

must be resolute and active in this exercise. The exhortation to it is doubled, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 'Examine your own selves, prove your own selves.'

2. Ye must be impartial in this inquiry. Ye are in this matter judges in your own cause, and under a strong bias to partiality. But the best way is, to take the matter to the highest Judge, with a resolution to know the worst of your case, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Be not as Saul, when sent to destroy the Amalekites, who spared Agag and the fattest of the cattle. Overlook not right eyes and right hands. What Solomon says of flocks, may we say concerning your souls, Prov. xxvii. 23. 'Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.' However partial ye may be, God will not be so to you; so that your foolish partiality can do you no good, but a great deal of ill, as it will make you ignorant of your own case, which it is your greatest wisdom and interest to know.

Quest. May one who doubts of his being in the state of grace approach to the table of the Lord? *Ans.* They whose consciences bear witness, that they do unfeignedly desire Christ and his grace, and to depart from all iniquity, may come notwithstanding of their doubts, which are their weakness, and which they are to struggle against. But if one's conscience witness to him, that he is not clear for Christ as he is offered in the gospel, he cannot come safely, Mat. v. 6. and xi. 6. 1 John iii. 20, 21.

Let every one therefore, carefully examine himself as to his spiritual state, before he approach to this holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, lest he contract the horrid guilt of trampling on the body and blood of Christ, to which he has a right at the Lord's table.



THE NECESSITY OF SELF-EXAMINATION CONSIDERED.*

2 Cor. xiii. 5.—*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

THE dispensations of providence begin to be alarming to this secure generation, and look like the beginning of sorrows, in the great

* Though this discourse, consisting of two short sermons, was not delivered as any part of this catechetical work, yet it is here inserted on account of its affinity to the preceding discourse, and from a persuasion that it may, through the divine blessing, be useful to the reader, as the subject is of no small importance both to saints and sinners; and were the design of it properly attended to, might prove a happy means

mortality prevailing in several places. And the language of such a dispensation is, as is expressed in the text bidding every one *examine themselves, whether they be in the faith, &c.* In which words we have two things.

1. A necessary duty proposed; and that is, the trial of their state. It is proposed under a double notion, *Examine* and *prove*, the call being doubled, because of the weight of the matter. And,

1st, Of self-examination. And here, (1.) Consider the point the apostle would have them put to the trial, *Whether ye be in the faith.* He knew very well that they professed faith in Christ; but all is not gold that glisters. None but believers, true believers, whose faith worketh by love, being a spiritual vital principle within them, will see heaven: but many take themselves, and others take them, for believers, who yet are not so. (2.) The trial he would have them to make of that point, *Examine yourselves.* The church of Corinth was a divided church. There was a censorious party among them, conceited of themselves, and despisers of this eminent and highly distinguished apostle. For all the clear demonstrations there were of the Lord's being with him, they sought a proof of *Christ's speaking in him*, ver. 3. Now, says he, ye are very much abroad, busy examining me, and make much ado for a proof of Christ speaking in me: I would advise you to be more at home, and examine yourselves. Put yourselves to the trial, whether ye are in faith or not. The original word signifies to make such a trial as one does of a thing by piercing through it, whereby he may know what is within, and whether it be sound or not.

2dly, Of self-probation: *Prove your own selves*, to wit, by trial, as in courts offenders are tried, or they who stand for an office are put on trials to prove whether they be fit for it or not; or rather as goldsmith's try metals, whether by the fire or by the touchstone, whereby they discern the true metal from counterfeit. This is near akin to the former expression, *Examine*, but is not quite the same. This last speaks the bringing the matter to a point, the pursuing

of retrieving the decayed interests of religion amongst us. And it is thought, this discourse will be the more acceptable to the reader, when he is told, that it was the last the author ever wrote, after he was confined to his house by the illness of which he died; and that these two short sermons were preached from a window in the manse to the people standing without, on the 2d and 9th of April, 1732; after which he preached no more, the God whom he had served in the work of the gospel, from the latter end of the year 1669, having called him home on the 20th of May, 1732, to inherit the crown of righteousness laid up for him. But by it and his other valuable writings, he yet speaketh; and his name and memory will be revered, as long as a taste for pure and undefiled religion subsists amongst us.

the trial till it should end in a full proof of their state, good or bad. Ye, q. d. seek a proof of Christ speaking in me; pray rest not till ye get a proof of your own state.

