

June 15, 1707.

FAREWELL SERMON, AT SIMPRIN.

SERMOM XL.

JOHN vii. 37,

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

OUR Lord having kept the feast with the Jews for several days, and having about the midst of it begun to teach in the temple, and being now to part, gives them the parting word in the text. In which there is,

1. A large offer of himself, which he makes to them. He had dealt with them before, but he is resolved they shall have a large offer before they part. It was a custom among the Jews, on the last day of the feast, to draw water joyfully, out of the fountain of Siloam; therefore Christ offers himself to them, under the notion of a fountain of water, inviting all thirsty sinners to come to him; that is, believe on him, as he himself interprets it, ver. 38. To drink, that is, to make use of him for the supply of their needs. The offer is large, none are excluded. If any man thirst, be but sensible of wants and desire supply, here he may have it.

2. The time when he makes this offer. More generally, it was at the feast, namely, of tabernacles, John vii. 2. This was one of these three feasts, at which all the males of the Jews were to appear before the Lord, at Jerusalem, Deut. xvi. 16. Of this feast we have an account, Levit. xxiii. 33. More particularly, the last day of the feast; that is, the eighth day, which was the great day; that is, a solemn day, which was to be observed as a sabbath, and on it there was to be a holy convocation. It was a joyful feast and lasted long, yet it has a last day. The people had been together seven days, and now, on the eighth, they were to part; and while this feast is upon the close, Christ invites them to a more lasting feast, where the table should never be drawn, even to feed on himself. And so the best wine comes last.

3. The way in which he delivered this discourse. It was standing, though he often sat while he taught. But at this time, he stood and cried. The reason may be, because of the multitude of hearers, but especially to denote his earnestness with them at parting. The

matter was so important, and it was so that in that manner, they were not soon to hear more.

DOCTRINE. If any man be under soul thirst, Christ bids him welcome to come to him and drink. Or needy sinners are welcome to Christ, to get supply of all their wants. Here we shall shew,

I. Who they are, that are invited.

II. To what they are invited.

III. I shall confirm the point. We are then,

I. To shew who they are, that are invited. It is any man that thirsts. There is a bodily and a soul thirst. It is the spiritual thirst that is here meant. In all thirst there are two things :

1. Sense of want. The thirsty soul wants something, and knows that it wants. Every man is sensible that he is not self-sufficient, that he labours under some defects, and must be supplied from some quarter or another; but it is not every one that knows to what quarter to go for supply.

2. Desire of supply. The thirsty soul craves what may supply its needs, as the hungry infant seeks for the breast. The soul of man is ever desiring, till it meet with that which doth fully satisfy its desires. The object of this thirsting is twofold :

1. The end where the soul may rest, and that is happiness. This every man thirsts after. All desire to be happy. A man cannot cease to desire to be a happy man; though, without grace, he cannot go the right way to obtain it.

2. The means leading to this end. This follows upon the other. The man that desires to be at the journey's end, desires also to go in the way, though perhaps he mistake it. He that desires refreshment, desires also to drink, though he may by ignorance take a cup of poison, instead of proper drink.

Now there is a twofold thirsting desire of these things :

1. One that is natural, and therefore is common to all men. It is as natural for a man to desire to be happy and to get satisfaction, as it is for him to breathe. And upon supposition that the man lives under the gospel, and learns that Christ and grace are the means of happiness, he will thirst after these in a natural way, as a bridge to carry him over God's wrath, John vi. 34; Matth. xxv; Num. xxiii. 10. But it is the plague of all natural men, they see not the excellency of Christ and grace, nor the emptiness of the creatures; hence they practically mistake the way to happiness, and thirst after it, seeking it in the world and their lusts, crying, "Who will shew us any good?" Having lost God, they are like a blind thirsty man, still drawing at empty cisterns. Here is a thirst, but not that which has the promise of being satisfied, Matth. v. 6.

Yet to them that have it, this invitation is directed: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Verse 2. "Wherefore do ye spend money, for that which is not bread; and your labour, for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good; and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This sets them right, and lets them see a pure fountain.

