

sting shall be taken out of the conscience, for this *blood purgeth the conscience from dead works*. And there shall be a raising up both in confidence in the Lord, and if God see it meet the stroke shall depart, however the quarrel shall be ended.

Lastly, Forsake that sin. Give up with it and strive against it. Turn to the hand that smiteth and be not like those of whom it is said, "Thou Lord hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." Return not with the dog to the vomit, otherwise you will get a sharper rebuke next.

Question. What should one do, who is afraid in a humble manner that their sin find them out? That is, that the Lord's anger justly fall upon them for their sin. "My soul, says David, trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."

1. Go to the Lord Jesus, the great burden bearer, and lay all your guilt over upon him. Lay the hand of faith on the head of the sacrifice, and plead the promise of forgiving and forgetting. For saith the Lord, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

2. Lay yourselves down at the Lord's feet, acknowledging that you deserve wrath, but begging for his Son's sake, he would turn it away; withal resolved to submit to whatsoever chastisement he will lay on you, saying, "Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

Lastly, Mourn over your sin and walk humbly and softly under the sense of it. Faith in Christ's blood and true repentance is the best grave-stone for guilt, that it neither rise on a soul here nor hereafter. Amen.

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*Ettrick, August 2, 1719.—Forenoon.*

THE GREAT DANGER OF PROFESSORS WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

### SERMON XVIII.

ROMANS i. 18.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

It is highly necessary to move men to depart from iniquity, that they understand how heinously the Lord takes their going on in it,

and to what hazard they expose themselves by it. Right impressions of this would oblige men to stand and consider what they are doing towards their own ruin, while they resist known truth, and go on in opposition to it, in favour of their lusts, which in effect is the blowing up of the Lord's wrath against themselves. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven," &c.

Attend 1st. To the connection, *For*, This is the general argument to prove justification to be by the righteousness of faith revealed in the gospel. Namely, that all who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and so are ungodly and unrighteous, (and such are the heathens, ver. 19.—32 and such are the Jews and carnal professors of the gospel, chap. ii.) are condemned by the law, and therefore cannot be justified by it; but if they be justified at all, it must be by faith. "For the wrath of God," &c.

2. Attend to the words themselves, in which consider two things,

1. A revelation of wrath made. *The wrath of God is revealed.* This is opposed to the revelation of righteousness, ver. 17. and shews the absolute necessity thereof, and none will value the latter, but they who see and are convinced of the former. Now here consider, what is revealed, *The wrath of God.* This is no passion in him, who is without parts and passions, but a firm and constant will in God severely to punish men for their sins, as men filled with wrath avenge themselves on those that provoke them. *The revelation itself.* This imports the existence of wrath in the heart of God against sinners, and also the unavailing and discovering of it to them. They cannot say it is hid and unknown to them. No, it is plainly revealed to them all. To those without the church, in the natural law, or dictates of their own conscience, ver. 32. To those in the church, not only in their consciences by the natural knowledge thereof; but also in the written law. To both, by strokes of wrath inflicted for sin. This wrath is revealed *from heaven.* Either from the God of heaven; or rather from heaven as the throne of God, where he sits judging men on the earth and from which the sentence comes.

2. The objects of the wrath revealed. These are twofold. First, the personal objects, *those who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* This is the character of the objects of wrath. They are men who maltreat the truth which the Lord has lodged with them. In men's understandings the Lord has lodged truth, whether of the natural or revealed law, there to command in chief, in their hearts and lives. But they, instead of allowing it to rule them, raise up their lusts against it, and unrighteously and wickedly hold it in and hold it under. The word signifies, to obstruct, or hinder, 2 Thess. ii. 6. *Ye*

*know what withholdeth.* So they hinder the effect of truth in their hearts and lives, it can do nothing for their reformation. And it signifies to hold forcibly, 1 Thess. v. 21. *Hold fast that which is good.* They imprison or hold the truth prisoner, in their heads, that they may do as they please in their hearts and lives. For it is thought to be a metaphor from tyrants who oppress the innocent, keeping them prisoners against all right.

Secondly, The real objects of this wrath, the things which provoke him against the persons, *all ungodliness and unrighteousness.* The former comprehends all sins against the first table, of which keeping truth prisoner is none of the least. The latter comprehends all sins against the second table. These are the effects of men's holding truth prisoner; for during this confinement, they range up and down at liberty. And against these, and all these, how little so-ever men judge of them, God's wrath is revealed.

*Doctrine 1.*—Men's unjust holding truth prisoner makes them objects of God's wrath. I shall consider,

I. What is that truth which men hold prisoner.

II. Show how men hold truth prisoner.

III. Show that truth is unjustly thus treated. And

IV. Confirm the doctrine. We are to inquire,

I. What is that truth which men hold prisoner?

It is religious and practical truth which tends to the right ruling of the heart and life in obedience to the will of God. And all religious truth is practical, even from the lowest to the most sublime truths of religion. *For the truth is after godliness.* From the truth of God's word, we ought to learn how to carry ourselves towards God and our neighbour.

This truth is twofold. First, The truth of natural religion, or the dictates of a natural conscience, agreeable to those common notices of good and evil, left in man since the fall. "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." When God made man, he impressed on his mind, the knowledge of the whole of his duty. This was greatly defaced by the fall, yet not quite obliterated, but that there are such remains of it as the going against them renders men inexcusable. "For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." The truths thus known are such as, God is to be worshipped, men must live honestly, every one is to have his due from us. The which and the like may be and have been improved into a considerable system of morality.

Second, The truth of revealed religion, which is held out to us in the written word, and comprehends the whole truths of the law and of the gospel also. The end of which is sanctification. *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.* These truths are revealed in the church, being read and preached to them among whom God has set up his tabernacle. And they shine as light in a dark place, to guide men's feet in the way of duty. The particular truths of each of these kinds are many. But all of them are held prisoners by the ungodly and the wicked who will not bow to them in their practice, nor be guided by them. We proceed,

II. To show how men hold truth prisoner. Two ways.

I. Men hold truth prisoner in others, and so expose themselves to God's wrath. This specially three ways.

1. By putting truth into an ill name, casting reproach and disgrace upon it, on whatever pretences. *Thus many of them said of Jesus, who is himself the truth, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?* This does effectually lay bands on the truth in an evil world. "Brethren, says Paul, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith." Much guilt lies upon a professing generation among us for hard speeches, which have imprisoned preached truth many a time, and marred its efficacy both on themselves and others; while they have little considered of what dreadful consequence to poor souls, the liberty which they have taken to themselves that way, has proved.

2. By resisting and opposing the truth. "Thus when the Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed, Paul shook his raiment and said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles." When men give loose reins to their lusts to oppose the truth told them publicly or privately, they lay bands on it, and hinder its efficacy, saying, it shall not reign over us. Thus men are often irritated by the truth, instead of being humbled and bettered by it. "Am I therefore, says Paul to the Galatians, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" Men will have truth suited to their humours, instead of suiting themselves to the truth. "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord. Which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."

Lastly, By an authoritative shutting up of truth. This often follows as a judgment. "But thou, O son of man, said God to Ezekiel, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shalt bind thee



with them, and thou shalt not go out among them. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house." And thus sometimes lights in the Lord's house are taken down from off the candlestick and put under a bushel, to the marring of the progress of truth, the darkening of the house, and hastening on of more wrath.

2. Men hold truth prisoner in themselves. This is what the text mainly aims at. The office of truth is to combat sin, to advance holiness, to bring the world and the soul in which it lodgeth, to a conformity to itself, to cast them into its own mould. "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." And it is held prisoner, when this effect of it is prevented by us, and we will not allow it to exert its efficacy. This is done two ways.

1. With respect to others, when it is kept back from preventing sin in them. This is done two ways. First, when it is restrained by undue silence. If the Lord call men to bring it forth, silence in that case is undue, and a bond laid on truth. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." And from this ariseth sin's going on without controul in the world.

*Question*, When is truth held prisoner by undue silence?

*Answer*, I. Negatively, not when one has no sufficient call to bring it forth. The wise man observes, *There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak*. And in discerning these times there is much spiritual wisdom. *A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment*. Truth kept in silence, during the proper time of silence, is not kept prisoner, but entertained in its lodging suitable to its character. "A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."

