

THE  
DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS  
OF  
TRUE BELIEVERS.

VI. IN RELATION TO LOVING THEIR ENEMIES.\*

A PERSUASIVE TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES.

MATTHEW v. 44, 45.

*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

NEGATIVE holiness is short of Christianity more than the one half. It is not enough that we do others no ill, but we must do them good as we have access. Nor is it enough that we fly not out in passion and revenge on those who have wronged us, but we must love them.

Nature teaches us to love them that love us; and so the worst of men may learn that lesson, ver. 46, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" But sanctifying grace goes higher, teaching to love them that hate us; and this is a lesson hard to learn. Hence the corrupt Jewish teachers, unable to come up to the intent of the holy law, brought down the law to their nature, and expounded the second great commandment of the law conformably, ver. 43, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.* Our Lord, who loved his enemies so as to die for them, does justice to that law here; and that end of the law which they had folded in, he folds out again, and stretches it out in its full length, so as to teach our foes as well as our friends. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, &c.* In which words we have,

1. A duty enjoined, *Love your enemies.* It is supposed, that in

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this world every body will have some enemies; and want who will, Christ's friends will not want enemies, who will hate them, and do them any mischief they can reach. The greatest innocency of life, and harmlessness, the greatest usefulness in the world, will not secure one from having enemies. Christ's own case demonstrates this. Well, what is our duty to them? Love them. That is explained, *Bless them, do them good, pray for them.* That is an old commandment, Prov. xxv. 21, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat: and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink." But it is new stamped with the authority and example of Jesus. And of all coin men are fondest of the very old and the split-new. Here are both together.

2. The necessity of this duty, and of obedience to this command. It is agreed among all to be the hardest duty of Christianity. The Papists will have it to be not a command, but a counsel of perfection. And if most Protestants would speak their hearts in this point, they would agree with them; for in effect they think and say, It is not for every one, it is only the attainment of some very rare good men; and though they cannot reach it, they are in no doubt for all that, that they belong to Christ. But our Lord teaches here the downright contrary, namely, the absolute necessity of it to all, to Christians of the smallest as well as of the greatest size: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.* Not that we must first love our enemies before we can be adopted into the family of God; but that we must necessarily evidence our sonship by this, or else forfeit our claim to it. So *that ye may be*, is, that ye may appear to be. Adoption into the family of heaven is a great privilege. The question is, Who may claim interest in it, and who not? They who love their enemies may claim it; for thereby they discover they are really God's children, they are so like him: they who do not, may not claim that privilege; for they really are not God's children, they are so unlike him.

The text affords the following instructive note.

Doct. Loving of our enemies is a necessary evidence, mark, and character of those who are of the family of heaven.

In discoursing this subject, I shall,

I. Consider the duty of loving our enemies.

II. Shew that this loving of our enemies is a necessary mark and evidence of a child of God.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. We shall consider the duty of loving our enemies. And here I shall show,

1. Who are to be understood by our enemies.
2. What is that love which we owe to them.

*First*, I am to shew who are to be understood by our enemies.

In general, it aims at those about whom there is least to engage our love to them. For the more our Christian love is of that sort, it is the liker to the love of God, who loves freely, and does not find the objects of it lovely, but makes them so, And,

It is not only to be understood of those who are simply our enemies, but of those who are enemies to God as well as to us. This is evident from the context, for the law binds us to love our neighbour, ver. 43. Every body is our neighbour in the sense of the law. Therefore our enemies, even such of them as are enemies to God, are our neighbours, and so to be loved. And upon this principle our Lord's explication goes. Again, were not such as cursed, hated, and persecuted the disciples of Christ, the enemies of God as well as theirs? Yet the text will have those loved. Finally, the evil and unjust are so far loved of our heavenly Father, that he does them good: yet they are his enemies. Therefore we are to love them too, if we would be like him, ver. 45.