2. The weighty ground that makes this duty necessary, most necessary: *Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.* Wherein we have,

(1.) The ground itself, *Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.* Now, Christ dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. iii. 17. Where there is not a vital union with Christ the person is *reprobate*. There is no union with him but by faith: therefore ye have great need to examine whether ye be in faith or not. *Reprobate* here is not opposed to *elect*: for certainly the apostle did not mean to drive them to absolute despair, in case they found themselves naught in the trial; or to persuade them, that if Christ was not in them already, he would never be in them. But it is opposed to *upright* and *genuine*, and so denotes a person, or thing, that being tried is found unsound or counterfeit, as Jer. vi. ult. and so useless, absolutely unfit for the ends desired, Tit. i. ult. and so rejected, Jer. vi. ult.

(2.) The necessity of the knowledge of one's self in this point, *Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, &c.* Knowledge of one's self is far preferable to the knowledge of other men. Alas! what will it avail men to be raking into the state and case of others, while in the mean time they are strangers to themselves? They do not advert to this great point, how Christ is in them, else they are all wrong for time and eternity.

Observe from the connection, That self-judging is a proper mean to bring people off from rash judging of others. It was not rash judging in Peter, when he pronounced Simon Magus to be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, who had offered money for the extraordinary power of conferring the Holy Ghost. Neither is it rash judging, to pronounce profane men, scandalous in the habitual course of their lives, to be going in the way to destruction; for the spirit of God by Paul says the same thing, Gal. v. 19,—21. 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' But it was rash judging in these Corinthians, to question Christ's speaking in Paul, because in some things he was not so acceptable to them as some others. So it is rash judging, to reject men who conscientiously appear to adhere to the uncontroverted points of practical godliness, because they

differ from them in some points controverted among good and holy men. Self-judging would call men home to their own case, so that they would not be at so much leisure to ramble abroad. It would let them see so much evil in themselves, and so much they have need to be forgiven of God, that they would not dare be severe on their brethren, and rigorous on their behaviour, lest the measure they mete to others should be measured to them again. Therefore I cannot but most earnestly recommend this practice of self-judging, which will happily tend to make you low in your own eyes, and preserve you from many miscarriages to and misconstructions of others.

Having thus explained the words, and considered their connection with the preceding context, I shall at this time only observe from them the following doctrine, viz.

Doct. 'It is a most necessary duty lying on men professing the name of Christ, to examine themselves, whether they are in the faith or not; and to pursue that examination and trial, till bringing the matter to a proof, they come to a point with reference to that great concern.'

In discoursing from this important doctrine I shall consider,

I. The point to be tried.

II. The trial of the point.

III. Make some improvement.

I. I shall consider the point to be tried. The point concerning which every one is to try himself is, Whether he is in the faith. And here let us consider,

1. What it is to be in the faith.

2. The weight and importance of this point.

First, I am to shew, what it is to be in the faith. To have the true faith, or to be true believers, and to be in the faith, is all one as to the matter; even as to be in Christ, and Christ's being in us, is the same thing in effect. The man that is endowed with the grace of faith, enriched with precious faith, is in the faith: and the faithless, the unbelieving, in whom the grace of saving faith has never been wrought by the Holy Spirit, is not in the faith. But I conceive the expression aims at these three things.