Truth is too sacred a thing, to bring forth just to make a show of, and far more to prostitute to men's lusts and humours. There is an unseasonable venting of truth, by which truth and holiness gain nothing, but lose much; as is clear in the case of Doeg discovering David, 1 Sam. xxii. 10. Our Lord forbids it. "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." The apostle says he had declared all the counsel of God, Acts xx. 27. But behold how it is qualified, ver. 20. "And how I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you,

and have taught you publicly and from house to house." Compare 1 Thess. v. 1. where he says, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is truth itself, see his practice in this matter. "But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I told not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

2. Positively, when the honour of God, and the good of our neighbour requires the bringing it forth. To hold truth back, when the Lord's honour requires it to come forth, is to hold it prisoner, Mark viii. 38. already cited. When the Lord's honour is at stake, truth is like a fire that will seek a vent, and get it in a tender soul. Thus speaks Jeremiah, "Then I said, I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name; but his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." And it exposes men to the wrath of God, to hold in truth in that case, for that is to sacrifice God's glory to men's own interests and lusts which is a dangerous business.

Again, to hold it in when the good of our neighbour requires it to come forth, is to hold it prisoner, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Where there is any probable appearance of sin's being prevented in others, by means of the coming forth of truth, it is not to be held in, nor can it be so, without the guilt of imprisoning it. For how can one be guiltless, when he sees his neighbour pulling down the house about his ears, and yet will not warn him, putting his soul in hazard of the Lord's anger, going out of God's way, and yet does not tell him of it.

3. When by words or actions, one holding in the truth, leads another into sin. This is to hold truth prisoner with a witness, shutting the prison door with double bars. This Paul teaches, "Who knowing, says he, the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." They knew things to be sinful, yet both did them themselves and helped forward others in them. There was a tincture of this in Peter's dissimulation, for which Paul reproved him, Gal. ii. 11,—14. This cannot miss to kindle the Lord's anger against a person, to lead others into that which he himself knows to be sinful.

II. With respect to themselves, they hold truth prisoner in themselves several ways. As by,

1. Neglecting, overlooking, and not adverting to it in the management of their hearts and lives. The Gibeonites who came to Joshua, *took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.* There is a certain carelessness men are guilty of this way, by which, though the principles of holy walking are known to them, yet they take no heed to them, but walk at random at all adventures. The light shines about them, but they take no notice of it to order their steps by it. This is to put the Lord's candle in them, under a bushel. It is a principle of religion and right reason, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do you also unto them.* But in the affairs of many this is as little regarded, as if they were incapable of reflection.

2. Not obeying truth speaking to them in their consciences. There is a conscience within men instructed in the truths of natural religion, and in Christians instructed in the truths of revealed religion, stirring up to duty to God, and one's neighbour accordingly. The which when men do not regard to obey it, in the dictates thereof, and to comply with the duties it presseth as the will of God, they hold truth prisoner, that it serves for nothing to them, but to be a witness against them, and to secure God's wrath upon them. "And thinkest thou this, O man that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

3. Going on in opposition to known truth, knowing the right and doing the wrong. "They are of those that rebel against the light." This is a forcible holding of truth prisoner, refusing to admit its government in the soul, but on the contrary treading it under foot, to the kindling of the Lord's wrath against them who do so. How many such are there, who condemn these things in the general and in others, which yet they do themselves. Their heads are full of light, but their hearts and lives are full of darkness. They talk like saints, but live as the profane.

Lastly, by overcoming the truth in their war against it. "Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Many a battle there is betwixt truth in the conscience, and a man's lusts, till the man taking part with his lusts against the truth, convictions are murdered, the troublesome light in the soul is put out, and truth is taken and held prisoner; that it can no more disturb the man in the enjoyment of his lusts. But he can go on securely in his sins, though the light remain, the heat of it being gone. We proceed,

III. To show that truth is unjustly thus treated, wrongously held prisoner by sinners. This is clear, for that,

1. It is God's messenger to men and his deputy in the soul, over which they have no power and authority. "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." God's truths are eternal and unchangeable like himself, and are set up in his word and the consciences of men, to rule their hearts and lives, and not to be overruled by them. So that one cannot hold it prisoner but in unrighteousness, or wrongously and in rebellion against the God of truth.

2. It is never guilty of any crime against men, that it should be so treated. Falsehood and lies are ever contrary to men's true interest, but the truth is never so. It is God's lamp set up to light them in the way to true happiness, and to keep them from the paths of ruin. And if sinners will allow it full sway in them and over them, they could not fail of being made for ever happy by it, as the disregarding of it will without question ruin them for evermore.

3. It cannot be held prisoner but for an unrighteous cause, and in favour of some lust or other. The very thing that makes a person treat it so, is that he may go on in his sin without controul. The office of truth is to be a reformer in the heart and life, and those who hate to be reformed, for that very cause rise up against it and lay bonds on it. "Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee."

Lastly, A just God will clear it, and set it free at the cost of those who hold it prisoner. "They shall know, saith the Lord, whose word shall stand, mine or theirs." If truth prevail not to men's reformation, it will prevail to their destruction; if its commands and instructions have not their effect on them, its threatenings will. "Your fathers where are they? And the prophets do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned, and said, like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." Wherefore strong is truth and will prevail, whoever oppose it. This brings us,

IV. To confirm the doctrine. Consider,

1. A person's treating truth thus is rebellion against God, who is the God of truth and Lord of light. The gospel is the sceptre of Christ's kingdom. The rod of his power, Psal. cx. 2. Those who resist it, and in opposition to it go on in their sinful courses, are declared enemies and rebels to the Lord. "But these mine enemies, says he, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." They will be broken with his iron rod. Conscience is God's deputy in the soul; therefore to go against it is to go against God, and God will ratify the sentence

pronounced by conscience, out of his word against the sinner, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

2. It exposes men to severe temporal judgments. It was our first parents holding truth prisoner, which brought in the flood of miseries on the world. To the old world Noah preached righteousness, yea, Christ by his Spirit in him preached to them, but they would not obey the truth, so they were swept away with the deluge, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

3. It exposes to spiritual judgments. Judgments of wrath on the soul. Men who will not see, God is provoked judicially to blind, to harden those who will not be softened; and to give them over to Satan and their lusts, who will not be reformed, nor withheld from them, Isa. vi. 8.—10. Thus the very means of grace become a savour of death unto many. Who can without horror read the fearful dispensation of providence against the heathens for imprisoning their light? Rom. i. 21.—28.

4. It exposes to eternal judgments. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." This crime then will bring men to everlasting ruin. The imprisoning of the truth in unrighteousness, will make them truth's prisoners in hell for ever. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Truth in God's word and in men's consciences says, *Those who do this, are worthy of death.* Their lusts bid them venture on them notwithstanding, hoping better things. But truth will prevail, because it is God's truth and cannot be broken.

Lastly, It vehemently heightens wrath and aggravates the judgments of it here and hereafter. "And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." The more light men sin against, the greater is their sin, and the more fearful will their punishment be. It will be a hot hell that these will have, who have been faithfully warned by a gospel ministry, in comparison of theirs who either never heard the gospel, or whose light has been but dim and obscure. O consider that heavy word, Dent. xxix. 19.—21.

*Use 1.*—This generation in this land is a generation of wrath, and cannot escape judgment come from what quarter it will. For this is the sin, the course of the generation, light is come, but they love darkness. We have had a long and clear dispensation of the gospel for many years. But look abroad in the land, and behold the fruits. They are fruits of Sodom. Few or none grow better. Many are waxing worse. Ungodliness and unrighteousness abound: not for want of light, but through resisting it. So that our sun of the gospel, is a winter sun whose efficacy is much gone. A gospel that is not obeyed but neglected and contemned; and if persecution be added to fill up the measure of iniquity and make the cup run over, it is but the native consequence of holding the truth in unrighteousness.

2. Let me apply this to you, to whom I have spoken the word of the Lord. To the best of my knowledge I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you. And I even own that your knowledge of the truth of religion, is as much generally as I ever observed in other places. But alas! I think truth is held prisoner with a witness, and our lives are not at all answerable to our light, and I fear it will bring wrath upon the place. Therefore I would have you convinced of this sin and of the hazard of it; and to forsake it and set truth free, that it may reign freely in your hearts and lives. Now,

To convince you of the truth of this charge consider,

1. Are there not some who to maintain their peace, keep off from serious consideration of that weighty point, how matters stand with them before the Lord. They do not obey the command, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. But the slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." They know if they should enter into the opening up of their state and case, their peace is gone. Their heart dies in them like a stone at the thoughts of it, and therefore they carefully hold from it. This is an evidence they are self-condemned and have no peace, but as truth is held prisoner.