2. One that is supernatural, and therefore is only given to the elect of God, whose hearts the hand of God hath touched. Thus touched, they are made to cry, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Thus, these that cared as little for Christ as others do, now long for him. There is a flame of desires raised in their souls, after the Lord, by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shining into their souls. So that thirst is for him, for himself; for what he is, as well as for what he has. "Unto them which believe, he is precious." The sight of his excellency has ravished the heart. The soul sees a beauty in him. This desire cannot be satisfied without him. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God." Clothe a thirsty man with scarlet, and fill his pockets with gold, yet nothing but drink can satisfy him. The soul cannot take up its rest short of Christ. The carrion of the creatures cannot satisfy it. To such, none but Christ will suffice. The soul is resolute for him. Like Jacob, "they will not let him go, till he bless them;" and like the woman of Canaan they will not take a denial, till he grant their desire. Therefore their earnestness makes them break through all difficulties, like David's worthies to the well of Bethlehem. Their desire, indeed, is humble before him; "for to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet." A hungry man is not nice. A crumb that falls from the table, will be great in their eyes. The prodigal is willing to be placed among his Father's hired servants. We proceed,

II. To shew to what they are invited.

1. They are invited to come to Christ. "If any man thirst," says Jesus, "let him come to me." This means to believe on him, to take him and close with him, ver. 33. Unbelief is a departing from the living God, so faith is a coming back again to God in Christ. In all coming there are two terms. Look how we departed from the Lord. "It was by forsaking him, the fountain of living waters, and hewing out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Hence we may describe faith to be the coming of the soul from the broken cisterns of created things to a full Christ, Song iv. 8. All things in the world are empty and unsatis-

factory to the soul. We must go out of ourselves, our sins, our lawful and unlawful comforts, and take up our rest in Christ, receiving him for and instead of all. This is that act of faith which unites us to Christ.

2. We are invited to come to him and drink. "Let him come to me," says Jesus, "and *drink*." Our thirsty souls are desired to drink here. This spiritual drinking is also an act of faith, and denotes the soul's really and actually making use of Christ, for the supply of its wants. This points at three things in Christ.

1. The fulness that is in him for needy sinners. He is the well of living water, that is ever full and overfloweth; who is able to fill up all the wants of all that will come to him. "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "Yea, in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There is in him a fulness of merit. His blood cleanseth from all sin. There is a fulness of guilt on all of us. Our hearts, lips, and lives are all full of sin. Tears, prayers and rivers of oil, cannot wipe it away; but in Christ there is a fulness of merit, to take it off completely. What will not the blood of God do? "Here is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness." The rock is struck, behold the water gusheth out. There is a sea to overwhelm it. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." And this redeems a forfeited heaven. There is also a fulness of Spirit in him, to take away the stain and power of sin in us." "The Spirit is given to him without measure." Who are so dead, but the Spirit of life can quicken them? who so defiled, but the Spirit of glory resting on them will cleanse, Isa. xli. 17. There is abundance of spirit in our head, to actuate all the members. There is, moreover, a fulness of grace in him, John i. 16. He is the fountain and storehouse of all grace, where there is no lack. From him all the saints on earth, and all in heaven, have derived their graces: And yet there is bread enough.

2. It hath respect to the suitability of Christ to the case of sinners; as drink is suited to the case of a thirsty man. There is in him a suitable remedy for every disorder. Here the dead soul may have life; the blind, light; the naked, a garment; the poor, riches; the scorched soul, refreshment; the pained, ease; the weak, strength. Whatever be their case in life, death, time, eternity, prosperity or adversity, there is every thing suitable in him.

3. It points at his satisfactoriness. "Whosoever," saith Christ, "drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." The hungry infant set upon the

breast, rests there, and desires no more. The soul that is thirsty, if it will come hither, may suck at the breasts of divine all-sufficiency in Christ. It is enough, said Jacob, Joseph liveth, Heb. iii. 17, 18; Phil. iv. 18. When all is gone, all the cisterns run dry, here is enough. Christ himself is able to satisfy the soul: "Whom have in I heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." Now this is spiritual drinking, or actual use-making of Christ for supply of our wants, implies these three things.