1. The elect's peculiarity of this heavenly gift; hence called 'the faith of God's elect,' Tit. i. 1. It is the peculiar treasure of these happy objects of everlasting love; it is given to none but them; it remains among that blessed party, as a peculiarity of their community. Hence the apostle Peter addressed himself to those to whom he writes, under this character, 'to them that have obtained like precious faith with us,' 2 Pet. i. 1. There is a fourfold faith mentioned in scripture: An historical faith, that devils partake of, Jam.

ii. 19; a faith of miracles, which one may have, yet want charity, or true saving grace, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. a temporary faith, which apostates in the end may have had, like the stony-ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20, 21. But the faith here to be tried, is the faith that unites to Christ, which none have but those 'ordained to eternal life,' Acts xiii. 48. It is that whereby a sinner receives and embraces Jesus Christ as a Saviour, and relies upon and trusts in him as his Saviour in particular, for the whole of his salvation, and in virtue of which he lives to God. Now, it is every one's concern to try whether he be in this faith or not.

2. The life of faith. The Christian life is indeed the life of faith. Hence Paul says, 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,' Gal. ii. 20. By Adam's eating the forbidden fruit, mankind were led off from the heavenly life into the life of sense, living to gratify their senses, follow their passions, please the vanity of their minds, and the vileness of their affections. Now, God has by Jesus Christ brought in a new way of heavenly life as the road to happiness; and that is the life of faith. Ye should try whether ye are in that road or not. The life of sense is indeed a spiritual death; see whether ye are *in the faith*, as in the life, the true life of the soul.

3. The operativeness or efficacy of faith; for 'faith worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6. Faith lies inwardly, undiscernible to all the world, but to God and the believer himself. But then it is not a dormant or inactive principle, but spreads its effects outwardly through the whole man. Sound faith works the whole conversation, in every part thereof, into true holiness, brings in an universal respect to the commands of God, and sanctifies the whole man throughout. In vain do they pretend to be possessed of faith, who do not live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. For they to whom God has *shewn the good*, Christ himself, and have by faith rolled the burden of their salvation upon him, will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God, as the genuine and never failing fruits of true faith. So ye would consider whether ye be in the faith, which is the way to all other good things.

Secondly, I come to shew the weight and importance of this point. There is nothing about you that can possibly be of greater importance for you to know, and to be clear about. It is the head point, on which all that concerns your eternal salvation depends; and that is a matter of the last consequence to every sinner. We must not stay to enumerate the several particulars. But the weight of it will sufficiently appear, if ye consider, that on it depends,

1. Your union with Christ, and saving interest in him. If Christ

dwells in you, it is by faith, Eph. iii. 17. This is supposed in the text. We remain branches of the first Adam, without Christ, till we by faith come into him as the true vine. If ye are not in the faith, if ye are not of that household, ye are none of Christ's; ye have no saving interest in him, and so none in his purchase. Ye are yet far from God, strangers to his covenant, and without any special relation to him.

2. Your deliverance from the curse of the law, and your absolution from the sentence of the condemnation ye are born under. Hence the apostle says, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' Rom. v. 1. If you have received remission of sin, it has been by faith. Hence the apostle says, 'Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses,' Acts xiii. 38, 39. If ye are not in the faith, there is not one of all your sins, from the womb to this day, but is sealed up among God's treasures, and will be brought out against you in due time. The curse of the broken law stakes you down under wrath: For 'he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,' John iii. 36.

3. Your doing any thing acceptable in God's sight: for 'without faith it is impossible to please him,' Heb. xi. 6; if ye be not in the faith, ye are reprobate to every good work. Ye can no more serve the true ends of Christianity, than dross can go for gold, or counterfeits pass for current money. For without saving faith, ye are without Christ; and without Christ ye can do nothing, John xv. 5; so that however your works may be in the world's view, some good, some bad; yet there are none of them, however good in themselves, good in God's sight, as they do not proceed from a principle of faith in the heart, and are not directed to the glory of God as their ultimate scope and end.