2. Where is conscientious reformation, according to the word preached and acknowledged in the time for true and right? "They come unto thee, said God to Ezekiel, as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." When you go to your looking-glasses what spots are on your faces you wipe off, what is wrong in your dresses you put right. The preaching of the word is the Lord's looking-glass, set up before you every Sabbath.

See you no spots by it? Does it not discover your duties omitted, your sin committed, and often touch on the sore heel? "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But do you labour to wipe off the spots discovered, and rectify the wrongs about you? Or do ye not even carry them away with you, and bring them back again and get the other view and carry them away again? James i. 23.—25. Ah! sirs, this is imprisoning the truth.

3. How many in the conduct of their lives and affairs consult their worldly interest and satisfy their unruly passions, but regard not the truth of God's law and gospel. Like a company of servants, that will have their own way, without any regard to their master's orders though he be looking on. They are so far from being in the fear of the Lord all the day long, that from their morning prayers, to their evening prayers, they have no more use for the fear of God, than the ape for his collar, which he puts off and on as his convenience serves, nor more use for their Bible and what it says, than if they were things out of date.

In their thoughts, words, and actions, towards God and their neighbour, they are children of Belial, without a yoke. They think, say, and do, what they please.

4. How many are there whose lives are stained with gross transgressions against the letter of the law, and never reform? Are there any amongst us who do not know that cursing, swearing, lying, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, unrighteous dealing, wrath, strife and the like, are works of the flesh, and they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God? I think there are none, though it were the advantage of some they had never known it, their sin had been the less. If men did not imprison truth, could their tongues be set against the heavens at the rate they are? Would they dare to do an unjust thing, bite and devour one another, fight and scold as void of God's fear?

5. Are not many things done, conscience in the very time reclaiming and witnessing against them; yet it is overruled and the sin done in opposition to it, Rom. ii. 15. Is it possible men and women can be hearers of the gospel and do such things as many do, without a witness against them in their own bosom, however fair a face they put on it? No, but they lay bands on it. They will tread over it, and strangle it, to please the lusts of others, or their own, and sell their souls to the devil for dishonest gain, and will do any thing to save their credit.

6. How many have had rousing awakenings, with whom all is got hushed again, and they have all the ease in their sinful courses which they had before. "Their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away." The word has sometimes made a disturbance in some persons' consciences and they have gone away with God's arrows sticking in them, but they have got them out through time. "When Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." They have met signal judgments from the Lord's hand that have spoken plain language, they have been in imminent danger of death and eternity; and these have made them bethink themselves of turning over a new leaf, and to be other sort of persons than ever they had been. But all has turned to nothing. "Lord in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening hand was upon them."

Lastly, Are there not some who will not witness against sin in others, when they have a fair call to it; or cannot bear it witnessed against themselves? Many who can speak well in their own cause, have not a word to speak in the cause of God and holiness, but imprison truth in themselves, to their partaking of the sins of others, but say what is that to us? And many are such sons of Belial, that one cannot speak to them of their offences, but their passions rise, and they pour contempt on the reprover, instead of taking with the reproof.

Having showed you the truth of the charge, let us try to convince you of the hazard of thus imprisoning the truth. Consider,

1. That it is ingratitude to God of the deepest dye. May not the Lord say, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?" God's laying to our hands the conveniences of this life, giving us fruitful seasons and filling us with food and gladness, obliges us to grateful improvement. Much more doth his giving us the knowledge of the truth in his gospel oblige us to it. It is a very signal and eminent benefit, and so great must be the ingratitude in so treating it. Consider that it is a spiritual mercy, a benefit for our souls. It is God's candle set up in and amongst us, to let us see to work out our salvation. Shall we then take it and put it under a bushel? We must go through a dark and dangerous world; it is a lamp to our feet, shall we cover it up. Besides it is a mercy not common to all. "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments they have



not known them. Praise ye the Lord." It is true all have some natural truth, but as for gospel truth revealed unto us, many nations in the world are without it. Look through the heathen world, and behold how they sit in the region and shadow of death, knowing nothing of a Bible, Sabbaths, ministers, sermons; and look again into this country and see how we have all these in plenty. And then think what monstrous ingratitude it is to treat truth at this rate.

It is direct disobedience to God, a flying in the face of his orders. "Now unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, God will render indignation and wrath." By this practice men will have their own will their law, and when the laws of heaven are proclaimed to them, they will not admit them, nor subject themselves to them. So that such in a peculiar manner are children of disobedience, not through ignorance, but wilfulness. Moreover,

3. It is a rising up against God in open rebellion and war. "They are of those that rebel against the light." It is as if men should not only disregard, but tear in pieces the proclamation of God's law, fall upon his heralds, and put them in bonds. If such could banish the truth from among them, that they should know it no more, they would; but since they cannot do that, they shut it up and are at war with it.

4. It is working against our own interest in favour of Satan and our lusts. It is the putting out of the candle, which God in compassion to our darkness has lighted unto us. It is like one travelling through a wilderness of pits, rising up against his guide, binding him and casting him into one of them. Like captives conspiring against their deliverers, or sick men against their physician, to their own ruin.

This is the evil of it. Now the hazard is great.

1. Men so doing grow worse and worse. "Being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness." It is a wonder to many to see men the longer they live under the means of grace, to grow worse instead of better; the name of the devil in them to turn legion, as it is with many this day. But here lies the matter, they are hellish conquerors, who grow insolent upon their victory. Like rebels waging war with their lawful prince, there is no abiding them, when the day is their own. Having got the victory over truth, they break all its bands, and cast its cords from them, the wall is thrown down, and wickedness, like a flood, breaks out and overflows all its banks.

2. It brings on judicial blindness. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the

glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Men who loving darkness rather than light, shut their eyes against the light, are in a fair way to be struck blind. So that as darkness is their choice so they shall have enough of it, Isa. vi. 9, 10. Sometimes a light is broke up in one's breast, and he is awakened. But striving against it, it is lessened and grows feebler and feebler, like the evening light, until it go quite out.

3. It brings on judicial hardness, Isa. vi. 10. A customary going on in opposition to light, is the high way to make one senseless and unfeeling, that one can sin without remorse. It makes the conscience as it were seared with a hot iron, benumbed, stupid, and dead. Every sin against light, wounds the conscience, the wounds multiplied, conscience is as it were slain outright. Hence it is, that some sins which one could not commit without great uneasiness, they have come by custom, to commit with all the ease they can wish.

4. It provokes God to give up with men and to give them over to their own lusts. "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels." This is a fearful judgment, when God withdraws the workings of his Spirit from men, which they have quenched; takes off the restraints of his providence from them, which they have striven against; lays the reins on their own necks, and suffers them to go wherever Satan and their own lusts drive them. Yet this is the native fruit of holding the truth in unrighteousness. *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.*

5. It paves the way to the unpardonable sin, *the great transgression*. The imprisoning of truth is a main ingredient in this sin, a going over the belly of known truth. It is a total apostacy of those once enlightened, Heb. vi. 1,—8. And O what a fearful thing is it to come so near the borders of that hopeless case.

6. It is often punished with the prevailing of the spirit of error and delusion, Isa. lxvi. 3, 4. When the sacred truths of God are not entertained in the love of them, a fearful mist of error and delusion oftentimes arises to the ruin of the souls of many. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." This never since the revolution, looked so like to be the plague of this generation as now and within these few years. And by this we know what to blame for it. The primitive apostolic church had a great gospel day, but many held the truth in unrighteousness. And for the pu-

nishment of it some arose denying justification by faith, and some the resurrection and the like. After the church had had a long declining day, the great apostacy of antichrist followed in the west, 2 Thess. ii. 6,—12. And nearly about the same time, mahometanism in the east. When Luther arose, and he and others had brought back the truth from its Babylonish captivity, the anabaptists arose in Germany, with fearful and outrageous delusions. In the last age, after these nations had lost the purity of ordinances and sense of religion under prelacy, and they were recovered by the good hand of God: This nation renewing the national covenant, and the three nations entering into the solemn league and covenant, they had a bright day of the gospel a while. But not being improved, an unparalleled deluge of errors and heresies came in on the back of it, as if the gates of the bottomless pit had been set wide open, especially in England. And we have had a great and long day of the gospel since the revolution, but fearfully misimproved. And the mist is now begun to rise. Not to speak of the prevailing of deism amongst many of the nobility and gentry, some of our own profession in the neighbour nation, teachers by office, have gone about to subvert the very foundation of Christianity. And in this church controversies about the doctrine have not long since broke out, and at this present time are in being, which trysting with the divisions and the separate practices among ministers have a fearful aspect and threaten a spreading cloud of ignorance and darkness. Believe ye and receive the truth in love and give it free course with you, lest the time come when many shall say, They know not what to believe in more weighty matters, than they have yet been staggered about it.