1. The soul's going out of itself, as to the supply of that particular want or wants, it labours under, renouncing all confidence in itself, or any creature, Jer. xvii. 5. To be sensible of our own emptiness and inability to help ourselves, is a great step to supply.

2. The soul's going out in a desire after supply from the Lord Jesus, upon his invitation. "Open," says he, "thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." This is the soul's placing its mouth at the fountain; and the conduit pipe to the well of living water. Many a time the poor soul is like Hagar, in a very hopeless case, till the Lord lets them see this well, to which they go and drink for their refreshment.

3. Believing application of Christ to the soul, and of that fulness that is in him, to our particular cases. Though the thirsty man gape for water, and lie down at the fountain, if he take not a draught of the water, he will not be refreshed. Our clothes will not cover us, unless we put them on; nor fire warm us, unless we approach it. This consists in three things:

1. In catching hold of the promise suited to their case. The soul must take hold of the promise, though it be with a trembling hand, Gen. xxxii. 10. The promises are the staves, with which the traveler to Zion supports himself. I confess the soul will sometimes be disputing itself out of the promise. They cannot see it to be theirs. But when they begin to sink, they will even catch hold of it again, at all adventures.

2. In venturing their case upon the promise and proposed supply. So Peter ventured on Christ for support, and so set his foot on the water. Is the soul thirsting for pardon or strength, then the soul is ventured on the blood of Christ, and on the grace of Christ, which is promised to be sufficient for them.

3. Confidence of Christ's answering their necessities, for he hath said, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." This confidence is stronger or weaker, according to the measure of faith. They that expect nothing, can get nothing. We must ask in faith, nothing wavering. As Peter's confidence failed, he sank. He was not drowned, because he had some faith; but almost drowned, because he had but little faith. Now,

III. To confirm this point, I will only lay before you:

1. That you have his word for your welcome. "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," Rev. iii. 20. It is the word of the living God, you may venture on it. It is a tried word. All the saints in glory, and on earth, have tried it, and it never failed one of them. Turn over your Bibles, look the history of past times, who ever died at his door. Will you go where others have gone before you, and succeeded. If you perish, you perish; but you will be the first, for none perish that trust in him.

2. You have his oath for it. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" If you will not venture welcome upon his word, yet you may do it upon his oath. O wonderful condescension! that he should so far yield to loose the objections of unbelief, and to take away the strife between himself and unbelieving wretches.

USE. And now in this last day of the feast, I do in the name of the Lord, invite you all, old and young, to come to Christ and drink, and fetch supply for your souls. We make this proclamation this once more, from this place. "If any man thirst, let him come to Jesus and drink."

MOTIVE 1. The supply of the needs of poor sinners, is the great end of the mystery of Christ, next to his glory? Why was he sent into the world? Why came he, but to save sinners? Why is he preached, but that sinners may come to him? He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, that sinners may look to him, and be saved. He is a fountain opened, that sinners may come and drink. The rose of the field, that all who will, may pluck. And will you dare to slight him any more?

2. He is able to supply all your wants, however great they can be. Sometimes people meet with a loss that they think will never be made up again. But Christ "is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him." Are you all over filthy? there is water here to wash you; streams, Isa. xxxv. 6; a fountain, Zech. xiii. 1; rivers, Isa. xli. 18; a sea, and depths of the sea, Micah vii. 18. Is misery with you? mercy is with him; a multitude of mercies, Psal. li. 1. If one mercy will not do, "mercy shall be built up," one laid upon another, Psal. lxxxix. 2. Are your sins deep as hell? "So great is his mercy towards us, that he delivers our souls from the lowest hell." Are your sins as high as heaven? "The Lord's mercy is in the heavens."