4. *Lastly*, Your eternal salvation. It is the stated ordinance of heaven, Mark xvi. 16; 'He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' So the clearing of that point, is the clearing whether ye be in a state of salvation or not. This is a point than which there is none more weighty and important. How then can that miss to be a point of the greatest moment, on which it depends? Were men more concerned as to their lot and place in the other world, they would be less concerned about the vain pleasures, amusements, and profits of this world; and bend all their endeavours and attention to gain a blessed and happy eternity.

Upon this, I hope, some may be ready to say, Seeing so much de-

pend upon being in the faith, and since we must eternally perish without it, what shall we do to get faith, that we may not underlie the wrath of God for ever? I answer, Faith is the gift of God, and to him you must apply for it; Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of faith, and to him ye must betake yourselves, that he may work it in you; and the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of faith, and it is the effect of his operation: so that you must have recourse to him, that he may 'fulfil in you the work of faith with power. More particularly, if you would have this precious grace of faith,

1. Be diligent in reading and hearing the word. This is a mean that God hath appointed for begetting faith in the hearts of sinners. Hence the apostle tells us, Rom. x. 17; that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Such as would have faith without hearing, would have it out of God's way. See that ye diligently attend the preaching of the word, and miss no opportunity of hearing it. The ordinances are the organ through which the Spirit breathes, when he conveys quickening influences into the souls of men. They are the conduit-pipes through which the water of life runs. They are Christ's road in which he comes to bless sinners. See then that ye be not out of the way when he passeth by. The pool of Bethesda was a figure of the ordinances, to which the diseased repaired, to wait the descent of the angel to trouble the waters: and whosoever stepped into the pool after the moving of the waters; was immediately healed. But if any absented themselves, they could receive no benefit thereby. So if ye would be healed of your spiritual diseases, especially unbelief, that deadly malady, that fixes the guilt of all your sins upon you, make conscience of attending the preaching of the word, and cry for the Spirit of faith.

2. Pray earnestly to God, that he would teach you to believe. Remember faith is his gift, and he bestows it on whomsoever he will. Pray diligently for it; and redeem time for that end. And pray importunately, besieging heaven with your cries for that effect, as resolved to get what ye want. Seek faith from God as a condemned man would seek a pardon: seek this, as a man that sees death before him would sue for his life. Remember, O sinner, that there is no life for you without it: for 'he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' Fall down then before God, and cry for it as for life, saying, 'O give me faith, or else I die. I may live, and be happy for ever, without friends or relations, wealth, honours, or pleasures; but I cannot live happily and comfortably without faith. Without it I can do nothing ac-

ceptable in thy sight. Vouchsafe me this precious blessing, that I may glorify thy name for ever.'

II. I now proceed to consider the trial of this point. This the text takes up in these two things, self-examination, and self-probation.

First, Self-examination. We must carefully, examine whether we be in the faith or not. And this speaks the following things.

1. The necessity of the knowledge of the faith, both of the doctrine of faith in fundamentals, and the grace of faith as to the nature of it, though it be not an experimental knowledge. None can examine themselves on a point they have no notion of: so that those who are grossly ignorant of the nature of faith, are quite incapable of self-examination in this point, but just walk on in darkness and confusion to their own ruin, 1 John ii. 11. How much then does it concern all to cultivate the knowledge both of the doctrine and grace of faith?

2. Men professing faith may yet be void of it. They may seem to be in the faith, in a gracious state, who are yet in unbelief, and in the gall of bitterness; otherwise there would be no need of self-examination on that head. There is no need of it in heaven or hell; for there are no false colours worn there; nor do any there seem to be any more but what really they are. But here, in the visible church, are foolish virgins as well as wise, and foolish builders as well as those who are not so. Great is the need, then, of self-examination.