7. It provokes God to remove the gospel from among a people, and to leave them in darkness. "Therefore, said Jesus, I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof." When people have no use for God's candle, but to divert themselves at it on Sabbath days, when they have no other thing to do, the candlestick is in a fair way to be removed out of its place, Rev. ii. 5. Many of God's candles have been put out, because their burning and shining was for no purpose to advance holiness amongst those among whom they shined. Many have put them under their bushel, so that in vain they have given light, and therefore God threatens to put them under his bushel next.

A while's darkness may make the light more prized and procure a more free course to the truth, 1 Sam. iii. 1,—8. It brings fearful tossings and rackings of conscience, when once conscience is awakened, under these Judas went and hanged himself. However

one may for a while bear down truth in a silent conscience, it is apt to rise up on them some time or other. And as a fire long smothered makes terrible havock when once it prevails and bursts out, so conscience when awakened. Then tormenting remorse takes its course in the soul and gives foretastes of hell, where the worm never dies and the fire is not quenched.

Lastly, It will aggravate a person's torment in hell, *But I say, unto you*, said Jesus to the Jews, *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.* Remember the doom of the servant who knew his master's will, but did it not. As the sharpest vinegar comes of the most generous wine, so the most fierce wrath comes from the despising of truth revealed to one in the gospel. And when these, who were all their days kept ignorant of gospel truths shall be laid under wrath, what will the case be of those who have known them and imprisoned them? Double vengeance, even the Mediator's vengeance will be found their due, who have sinned against the remedy of sin.

3d Use. Set truth free, loose its bands that it may reign freely in your hearts and lives. That is,

1. Resist not truth laid before you in or from the word, or by your own conscience. Never quarrel nor contend with it, nor oppose it more. Resist not its entry, but allow it free access into your consciences. Wilful and affected ignorance in points of faith and practice, is a resisting of truth, says the Psalmist, "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness." It is the character of the wicked, *They say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* It is an evidence of enmity against the truth, when one desires not to know it, for that is only that they may enjoy some one lust or other with the more ease. But an upright heart opens to the truth, that it may be guided by it. Again, resist it not when it has entered. Rebel not against the light. Never resist the voice of your own consciences, by going contrary to its light, whatever be the temptation or the hazard. The testimony of one's conscience will be more comfortable under any trial, than all the world can be. "For our rejoicing is this, says Paul, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." And an accusing and condemning conscience will be more heavy than any other burden.

2. Slight not nor overlook truth in the conduct of your lives. Let God's word be your rule in all your actions. Take the direction of conscience from the word along with you. And let not truth

known unto you stand by unnoticed, but consult it and manage your life by it, in the several steps thereof.

3. Submit to the truth, to the truth in the word and to truth in your conscience, as the ruler of your life. It is God's deputy in your souls; it is the law of the great King, to which you are to yield in all points. Let it have the command in your souls, that they omit not what it requires, nor commit what it forbids. Let your souls be open to it, to be reformed, reprov'd, instructed and directed by it. Renounce your own wills, your own lusts, resolving to be guided by the testimonies of God, as to what is to be believed or practised.

*Motive 1.* It will set you at liberty. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Truth set free will break the bonds of sin and Satan, under which the soul is, and give the man true liberty. "I will walk at liberty," says David, for I seek thy precepts." Licentiousness, to run freely wherever a person's lusts drive him, is no true liberty. But to walk according to the rules of religion and reason is liberty indeed.

2. The way of truth is the way of holiness and happiness. Truth and godliness are akin to each other. Hence Paul speaks "of acknowledging the truth which is after godliness." Truth is the great mean of sanctification. "Sanctify them," says Jesus, "through thy truth, thy word is truth." And error and darkness always foster the corruptions of the heart. Holiness leads the way to happiness. And so truth believed and practised will spring up in eternal happiness.

Lastly, Consider the imprisoning of the truth is the occasion of all ungodliness and unrighteousness among the hearers of the gospel. See the text. What is the cause of the abounding impiety and profaneness of our day, but that truth hath not its effect. When truth is pent up, the sluice of ungodliness and unrighteousness is opened overturning all duty to God and to our neighbour.

*Doctrine II.* Truth being kept prisoner, ungodliness and unrighteousness get loose. These are like the scales in the balance, as the one goes up, the other goes down. Here we shall consider,

I. In what cases this holds true. And II. Why it is so.

I. In what cases this holds true. This holds,

1. In the case of societies, churches, nations, congregations, families, and neighbourhoods. If truth prevail among them; ungodliness and unrighteousness lose their ground. If it be not so; they prevail. Look without the visible church, it is so. "Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

Look within the church and you will find it is so, says Isaiah, "In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." If one would open the sluices of impiety that wickedness may overflow all its banks, he has no more to do, but to lay bands on the truth, and the flood will run out amain.

2. It is so in the case of particular persons. "Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst; but thou saidst there is no hope: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." When once the bands which should be laid on their lusts, are laid on the truth, then men live at large and unconfined, abandoned to a lawless liberty. And then a man becomes a son of Belial indeed, without a yoke, in effect he bids defiance to heaven. "With our tongue, say they, we will prevail, our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" And such persons regard not men, farther than their interest and humour lead them. "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." Now let us,

II. Show why it is so. Consider,

1. That truth and they are contrary the one to the other, so that as the one goes away, the other takes place, as light and darkness which can have no communion. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" The truth set up in one's conscience and what is revealed in the gospel teaches, "To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And when the light of the truth is stopped, then darkness comes on, and ungodliness and unrighteousness creep out like wild beasts from their dens in the night.

2. Man's heart has a natural bias to ungodliness and unrighteousness. Truth is a curb to this bias of the heart, and when this curb is removed, the heart goes in the ungodly and unrighteous way to which it is naturally inclined. "My people, says God, are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." Man since he first broke over the hedge of the law, cannot be kept within it, but by restraining or sanctifying grace. In both these truth is the great instrument, being that which is accommodated to the restraining of rational creatures. It is the bridle by which men, like horses and mules, must be kept in. Take it off, and men "Are as the wild ass used to the

wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, in her occasion who can turn her away?"

3. Satan strives against the truth, and to advance ungodliness and unrighteousness. For truth is a stop to the advancement of his kingdom, whereas ungodliness and unrighteousness are the very pillars of it. So getting the stop removed, he urges men with ease to ungodly and unrighteous lives. "Ye are, said our Lord to the Jews, of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." When he first brought in the flood of ungodliness on the world, he first attacked the truth; "Ye shall not, said he, surely die;" and when once he had gained that point, he carried all before him. The woman did eat, and gave also to her husband and he did eat with her. So to this day unbelief is the ruin of the world.

4. Men do not lay bands on the truth or resist it, but that they may get loose reins to their lusts. "Let us, say they, break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." They can have no quarrel with it, but that which the owl has with the sun, that it gives light, and they love darkness and the works of darkness, therefore they hate the light. Were the hearts of men reconciled to their duty, and divorced from their lusts, they would as willingly hearken to the truth, as a man that wishes to keep his way would listen to a director, who would conduct him safely past every danger.

*Use 1st,* See what is the spring and cause of all the ungodliness, and unrighteousness, and wickedness, which abound in the land, and in the congregation this day. It is the imprisoning of truth, men going in direct opposition to the word of God, and their own consciences. The contempt of the gospel, and not obeying it, leaves the sluice of profanity open, fills churches, nations, and congregations with scandalous practices. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

2. Whoever they are, who have any hand in rendering the gospel unsuccessful, are so far chargeable with the ungodliness and unrighteousness that follow thereupon. And this will conclude all guilty of the wickedness of the generation, for, alas! on all hands, and among all parties, the success of the gospel is little regarded. Many stumbling-blocks are laid by the preachers of it, long have many people striven to make them contemptible; the weighty concern of the gospel, doing good to souls has been sacrificed to party zeal, humour and interest. So that it is like to be a fearful reckoning, God will have with pastors and people, with all the different

parties among us, when God rises to visit for the unkind treatment, the gospel has received from all hands, as to the success of it.

