foot; Deut. xxxii. 35. Now the prospect of this is enough to make a gracious soul groan for those that cannot groan for themselves; Psalm cxix. 119, 120, "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dress; therefore I love thy testimonies. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." So Hab. iii. 16.

(3.) The hurt that is in it to others. It is Solomon's observation that "one sinner destroyeth much good," Eccl. ix. ult. And there is a woe pronounced on the world, because of offences, Matth. xviii. 7. Sin is a noxious vapour, spreading its infection over many; wounding some, and killing others; grieving to the godly, and hardening to the wicked. And a serious view of the mischief it does to others, beside the sinner himself, makes the godly groan.

From what is said it appears that sin is the fundamental and chief cause of the believer's groaning. Troubles outward and inward rise from it, temptations lead to it. That is it within them, and that is it without them that makes them groan. That is the burden to the Spirit of God that grieves him, as one groaning under a burden, Amos ii. 13; Isa. i. 24. That is it that makes the whole creation groan, Rom. viii. 22. And it is that which makes the believer groan.

II. The second general head is to shew how the Spirit makes intercession for believers with groanings.

1. He works in them a spiritual feeling of their burdens; Rom. viii. 23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves." The time was, when they lay with the rest of the world without sense or feeling of the burden on them, and he gave them life; and sometimes spiritual life in them has been so low, that they could have but little true feeling of their own case; and it was a burden to them to bestir themselves to rid themselves; Cant. v. 3, "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" But the Spirit excites grace, and gives them a lively feeling of their spiritual case; ver. 4, "My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door and my bowels were moved for him."

2. He gives them a view of the free and unburdened state wherein mortality is swallowed up of life, 2 Cor. v. 4. There is such a state, it is represented in the word of truth. The Spirit strengthens the eye of faith, whereby the soul sees it clearly, though afar off; a
state wherein there is an eternal putting off of the burden of trouble, temptation, and sin.

3. He excites in them ardent desires of riddance from their burden, and of arriving at the unburdened state; 2 Cor. v. 2, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." Rom. viii. 23, "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." What ardent desire of deliverance would a man have who was kept lying among dead corpses, rotting and sending forth their stench into his nostrils? Such ardent desire will a Christian have, when, through the Spirit, grace is put in lively and vigorous exercise, while the dead world without him, and the body of death within him, conspire to annoy him with their savour of death, Rom. vii. 24. Hence,

4. He engages them in earnest wrestling with their burden, in order to get clear of it, that the new creature of grace may get up its back, and run the way of God's commandments, Gal. v. 17. Here grace has a mighty struggle with its enemy, longing and panting for the victory, and pressing towards a state of perfection, Phil. iii. 14.

5. Lastly, Finding themselves still entangled with their burden, notwithstanding all their wrestling, he helps them to groan out their case before the Lord, as 'a case that is beyond their reach to help; Rom. vii. 23, 24, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the groaning through the Spirit's aid is not groaning and dying, but,

(1.) Groaning and looking to the Lord for help; Psalm cxxxiii. 1, "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens." The believer groans and looks upward to God for relief. His burden of trouble, he will lie under it, till the Lord take it off, and will not take any sinister course for his deliverance; Isa. xxviii. 16, "He that believeth shall not make haste." The burden of sin, he is never to be reconciled with that, but however long he wrestles with it without the desired success, he will ever be looking and longing for deliverance, Phil. iii. 13, 14.

(2.) Groaning and waiting for relief, Rom. viii. 23. Unbelief makes one to groan and despair of deliverance, either in temporals or spirituals, Jer. ii. 25. But the Spirit makes the believer to groan and wait in hope, Gal. v. 5. Though the eyes fail while they wait for their God, yet still they will wait in hope of the promise, Luke xviii. 1.

III. I come now to shew in what respects these groanings are groanings that cannot be uttered.
1. The working of their affections, thus set in motion by the Spirit, is sometimes such as stops the course of the words. This is often seen in the workings of natural affections, how that either joy or grief filling the heart, mars the ordinary course of words; the heart being too full, to be vented easily in expression. It is not then to be thought strange, that it so falls out in the case of spiritual affections put in mighty motion by the Spirit. Yea they do,

(1.) Sometimes interrupt the expression, and the groaning fills up what is wanting in the words, Psalm vi. 3. Even as a hurt and pained child tells his case to his mother, in imperfect expressions, filling up the want with tears, sighs, and sobs; so that she may have difficulty to understand what ails him; but our Father in heaven has no difficulty in coming at the meaning of his children so expressed, Rom. viii. 27, "He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." Our elder Brother sometimes spoke by broken sentences from the same cause, Luke xix. 41, 42, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." So Gen. iii. 22.

(2.) Sometimes stop the expression altogether, like as a multitude of people rushing all together to a door, they all stick, and none can get out, Psalm lxxvii. 4, "I am so troubled that I cannot speak." So a child of God may go to prayer, and not be able to speak a word. But let them go to their knees before the Lord for all that; and if they cannot speak a word, let them groan their case before the Lord. That is a proper way of praying in the Spirit, and God will certainly hear and accept that kind of praying, though there be nothing but groaning in it. Do ye put away dumb people without an alms, because they cannot speak? are ye not more moved with their signs and humming noise, than with the cries of common beggars? Do not the sighs and sobs of your frightened or hurt children move you more than their complaints formed in words? And do ye think that God will disregard the groans and sighs of his people, when they cannot speak a word to him? No, surely; he will hear the groaning of the prisoner, Psalm cix. 20.

2. What they feel and see in this case, by the Spirit, is always beyond what they can express in words. I own that what a child of God sometimes feels and sees in prayer, is so small, that their words may sufficiently express it; but when the Spirit helpeth them to these groanings, it is quite otherwise, their words cannot come up to their affections. When the Spirit gives a Christian an experimental feeling of the burden of sin, realizes to him the glory of the
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.

2. How are God's people regarded when they get leave to groan on? Answer. 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.

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.