3. The certain knowledge of our estate, whether we be in the faith or not, gracious or graceless, may be attained in the use of ordinary means, without extraordinary revelation. Self-examination and probation are that means; 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' Many complain they can never get to a point in that matter: but let them inform their judgment as to the nature and evidences of faith; let them lay aside their laziness and their untender walking, shewing a precise regard to the duties of morality; and it will not be so hard. But when people remain in confusion as to the nature and evidences of faith, cannot bring themselves to the bar, and continue untender in their walk, what can be expected? Hence our Lord says, Matth. vi. 23. 'If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' And says the wise man, Prov. x. 4. 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand.' Whereas diligence in the Christian walk, and tender walking in the way of the Lord, are happy means of getting marks of faith. Hence Christ says, John xiv. 21.

‘He that hath my commandments, 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. There is a rule of trial and self-examination given. That we are commanded to examine ourselves, implies there is a rule given we are to examine ourselves by. Hence the beloved disciple says, 1 John v. 13. ‘These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.’ God’s word is a looking-glass, wherein good and bad may see their true image, if they will. It is a fire that separates the good metal and dross ; it is our way-mark, shewing where we are for the present, whither we are going, and pointing to the right way. This frightens many at the Bible ; and few make this proper use of it, but skim it over. O ! Sirs, regard God’s word, and try your state by it, for it is a sure and infallible rule, nay the only rule for it.

5. There is a faculty of self-judging in man, otherwise he were incapable of examining himself. Hence the wise man says, Prov. xx. 27. ‘The Spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly.’ This candle, whether shining with the light of reason only, or with the light of grace also, is capable to make the discovery. Even the foolish virgins saw at length that their lamps were gone out. And all are made to see they are not in the faith, before they are brought into it. So then you may, if ye will, erect this court of examination within your own breast, your own soul and conscience being both judge and party ; but it is only a subordinate judge, whose sentence, if wrong, will not stand, but be overthrown by the supreme Judge, by whose law the decision must be made.

6. *Lastly*, A close applying of that self-judging faculty for the trial of that point. Hence the Psalmist saith this was his practice, Psal. lxxvii. 6. ‘I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.’ The man must rouse up himself, as peremptory to know his state ; must inform himself of the rule he is to be judged by, set it before him, and apply his own case impartially to it, that he may see how they agree, and how the decision is to be made. Say not ye cannot do this. Ye can examine whether ye be in a wealthy or straitened condition ; when something is laid to your charge, whether ye be guilty or not ; and whether ye be in such a one’s favour or not. Only ye cannot, because ye will not, examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. O ! Sirs, rouse up yourselves to this important exercise, shake off all lazy delays, and set about it vigorously.

Secondly, Self-probation. Ye must *prove yourselves*. This speaks,

1. Ye must not take the matter of your state upon trust, hoping the best without due evidence, and stopping there, like the person of whom it is said, Isa. xlv. 20. 'He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?' That is an easy way indeed, but very unsafe; as was the case of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. unto whom our Lord says, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Men entering on self-examination find it difficult and thorny, and they shrink back, contenting themselves to hope well, on they know not what grounds: so the examination is broken off ere the matter is brought to a proof. If the examination before the tribunal of God could be shifted that way, and the decision made in men's favour as superficially, the matter were the less. But there the examination must go through, and the decision must be made, according to, not men's groundless hopes, but the reality of things; according to what Bildad says, Job viii. 13, 14. 'So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.'

2. The matter may, through a close examination, be brought to a decisive proof, however dark and intricate it may seem to be; otherwise we would not be bid prove ourselves. Men may, by close examination of themselves, and thoroughly sifting their own hearts, discover that in and about them, which, according to the word, is decisive of their state, good or bad. Which will leave men inexcusable, in not pursuing for it, but contentedly walking on in darkness. Closely ply the duty according to scripture rules, and ye will find out how matters stand.

3. We must not stop, but pursue our self-examination, till we come to that proof, and so come to a point in the matter on trial. Thrust forward resolutely, looking to the Lord for light, and his help in the search: he will roll away stones of difficulty, and make darkness light before you; remembering what Christ says, Matth. xiii. 12. 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.' And suppose ye should not reach that proof at one time, ye must carry on the examination at another time, and so from time to time, till ye reach the proof. This is your duty; and if ye steadfastly persist therein, ye will bring matters to a crisis.