3. If there were no more evil in bearing down the truth and marring its efficacy, instead of promoting it in our several stations, it is bad policy. How many complaints are there in families, that masters, servants, husbands, wives, are most undutiful to their relatives, which occasions much uncomfortable living in families. How many complaints among neighbours, that people cannot trust one another, that so many stand not to wrong their neighbours, take the bread out of their mouths, bite and devour one another? What is the fountain of all this disorder? Alas it is a thing that is but little laid to heart. The truth has not its effect among us, and none, or next to none are concerned to promote it. Alas! Sirs, do you expect that they will regard man, who will have no regard to God? Do you expect that righteousness and dutifulness will be brought into your families and neighbourhoods, where there are no pains taken to bring people to obey the truth and fear the Lord?

4. The way to obtain reformation much needed, is that every one in their several capacities, strive that the truth may have free course, the gospel may have its effect. Let no man think that this belongs to ministers only; no, but as when a house is on fire, every man is to help, so here. It is common duty and interest too. Beware of speaking or doing any thing by which the success of the gospel may be marred, lest souls perish thereby and their blood be charged on those who lay the stumbling-block before them. Do every thing in your power for the furtherance of the gospel. Were this point more considered, men would be very sure that God's command in his word, made separation a duty before they dared to venture upon it; because otherwise all the ruining consequences of it to many poor souls, thereby taught to despise ministers and ordinances by them administered, lie at their door who make the separation not made a necessary duty by God's own command in his word. I have with a bleeding heart often seen and felt the consequences of such separation, and have always been of the mind that our divisions here, are one of the great causes of the little success of the gospel among us; marring the effect both of doctrine and discipline upon poor souls. And therefore no marvel one have a horror of it, till God's own word bind it on their conscience. Professors may very well plead with their mother to put away her whoredom; and if she deny them the privileges of the family, unless they will play the whore also, or drive them out of her house, they may justly leave her. But while she does neither of these, but only requires them to join with her in uncontroverted duty to her



husband, and managing the lawful affairs of the family; they cannot leave her without breach of duty and without condemning the generation of the righteous, following this method in the Old and New Testament. And let one's own conscience judge, whether staying in her house and pleading with her in this manner, or leaving her for altogether, be the most proper means to reclaim her from her whorish practices?

5. See why truth in the gospel or in men's consciences once overborne and oppressed is so difficult to rise again. Ungodliness and unrighteousness break loose, and the sluice once opened is difficult to stop. The hard heart grows harder. *The last state of that man is worse than the first.* No person's case is more hopeless than that of apostates, the returning devil brings with him seven spirits worse than himself, 2 Pet. ii. 20.—22. How many have sometimes had convictions, touches from the word into the innermost parts of their souls, from whom God is gone and answers them no more. And the more they had of these, they are now the harder to work upon.

6. In what a sad case are these from whom the gospel is taken, or truths profitable for them kept up, or their consciences seared that truth cannot enter. In these cases ungodliness and unrighteousness get loose. When the gospel goes, God goes. *Yea, woe also to them,* says God, *when I depart from them.* So far as profitable truth is withheld, men's souls are starved and betrayed into snares, and the hands of their enemies. And the seared conscience must needs make a sinful life, when the eyes are put out the whole body must be full of darkness.

Lastly, As ever you would have the current of ungodliness and unrighteousness stopped, labour you that truth may have a free course.

What can we do to the stopping of the dreadful current?

1. Walk in the truth yourselves. "I rejoiced greatly, said John, that I found of thy children walking in the truth, as we have received commandment from the Father." Be ye doers of the truth. Study to know it, and what you know practise. This will not only tend to the good of your own souls, but to the good of others, to direct them in their way. "Thus you may be blameless and harmless the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life;" and if men will not be taught by such conduct it will turn to a testimony against them. Thus Noah by his righteous conduct condemned the world.

2. Support the interest of truth in others. Do every thing for the truth. Do all you can to promote the truth in others, because it is

the sovereign remedy for healing sinners. The nails driven, in the preaching of the word, do you endeavour to rivet in any, as you have access to them. Labour to remove men's prejudices against the gospel and the way of holiness. Exert yourselves to carry on convictions of sin and duty, where they appear to be begun. Let your communications be to the use of edifying, and by these means you may be instrumental in stopping the current of unrighteousness and ungodliness.

*Motive 1.* Consider the case of the day needs it. It is a day of abounding sin. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." It is a day in which our Saviour's prediction is accomplished. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." All ranks of men have corrupted their ways, and every one is adding to his coal to the fire of wrath. A general corruption of manners overflows, atheism, irreligion, profanity and formality, and by these God is dishonoured, our holy religion is blasphemed, and the glorious gospel is despised. It is also a day of approaching wrath. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" We have met with many deliverances. God has been saying, "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." But all this prevails not to make the generation one whit better; but we rather grow worse; and therefore God's voice may be to us, "Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward, therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee, I am weary with repenting." God has many arrows in his quiver. But which of them soever he use, there is no appearance that this generation can escape a rousing stroke.

*Motive 2.* It will always be well with those who take part with truth and holiness, setting themselves against the flood of sin in an ungodly and unrighteous generation. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings."

If you do prevail in any measure to stop the flood of sin, so far as you do prevail, you bring honour to God, who is dishonoured by ungodly and unrighteous practices. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." You also bring safety to perishing souls, and oh! what should not one do to save a soul from death. "Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of

sins." You also strengthen the cause of religion by making friends to it, and weaken Satan's kingdom.

But though you should not prevail, yet you give your testimony for God. "They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them." And you deliver your own souls from the guilt of the common conspiracy. You take the best way for safety in the evil day. "And the Lord said to him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the forehead of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." So that you shall either be delivered from trouble or in trouble.

*Doctrine* III. and last. God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who have the truth, but truth has not its effect upon them.

This is not the sound of God's fearful trumpet of the law, against all who obey not the gospel by believing and repenting; and we are obliged to sound it, as well as the trumpet of the gospel. The gospel damns no man; it needs not, for if it save them not, the law will ruin them eternally, and that as law-breakers and despisers of the gospel. "Do not think, said Jesus to the Jews, that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust."

From this doctrine, I shall,

I. Consider the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, against which the wrath of God is revealed.

II. I will consider the wrath of God which is revealed against this ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

III. Show how this wrath is revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. I am,

I. To consider the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men against which the wrath of God is revealed. Under this general head, I shall, I. Condescend on some gross sins under the two branches of ungodliness, and unrighteousness. II. Point out some mother sins, and III. Mention some distinctions and kinds of sin in general, and under each of these show the wrath of God revealed against them.

I am to condescend on some gross sins under the two branches of ungodliness and unrighteousness, and show the wrath of God revealed against them.

I. Some pieces of gross ungodliness.

1. Blasphemy, denying God, or speaking reproachfully of God, or of any of the persons of the ever blessed Trinity. Such monsters this land of light has produced; for men disregarding known truth, grow worse than those to whom it is not revealed. And Satan rages

the more that the light combats his kingdom. God's wrath is revealed against this sin. In the Old Testament it was death by the law of God. "Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him; as well the stranger as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death. In the New Testament we have blasphemers delivered unto Satan for their crime. "Whom, says Paul, I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

2. Idolatry and religious imagery. Papists profane our land. And I wish I could say they only did it. But there is a piece of horrible abomination crept into this land, the rudiments of popery, from our neighbours of the rotten church of England. Images or pictures of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, some representing him, hanging on the cross, some ascending into heaven. Strings of beads wrought before in the form of a cross, lime vessels with I. H. S. in the bottom. And I doubt not there are many other of that sort, which I have never seen. But to the best of my observation, this deluge broke in upon us from that quarter in the four last years of Queen Anne's reign; without doubt to prepare the nation insensibly for the popish Pretender and popery. I would fain hope there are none of them among you? But why should I say that, for, to the best of my remembrance, it was in presbyterian houses that I observed any of them. There is likewise in some Bibles the picture of God represented by the sun and the name Jehovah in Hebrew letters in the midst of it. I warn you from God, that all pictures of God or any person of the holy Trinity is an abomination; and if you have any of these things, that you deface or destroy them; and if you see them any where that you testify your abhorrence of them, as blasphemous against God, for the information of misled people, and as you would not partake of their sin. God's wrath is revealed against this in the second commandment. See also Romans i. 23, 24.