3. Christ is a fountain that will never run dry. The creatures, all of them, are broken cisterns. Little they can hold, and that

little is soon exhausted. What can they do for us at best and many times they leave us in the greatest straits. All must part. Christ is a fountain that will serve you at all times, in all cases, through time and eternity.

2. Consider your need of him. How will you live or die without him? Does not the sick man need the physician? How will you get a pardon, peace with God, strength for duty, without him?

5. If you will come now, you will get a full feast above, and drink of the rivers of God's pleasures for evermore, Rev. vii. 16, 17.

Lastly, Remember Christ is in your offer this day. "If any man thirst," &c. This cuts off all exceptions, and makes the offer particular, therefore delay no longer. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

And now I would turn my speech to you of this generation. Dearly beloved, the text tells us, that the most joyful feast of ordinances in the world, may have an end. God will have a difference betwixt the lower and the upper house. People may be in hazard of loathing their food, and they must fast a while to find their appetites again. We have had now, for near eight years, a feast of ordinances together, and now the last day of that feast is come. I hope your table shall be again covered to greater advantage, seeing God has children here to feed. But now I would have you to reflect,

1. On the entertainment you have had at this feast: both ordinary, at the preaching of the word; and extraordinary, at the sacraments. When I entered on the ministry here, I began and preached man's natural state, for the first eleven months; then I preached Christ the remedy. I have withheld nothing from you of the whole counsel of God, so far as I knew it, and was necessary for you. I have told you the danger of neglecting the remedy, and am free of the blood of all men.

2. How it has been with you under the means. If any have been brought to acquaintance with Christ and themselves, and have got their souls refreshed, bless God for it. Where it has been otherwise, now mourn before the Lord for it.

I have not many advices to leave you, having about half a year ago been pressed in my spirit, before I knew what way I would be disposed of, to preach some things to you; which I began then, and finished just the last Lord's day I was here. I will put you in mind of them: I exhorted you to beware of the evils of the tongue, &c., &c.

Take this removal kindly out of the Lord's hand. Search out the cause of it, sisting your consciences before the Lord. I think it

will be safest for every man to leave his complaint on himself. It is a small thing for me, to be judged of men. God knows the heart, and will bring secret things to light. Some say, I needed not have gone away, but if I would. If my heart deceive me not, it is several years since I gave up with mine own will, and in this I have followed what I took to be God's will. As I came to this place under a sense of a call from God, and durst not do otherwise; so I go from it under a sense of God's call, which for my soul I durst not disobey, whatever difficulties I may meet with, though I should die at the end of it. Pray for a minister from the Lord. Pray in secret. Meet together, and pray for one. And, in the meantime, make conscience of family duties; watch over one another, and live in peace together.

I leave my testimony to the doctrine of the confession of faith, as the doctrine of Christ; and against the errors of the time. And I exhort you to cleave to that doctrine. I give my testimony to the covenanted work of reformation, and believe that the national and the solemn league and covenant were of God; and I exhort you to cleave thereto, against popery, prelacy, superstition and ceremonies. And mourn for this, that by the union, a nail is sent from Scotland, to fix the Dagon of the English hierarchy in its place in our country.

Above all, I exhort you to go to Christ, and be daily making use of him, for the supply of all your wants. I dare not say I have been useless here. I hope you and I will not forget the many sweet days we have had in this place. Christ has been with us at sermons, both on sabbath days and week days. We have had much of his presence at communions, and I bless God that ever put it in my heart to celebrate the sacrament in the winter. I hope you will particularly remember, and never forget the sabbath after our last communion.

I have come so far short of my duty to you as a minister, that if God should enter into judgment with me on that account, I should undoubtedly be damned. But for pardon, I flee to the same blood of Jesus Christ, which I have preached to you. And I advise you to take the same course with respect to your shortcomings. Now, I beseech you, pray for me; and God forbid that I should cease to pray for you, that Simprin may always be as a field that the Lord hath blessed. Now I will say no more, but conclude with the words of the apostle, Acts xx. 32, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified." Amen.