4. *Lastly,* Having reached the proof of your state, whether ye be in the faith or not, pronounce judgment thereon, whether it be good or bad. This is the end for which the self-examination is gone

through, and the proof was searched out, that you may thereon form a certain conclusion, whether ye be in the faith or not. And it is necessary so to do, that if ye find ye are not in the faith, ye may give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, till ye be brought into that happy state; and that if ye find you are in the faith, ye may give God the glory of it, and improve your blessed condition to his honour.

I shall conclude with a use of exhortation. O! Sirs, examine ye yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, and cease not till ye bring the matter to a proof, a decisive point.

Before I press this exhortation, with motives, I will take notice of some impediments in the way that keep men back from self-examination.

1. Their being carried away with the things of this world, as with a flood, that they can mind nothing else, and have a heart for no other business. Some are so overwhelmed with worldly cares and secular business, that any solid care and concern about their salvation is quite warded off, and there is no access for the same. Hence our Lord cautions his disciples, Luke xxi. 34. 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.' Some are so drenched in the vanity and pleasures of the world, that they have neither mind of it, nor heart or hand for it. Madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead, and are at their place, before ever they have put this matter to a trial. O! Sirs, guard against this excessive attachment to the world, which will prove ruinous in the end.

2. Love to carnal ease predominant. Spiritual sloth is so masterly over those that give up themselves to it, that, in the midst of warnings from heaven, from without and from within, they must have their ease, and keep undisturbed, cost what it will. Hence says Solomon, Prov. vi. 9, 10, 11. 'How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy wants as an armed man.' But O what a risk is that, foreboding a fearful wakening! if ye love your own souls, strive against this sluggish disposition.

3. A false notion of the easiness of the way to heaven. Many in their thoughts of their getting to heaven, the necessity of their being in the faith, regeneration, universal and unlimited obedience to God in the way of duty, and sparing no known sin, never comes into their head: only they believe God is a merciful God; and when the time

comes, they must apply for his mercy. Hence our Lord exhorts, Luke xiii. 24. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'

4. A secret fear that all is wrong. This frightens them from self-examination: and they chuse rather to patch up their present ease the best way they can, than fairly to open the wound that it may be healed. What is this but to chuse to die of the disease, rather than to lay it open for cure? But the eyes most closely shut now will be opened in the other world, as the rich man's were, Luke xvi. 23. Be not discouraged with fears, but be willing to know the worst as well as the best of your case; for that is your safest course.

5. A general hopefulness as to one's state, got by some passing reflections on some good things they imagine they have, without examining to the bottom. This men come at easily, as it were in passing: and being easy in this course, they never set themselves to go to the ground of the cause, like the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. forecited. This is a very dangerous state, and proves the ruin of many.

6. *Lastly*, Satan has a mighty influence to the hinderance of it, both in saints and sinners. In the former he mars the comfort of the clear view of their state: in the latter he keeps them from waking out of their natural security, and so holds them back from Christ. And I know no duty he sets himself more against. For being an accomplished master in hellish subtlety, he well knows, that if sinners were at due pains in examining themselves, and discovered the damnable state they were in by nature, they would hasten an escape to the gospel city of refuge; and therefore he lulls them into a sleep of profound security that they may not feel their misery, and the worse than Egyptian bondage they are in to sin and Satan. Awake then, ye that sleep, that Christ may give you light.

I shall now press the exhortation by some motives; and O that the Lord may carry it home with power on your hearts, as your eternal welfare is deeply concerned therein!

Mot. 1. God has given thee a faculty of examining thyself. He has set up a twofold candle for thee; one within thee, conscience, Prov. xx. 27. forecited; and another without thee, the written word, Psal. cxix. 105. And will ye venture to walk on in darkness as to your state, while ye have these lights to let you into it? Sirs, if ye will not bring in that light, and use it for this purpose, a light will be let in, whether ye will or not, that will set the matter in due light, either in mercy, as in the case of the prodigal, Luke xv. 17. or in wrath, as in that of the rich man, chap. xvi. 23.