3. Cursing and swearing profanely. Wrath is revealed against this in the third commandment. Some men curse and swear in cold blood. Others, when the devil has blown up their passions, they will open their mouth as if hell were opening. What a wonder of patience is it, that God makes not the swearer's tongue to fall on himself, let loose the devil to take them away visibly that call on him so; that he strike not the worms dead on the spot that profane his sacred name. We cannot get this reformed among you, but it abounds among us, and some have the impudence to cry out against ministers taking the oath imposed by the law upon them, under the

pain of all that they have in the world ; and yet themselves will curse and swear, when no one bids them, but the same law of the land forbids them under a penalty. Some will be praying one while and cursing another. As I have often, so I now warn you that the wrath of God is revealed against profane cursing and swearing. And I here protest against all the cursers and swearers in this parish present or absent, and call the timber and stones of this house to witness, that God's wrath shall pursue them for evermore for it, if they do not repent, Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.

4. Sabbath-breaking and profane neglect of God's worship. This is a crying sin in our day, bringing wrath on the land. Application has been made to get the fairs and markets in the country altered, which occasion the Sabbath to be profaned by travelling and driving cattle to them on the Lord's day, but without success. It is profaned by many, who loiter away Sabbaths at home, as if the public exercise of God's worship was no part of Sabbath sanctification. How they are employed at home their own consciences can tell. But some there are whom nothing hinders, but a profane contempt and neglect of God's ordinances ; that all the sermons which they hear from the end of the year to the other may be soon told. Some come to the church, whose behaviour at it looks neither like grace nor good manners, doing several highly improper and offensive things even in the time of worship. Wrath is revealed against these. " Did not your fathers thus, said Nehemiah, and did not our God bring all this upon us, and upon this city ? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

II. Some pieces of gross unrighteousness.

1. Disobedience to parents, refractoriness and rebellion against them. This is a piece of gross unrighteousness, for what human authority is more sacred than that of a parent, which some nevertheless trample on, and prove a grief of heart instead of a comfort to their parents. And this in some monsters of mankind has proceeded to cursing or beating of father or mother, and in some to the murdering of them. God's wrath is revealed against this in the fifth commandment. It is also declared, " That the eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. For every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death : he hath cursed his father or his mother ; his blood shall be upon him."

2. Drunkenness that loathsome sin. This puts a man on a level with the beasts, destroys the soul, murders the body, darkens the mind, breaks a person's health, and ruins their substance. A sin prevail-

ing among us beyond what we could believe ; where there is fuel for the lust in so many houses, that by their number must be for luxury, not necessity. And love to, and abuse of, the fiery liquor in this place, which God nor nature never ordained for common drinking, will bring many to the place where thy will not get a drop of cold water to cool their tongue, if they repent not. God's wrath is revealed against this sin. "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

3. Uncleaness, of which we seldom want sad instances, which fill our hands with many sad processes, besides others that are easily discovered. The causes of this sin abounding so much in the place, I reckon to be your fulness of bread and the solitariness of the place, and I think I may add a certain garb peculiar to the country, which I am sure in some places would not be reckoned a modest one. But let men and women know that God's wrath is revealed against this sin. "Whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge. For this we know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

4. Dishonesty ; want of common honesty in dealings with men, cheating and stealing. God has established property among men, and forbidden all manner of injustice in that command, *Thou shalt not steal*, and requires justice to reign among them. But alas how many are there, who are void of common honesty, stand not on cheating in their bargains, are unfaithful in what is committed to their trust, and can put out their hand to their neighbour's goods, if they can but carry their point without being discovered. Many have lost their credit in this way, brought themselves to disgrace and public punishment ; and some from less to more have brought themselves to the gibbet. God's wrath is revealed against this. The unrighteous and thieves are excluded from the kingdom of God. What is brought in that way, if not worth twopence brings a curse with it. "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof." And moreover, you must be ready to restore if in your power ; else there is no pardon. Idleness and an unmortified lust are the inlets to this sin.

Lastly, Lying, a common sin, which many commit freely. There is a certain baseness in this sin, beyond many others, so that liars themselves cannot endure to be called so. And no wonder, for the liar's credit is gone as soon as he is discovered, and there is no

trusting him when he speaks truth not otherwise known. It is a part of the old man. "Hence, says the apostle, lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." It is the natural product of the unrenewed heart. "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." But grace no sooner enters but it banishes it. "For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour." The devil was the first liar, and it was a lie that ruined the world. God has a particular hatred of it. "A lying tongue is an abomination to him." His wrath is revealed against it. "He will destroy them that speak leasing. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape." They are barred out of heaven by name. "For there shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that maketh a lie." Their lodging is appointed with the devil in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, in which all liars shall have their part. We are,

II. To point out some mother sins and the wrath revealed against them.

1. Unbelief, not believing the gospel, nor falling in with the grand device of salvation, through Jesus Christ, not closing with Christ in the gospel offer, nor making use of him for the great ends for which the Father has given him. This is lightly looked at, but is the great cause of ruin under the gospel, John iii. 19. It is the mother sin to all others. Wrath against it is revealed in the most express manner. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* And there is no escaping for them who neglect the great salvation. For it is sinning against the remedy, despising the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

2. Gross ignorance of the principles of religion. It also is a mother sin; one may lead the blind what way he pleases; so may Satan, an evil world, and an evil heart, lead an ignorant person. Ignorance keeps one from believing, for they know not to believe from repenting, for they know not what to repent of. It muffles them up in darkness, and will land them in eternal darkness. Wrath is revealed against it, though many look on it as a shelter from wrath. "My people, says God, are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." Behold how Christ comes, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

3. Pride and self-conceit, another mother sin. It is the great de-

ceiver. *The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.* It carries men into a thousand snares. It exalts them against the God that made them, and causes them break over all bounds. Who is the Lord, said Pharaoh, that I should obey him? They will not submit to word nor providences. It exalts them against men, they will not be advised nor taught; nay, they trample upon others, to raise up themselves. It hides a man from himself, blinds him to his sin and to his duty, Rev. iii. '17. So is the highway to destruction. Wrath is revealed against it. As it makes one most unlike the lowly Jesus, it makes him like the devil, and leads the way to damnation. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." God is the proud man's enemy. "God resisteth the proud. A man's pride shall bring him low."

4. Spiritual slothfulness. This is a devouring deep, in which many good motions, convictions, and purposes are swallowed up and utterly lost. It is a waster and destroyer of the life and health of the soul. It is a disposition of heart which renders a man adverse to good, prone to evil, and lays him open to Satan's snares. To this a man owes the neglect of his duty to God and to his own soul; his soul's case going all to wreck. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands, the house droppeth through." It is from this that there comes one off-pnt after another to repentance and reformation till the time be gone. Wrath is revealed against it, "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 want as an armed man." Now is the seed time for eternity, to sleep now will make a bad harvest. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." See the doom of the sluggard and his sin, Matth. xxv. 26,—30.

5. Inordinate love of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is a corrupt spring which has several streams. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And the main stream is not the same in all. Some pursue the profits; others the lust of the eye; some the pleasures of it, the lust of the flesh; others the vain pomp of it, the pride of life. Some roll themselves in the bosom of a fawning world; others court a frowning world, for its smiles as their chief good. In a word, the clay idol, in its several shapes, has many votaries who put it in the room of God. This is a mother evil, which turns the world upside down, and fills it with all manner of wicked-



ness, done to gratify this master lust. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." But wrath is revealed against this sin. Paul declares repeatedly, "That for these things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." See also, James v. 1.—6.

6. Slighting the means of grace, public, private, or secret. This is a mother sin too. When the wells of salvation are opened amongst a people, but they have no appetite to drink of them. Then is a price put into their hands to get wisdom, but they have no heart to it. This shews itself in the neglect of public ordinances, family and secret duties, or not improving of them. Wrath is revealed against this. Men may blind their own consciences with silly shifts and excuses, but these will not pass with God, Luke xiv. 16,—24. Yea, such conduct will aggravate their condemnation. They had the opportunity but slighted it. These slights will themselves be the losers, and find it so in the end. "He that sinneth against me, saith Jesus, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death."

Lastly, Neglect of relative duties. These are the bands of society, which, when they are disregarded, all goes loose and into disorder. Families are the nurseries both of church and state. When the members of families do not regard, especially their spiritual duty to one another, parents to educate their children for God, to concern themselves for the welfare of the souls of their servants; and they again to be dutiful to them and watch over one another, it is the opening of a sluice of sin. Wrath is revealed against it. "Shall I not visit them for these things? Saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this." Micah vii. 4,—8. It remains,

III. To point out some distinctions and kinds of sin in general, and the wrath which is revealed against them. God's wrath is revealed against all kinds of sin, particularly,

1. Against open sins, of one's life, lip, heart, and nature. Men's life-sins, their sinful deeds and actions. Let no man think that he may live as he pleases, and do as he will; for God remembers all our deeds, and men shall be judged according to their works, and a sinful life will make a sad reckoning: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Against lip sins, the sins of the tongue. God made the tongue man's glory, but men have turned it to the dishonour of God: so that it is a world of iniquity. An unruly tongue rages against God and against man; and thinks little of words. They are but wind say some. But they are wind that will blow men to hell. "But I say unto you, said Jesus, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

This wrath is revealed also against heart sins. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." The heart is hid from men but God seeth it clearly and all that lodgeth in it, or passeth through it, and has bound men to heart holiness, as well as life holiness. And wrath is not more dreadfully revealed against any sins than heart sins. "And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall be upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."

Against the sin of man's nature, that corrupt bias of the heart which we bring into the world with us, containing in it an aversion to good and bent to evil; and a perversion of all the faculties of the soul. This was one of the causes of the deluge. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Accordingly infants as well as others were swept away with the deluge. Men think little of this, but it will ruin men for ever, if it be not healed by regenerating grace. *For except a man be born again*, said our Lord, *he cannot see the kingdom of God*. God's holy nature can so little endure our depravity, that he will pursue it with eternal wrath, as what is most contrary to his holy nature. "And there shall in no wise enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, any thing that defleth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."

2. God's wrath is revealed against sins of commission and omission. Against sins of commission. God's law is the hedge which he hath set about men to keep them in, and it is fenced with wrath.

revealed against those who shall venture to break over it. *Whoso breaketh this hedge, a serpent shall bite him.* The sword of justice stands on the other side to pierce those who dare to commit what God hath forbidden, for they are worthy of death, Rom. i. 32. Also against sins of omission. God's wrath is not only revealed against men's doing what he hath forbidden, but also against their not doing what he hath commanded. And so many omissions of duty, we are guilty of so many sins exposing us to wrath. It is a sad thing that men should look so lightly on omission, seeing the great damning sin is of this kind. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* And in the great day, sins of omission shall be brought forward to the condemnation of many, Matth. xxv. 41.—46. And the curse of the law runs directly against them. "For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

3. Against open and secret sins. Against open sins, whereby God is provoked and others stumbled and scandalized. "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not; woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves." Impudence in sin by which men bring forth their works of darkness before the sun, is no small aggravation of it and will also aggravate the punishment. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay they were not at all ashamed, neither they blush; therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord." And the scandal given by open sin goes deep, Matth. xviii. 7.

Against secret sins. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are spent away in thy wrath." Secret sinning is a daring or despising of the all-seeing eye, and therefore God watches to discover them to the world. "Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the congregation." Secrecy is a great temptation to sin, but the godly will be afraid of secret as well as of open sin. *Cleanse me, says David, from secret faults.* They know that there is nothing hid that shall not be revealed, or secret that shall not be made known, and that God will bring every secret thing into judgment. Sin is like the ointment of the right hand, it will discover itself. *And be sure your sin will find you out.*

4. God's wrath is revealed against personal sins and relative sins. Against personal sins, such as affect ourselves only in their own nature. The gospel requires personal holiness. It teaches us to live soberly. And wrath is revealed against, and shall be inflicted upon

*all who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Though one lived alone altogether by himself, his duty to God, and his own soul must be performed, otherwise he incurs God's anger.

Against relative sins, the sins of the several relations in which we stand. In whatever relation we are placed, whether in the church, state, or family, God has prescribed us our duty, wherein we are to walk in these relations; and we cannot be unfaithful or negligent in them, but we expose ourselves to the anger of God.

5. Against the sin of the particular bias of our nature, as well as these of the general bias of it. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." The sin that by reason of our natural temper, constitution, manner of life, does most easily beset us, though we are apt to indulge ourselves in it, God will not, but it will bring us to ruin, if we hold not off from that as well as from others. *I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.*

Lastly, God's wrath is revealed against all sin, great or small. The sins of every size, customary or not customary, signal miscarriages or more ordinary sinning. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." We now proceed,

II. To consider the wrath of God revealed against this ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Here we shall first show what this wrath is; and secondly, take notice of the properties of this wrath.

1. What is God's wrath? Wrath in men is the passion of anger risen to a height; but since there are no passions in God, wrath is not ascribed to God in respect of the affection, but of the will and effects. There are three things then in it.

The highest aversion to ungodliness and unrighteousness. "Thou Lord art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." They are most contrary to his holy nature, so that he cannot endure the sight of them. "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity." He has (so to speak) a natural antipathy against them, such a strong aversion to them, that it is impossible he should ever lay aside his utmost abhorrence of them, or cease to hate them and be angry at them.

It implies, secondly, A constant will to punish them as crimes against his honour. By the righteousness of his nature he has this will. "It is a righteous thing with God, says Paul, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people." So that these sins can

never be forgiven, but on a valuable satisfaction, by which the due wrath and punishment not laid upon the guilty, is yet laid fully upon the Cautioner, who stands in their stead. And where there is no cautioner, there it falls on the head of the guilty. "And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off."

It implies, thirdly, Actual resentment of them in the effects of wrath. "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." This is called pouring out of wrath, by which the heavens, black above the heads of the ungodly and unrighteous, do disburden themselves upon them in showers. "For great, said Josiah the king, is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord." And as no man can count the drops of a shower, so the direful effects of the wrath of God, on the body and soul are innumerable. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." It is not only as showers of water, but of fire. "Who, says the prophet Nahum, Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." And there is,

The small rain of wrath, that falls on the ungodly and unrighteous on earth. "God, says Zophar, shall cast the fury of his wrath upon the wicked, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating." This is a rain that never ceases, sometimes it is greater, sometimes less; but it is never quite fair, any day that dawns to the ungodly. *For God is angry with the wicked every day.* Sometimes indeed the sun of outward prosperity shines on him, but even while it is shining, it is raining on him also. Drops of wrath are silently sinking into his soul, his body, his every enjoyment. *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* The least stroke he meets with is a drop of wrath. But besides these drops,

There is also the great rain of his strength, that falls upon them in hell. In this life there are thunder claps of wrath from the word, in the threatenings, and the shower falls; but for the most part sinners are deaf to the thunder, and shift for themselves under the rain. But at the great day, the great thunder clap is given from the throne. "Then the Judge shall say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And then the fountains of the great deep, and the windows of heaven are opened, and the full shower comes which  
 • makes an eternal deluge; for it will rain for ever, without one clear

blink through the ages of eternity. "Upon the wicked God shall rain, snares, fire and brimstone; and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

We find this shower represented under the notion of a shower of hail, Rev. xvi. 21. *Every stone about the weight of a talent*, a prodigious size; and then it will pierce them to the soul, and fill them with despair under which they will rage and despair evermore. This is that rain which is in the cloud of the threatening against the ungodly and unrighteous, which gathered together and began to fall when Adam fell from God; and which rained down in such abundance, as made the way betwixt heaven and earth unpassable. But with respect to believers, it is over, having fallen out on Christ their surety. *With them the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.* Nevertheless with respect to men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, it continues in its full force. This is that wrath of God which is revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. Let us,

2dly, Take notice of the properties of this wrath of God.

1. It is most mighty wrath. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." There is no standing before it. *Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?* It comes on like a deluge of waters, overflows and sweeps all away before it. *The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.* It burns as a fire and devours all before it as the flame doth the dry stubble. "Men perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Worm man cannot resist it, cannot make head against it.

2. It is unsupportable. What men cannot resist, they will set themselves to bear. But wrath strikes the criminal in a most tender part, where a wound produces intolerable pain. *A wounded spirit who can bear?* Wrath is a sinking load on the soul, quite beyond the power of the creature to comport with. "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings." Therefore there is no rest under the load, Rev. xiv. 11.

3. It is most penetrating and piercing wrath, a seeking thing like water or oil. "As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garments, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." Men's wrath may reach flesh, blood, and bones, but can go no further; there is a precious part within which it cannot reach. But God's wrath pierceth into the whole man and every part. "God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." It sinks into the soul and conscience. "The arrows of the Almighty, says Job, are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." As with some struck .

with thunder, not a wound in their skin, yet the bones are crushed, or grinded, and the life is gone; so a person's external comforts standing entire about him, his soul may be melted within him, as in Belshazzar's case.