Mot. 2. To be bound up from this duty still, is next door to a des-

perate case, Isa. xlv. 20. above quoted. While a person is inquiring about his state, there is some hope: but while men are unconcerned about it whether good or bad, that is like the case of men sleeping to death in their bleeding wounds. Publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before self-righteous Pharisees, because the former were more ready by far to admit the conviction of the badness of their state, than the latter, who were blinded with delusive ideas of their own righteousness.

Mot. 3. It is certain ye were once not in the faith, not in a gracious state, as the Ephesians were, Eph. ii. 3, 12. Now, dare ye pawn your eternal salvation on it, that ye are now in the faith, in a state of grace? No; but ye hope the best, and are easy. But one would think, that in all reason, according to the weight of the matter, one should labour for a proportional certainty. And to leave a matter of the utmost importance at an uncertainty, and make a leap in the dark into the other world, is a most miserable affair, and argues the greatest instability. Surely then this requires a most solemn and deliberate trial; and if ye were wise for yourselves, ye would bring it to a point.

Mot. 4. There are many false pretenders to religion, from off whose faces Christ will draw the mask. Hence he says, Matth. vii. 22, 23. 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity,' Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence you are; then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.' Many have Jacob's voice, but Esau's hands; like Judas, they kiss Christ, and betray him. Such pretenders were the Laodiceans, when they fancied they were 'rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing,' Rev. iii. 17. Men may go a great length, in legal humiliation with Ahab, in repentance with Pharaoh, in reformation with Herod, in zeal for religion with Jehu, and in strictness of life as to the outward man with Paul before his conversion; and yet be strangers to the life of religion and godliness. And should not these instances alarm all who profess Christ, to bring the matter to a trial, whether they are in the faith or not? as a mistake here is of the most dangerous consequence.

Mot. 5. This would be a matter of the greatest utility, if followed through, both to believers and unbelievers. To the former it brings the comfort of their faith, clears up their gracious state, and gives them so many evidences for heaven as they have proofs of their faith. To the other it may be the beginning of good; it will give them the knowledge of their disease, which is the first step to the cure; and if once they be thoroughly convinced of their sinful and damnable estate, they may be induced to leave no stone unturned till they be rescued therefrom, by application by faith to the blood and spirit of Jesus Christ, who saves from sin, and delivers from the wrath to come.

Mot. 6. Try now your state, for God will try one and all of you, and no wrong judgment will pass before him. O! to what purpose should we shift a trial, which we know we will certainly undergo, from an infallible hand? We cannot by any sleight or artifice cast a blind before his eyes, Gal. vi. 7. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. All things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,' Heb. iv. 13. Not the least thing in or about us can escape his all-piercing eye; for he says, 'I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees,' Zeph. i. 12. God has trying times for lands, and for particular persons, wherein he sets them. And such a trying time we have just now. O! let us regard the operation of his hands, lest he proceed against us by terrible things in righteousness. However, should we pass untried in this world, we will most certainly be tried in the other, and there will be no altering of the decision then made. Should we not then be stirred up to try ourselves now, and see how matters stand betwixt God and us, that we may not be condemned in the great day of decision and judgment?

Mot. last. It is the express command of God, that ye should try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith or not. God has not only warned you to try this important point, both by his word and providence, but has expressly interposed his authority, binding it as an indispensable duty upon you to try yourselves, as ye will answer it on your highest peril. I say then, Try yourselves as to this weighty affair, lest ye be found to be fighters against God, to spurn at his yoke, and to throw his cords from off you. Try yourselves then, I say, whether ye be in the faith or not, as ye would regard the authority of the great Lord of heaven and earth, and would not fall into the hands of the living God, from which there is no deliverance.