4. It is most vehement and exquisitely tormenting. By the hand of wrath, sinners falling under it shall be torn in pieces. *Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* It is a fearful story, 2 Kings ii. 23. But the united force of lions, leopards, and bears, is little enough to represent, what tearing an angry God makes on the ungodly, Hosea xiii. 7, 8. By the millstone of wrath they will be grinded to powder, Luke xx. 18. By the fire of wrath they will be burned and scorched. *For God is a consuming fire.* No pain more exquisite than what is caused by burning, and no fire burns so keenly as the fire of God's wrath. "The pile of Tophet is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

5. It is wrath treasured up. "The wicked treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." This speaks a fulness of wrath. The clouds of wrath are full and ready to burst, to empty themselves on impenitent sinners. A variety of it. The wrath of God is a teeming womb of all miseries on the ungodly, Deut. xxxii. 23.—26. All the mischiefs that can befall a creature, are in this treasure, and all shall be gathered together and cast into the lake with the generation of his wrath. *And whosoever are not found written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire.* It speaks also the reserving of it for them. They are reserved for it as fuel for the fire. *God reserveth the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.* And it is reserved for them. "The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." And this will be brought on them in due time, *When the day of the Lord's anger cometh upon them.* Hence frequently compared to travelling pangs.

6. It is continuing wrath without intermission. The worst season has readily some intermission, some fair blinks, but God's wrath is an abiding cloud on the objects of it. *The wrath of God abideth on them.* The curse abides in the house, Zech. v. 4. Men are born children of wrath, and if they be not born again, it lies on them from the cradle to the grave. It leaves them not at death, but goes with them to the other world. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.* And the full shower comes on at last, when they are plunged into everlasting burning.

7. It is eternal wrath. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his

power." It will lie on the sinner through all the ages of eternity. The bands of death will be loosed, and the grave will cast out the dead criminal, and though he cry to the hills and rocks to cover him, they will not hear; because he must live to the end he may be ever dying. The wrath of mortals, death will extinguish if nothing else can; but the wrath of the eternal God is a worm that never dies, and is a fire never quenched. And God's wrath will ever be the wrath to come.

8. It is unavoidable to such as continue in their ungodly and unrighteous state and courses. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." What way is it possible for them to avoid it? They may fancy that time will wear it out, and a provoked God will forget the affronts. But in vain. "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works." Fair words will never appease this wrath. "Without shedding of blood their is no remission of sin." They cannot outwit him who is omniscient; nor outbrave the omnipotent; nor flee from the presence of the omnipresent God.

Lastly, After all, it is most just, a clear fire without smoke. *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* The sea of wrath raging against the sinner, remains clear as crystal. No transport of fury to carry him to excess, is consistent with his nature. The offence is against an infinite God, and must be infinitely punished. It remains,

III. To show how this wrath is revealed against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. It is revealed three ways.

1. In the word. Therein God has declared his anger against all such. And one jot or tittle cannot pass away without being fulfilled. The Bible is a standing witness against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, a solemn warning piece to all. And the preaching of the word reveals it also. The Lord's messengers are sent to warn sinners of that wrath. They are to say, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." And the warnings which men get in this way will aggravate their condemnation. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

2. In providences. God has not left himself without a witness, in his works, as well as in his word. It is revealed to us, in the wrath which falls on others. Look into the records of providence, in all ages, the deluge, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. Observe what has fallen out in our day of this sort. It is a reve-



lation of God's wrath, against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, and the language is, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

It is revealed also in the wrath, which at any time has fallen on ourselves. When that prevails not to turn men from their ungodly, and unrighteous courses, it says, "Therefore will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Who are they in whose experience some threatenings of the word have not been accomplished, which may have made them say, "As I have done, so God hath requited me. Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." If therefore we repent not, these are pledges of the full shower of wrath.

Lastly, in men's own consciences; "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Ungodliness and unrighteousness, in those who have the truth, leaves a sting in their consciences behind it. Conscience is a domestic preacher to them, who lays before them the commands and threatenings wherewith they are fenced, and so binds them over to answer it before the tribunal of God. And as long as there is a conscience within men's breast, that witnesseth for God, that he is angry with men's ungodliness, and unrighteousness, they must needs acknowledge his wrath to be revealed against them.

*Use. 1. Of information.* Then,

1. God is well pleased with those who obeying the truth, live godly and righteous lives. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." God's word and their own conscience favour them, and the providence of God too, causing all things work together for their good. When they look without them into the word they find God's approbation of their way: when they look within them to their own conscience, they have its testimony in their favour; or about them in providence, they will see all for their real welfare. "Moreover by them, God's statutes, is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

2. The pleasure of ungodliness and gain of unrighteousness, are dear bought. It may be sweet in the mouth, but it will be bitter in the belly. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity." Did men consider the black cloud that hovers over their ways of ungodliness, and unrighteousness continually, they would be afraid to venture on them. For whatever case is

found in them for the present, it exposes the soul to everlasting disquiet, and where a penny is gained, a talent is lost. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul."

Lastly, They are left without excuse who living under the gospel, obey it not, but lead still ungodly, and unrighteous lives. They cannot say they are not warned, they understand not the danger of that course: for it is revealed to them plainly, that God's wrath will overtake them in such courses. And if men will not let themselves believe it, then who can help it? If men will delude themselves, and sooth up themselves in their ungodly, and unrighteous courses fearful will be the taking off the vail and undeceiving them, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

*Use 2. Of exhortation.*

As ever you would escape the wrath of God in time and eternity renounce all ungodliness and unrighteousness; and since you have the gospel, the truth, let it have its effect on you. For the wrath of God is revealed against all who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

*Motive 1.* Consider, much less than the wrath of God falling in full measure on impenitent sinners, is very terrible, how much more that wrath. The wrath of a king is terrible. *The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.* When the wrath of Ahasuerus was kindled against Haman, his ruin was secured. Kings have power in their hand to reward or punish; so their wrath is terrible to their fellow-creatures. But what is the wrath of a king to that of the King of kings? The very threatening of God's wrath is most awful. "When I heard this, says Habakkuk, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself." The sight of the hand writing on the wall made Belshazzar tremble. God speaking in wrath to a sinner, is enough to damp the stoutest sinner. How much more the fulfilling of it. Even God's fatherly anger against his own children is very dreadful. The Lord's rod on his own is but the rod of a man, but yet how does Job cry out under it. "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." How did it affect Asaph, Psal. lxxvii. and Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. What must it then be on his enemies. Finally, God's giving the law on mount Sinai was full of terror. See how it affected the people, Exod. xx. 18, 19. *Yea, so terrible was the sight, that Moses himself said, I exceedingly fear and quake* What will it then be when he comes to avenge the transgressions of that law?

*Motive 2.* Consider what a God he is whose wrath is revealed. He is most just. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity. God must act contrary to his own nature, if sin go without wrath. This makes the destruction of the impenitent pleasing to God. For though God distributes sorrows, with sorrow (so to speak) to his own people; *For in all their afflictions, he is afflicted*, yet he is eased as it were, in making his enemies the resting place of his wrath. *Ah*, says he, *I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.*

He is omniscient. Therefore an angry God knows all the affronts given, and cannot fail to devise and find out all means, by which his wrath may be executed to all possible satisfaction of his justice. He is omnipotent. There is nothing beyond the compass of his power. It must be fearful to fall into the hands of the living God. For he can hold up sinners with one hand through eternity, while the other shall lie heavy upon them. Finally, God is eternal. Men die, and their wrath with them; but he will be an everlasting enemy, and while he is, will pursue the quarrel.

*Motive 3d and last.* Consider the fearful instances of wrath, first of men. Many have been made monuments of the Lord's anger, in their sinful courses. Wrath has swept away multitudes together, who have fallen a sacrifice to God's anger. Wrath has fallen on men's infant relations, yea on the very place of their ungodliness, and unrighteousness. Adam sinned and wrath came upon him, and upon all his. It came upon the old world; upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Upon the rich man in hell, when he could not find a drop of water to cool his tongue.

Secondly, Upon fallen angels. They sinned and God made their case hopeless. No Mediator was provided for them. They were the first that ventured to break over the hedge, and God made them dreadful instances of his justice and severity. They believe and tremble.

Lastly, It came upon the man Christ standing in the room of the elect. *God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.* Wrath coming on him makes him sore amazed, fall on the ground and sweat great drops of blood. What is a deluge? What is the noise of a dissolving world, to God groaning and dying on a cross? Infinite wisdom and holiness did it, to make sin appear like itself.

Wherefore I warn you all and every one, to renounce ungodliness and unrighteousness and to allow truth to have its full effect; declaring that otherwise the wrath of God will pursue those who will not. Amen.