They would do well to consider this, who make the extent of their religion the boundaries of their love; who if they love those of their own religion and way, think they owe no love to others, but are at liberty to hate all the world besides; and could be content to exterminate and devour them under the notion of God's enemies. This is the way of the bloody Papists; and be who they will that go that way, they are actuated by the spirit of Antichrist, which is a spirit of hatred, not by the Spirit of Christ, which is a Spirit of love. If Christ had loved at that rate, there had never been a church in the world: but, as says the apostle, Rom. v. 10. *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.*

*Object.* 1. Does not the psalmist say, Psalm. cxxxix. 21, 22, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies?" And does not Jehu the son of Hanani the seer say to King Jehoshaphat, *Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?* 2 Chron. xix. 2.

*Ans.* (1.) There is a hating of one's way and course, and a hating of one's person. It is not the latter that is meant in these passages, but the former. They hate the Lord, rise up against him, are ungodly; that is their course, which our hatred must fix upon. So the sum of it is, I count them mine enemies, whose persons I am obliged to love, but their enmity I am obliged to hate. So a man loves his

sick child, though he loathes his loathsome disease, and seeks to root it out.

(2.) There is a hatred opposite to a love of complacency, and a hatred opposite to a love of good will: the former is what we should bear to the enemies of God, and is there meant; the latter is not.

*Object.* 2. Are not the prayers of the church bent against the enemies of Christ?

*Ans.* Yea they are, and for them too, in different respects; the former in respect of their wicked works, the latter in respect of their persons. And if there is no separating of their works from their persons, that their works are not to be destroyed but with the destruction of their persons, i. e. if they be incorrigible, then since God's honour must be dearer to us than all the world, we may lawfully pray against their persons too. And this is as consistent with the love in the text, as a parent's calling a surgeon to cut off his child's gangrened leg; he loves the leg, and would heartily wish its preservation; yet he must call for cutting it off, lest it ruin his child's whole body. See all this, Psal. lxxxiii. 16—18, "Fill their faces with shame: that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever: yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that men may know, that thou whose name alone is **JEHOVAH**, art the Most High over all the earth."

2. It is to be understood of those who are adversaries to us, or are against us any manner of way, whether they in that matter be against God or not. And so it takes in,

1st. Those who are not truly and properly our enemies, but in our account and reckoning only are enemies to us. And here is an occasion of the exercise of this grace and duty, as well as in the case of the most real enemy to us. For though one be not indeed your enemy, yet if you think him to be so, it is all a case to you to love him, as to love one that is really so; and if you reach it, it will be certainly acceptable to God, it will not be lost: for though it is your weakness to mistake one for your enemy who is not so, yet it is your excellency to love one whom you take for your enemy, Luke xxiv. 1. So this love is owing,

(1.) To those whom we take for our enemies, but are really only smiting friends. Wounding friends in a childish sickly world oft-times go under the name of enemies; while kissing enemies are taken for friends, Prov. xxvii. 6. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." So it fared with Paul among the Galatians, chap. iv. 16. *Am I therefore become your enemy*, says he to them, *because I tell you the truth?* Much enmity is raised this way in the world. A sound reproof for sin, an

opposing of persons in sinful courses, is sufficient in the world to make enemies, and when the war is denounced against them, Amos v. 1, "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate." But if these must needs be your enemies, love them according to the text, saying with David, Psal. cxli. 5. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."

(2.) To those whom we take for our enemies, but are only competitors with us in a lawful way. There is so much selfishness in the world, and so little regard to the interest of our neighbour, that a great many imaginary enemies are made this way. Thus Joseph's brethren took him for their enemy, and pursued the quarrel against him. So a man's pursuing in a lawful way for his own, what enmity does that many times breed among men? Persons of the same employment or occupation, what envy, grudge, and enmity is raised among them on that very head? Where there is an advantageous bargain to which all are alike free, how often is the man that gets it looked on as an enemy to the rest? And at bottom it is just because he is a friend to himself, which all the world must allow, so it be in a lawful way. But if such must needs be enemies, know you ought to love your enemies.

*2dly,* Those who are indeed our enemies, whom we reckon so, and who are truly what we reckon them. Here is occasion for the exercise of this grace and duty: and it is not likely that any body appearing in the world wants such occasion. If they belong to God, they will not want it, Luke vi. 29. Let all then take heed that they be found in the way of this duty. These enemies are of two sorts, but all of them to be loved, according to the text.

(1.) Stated enemies, in respect of a course of enmity. And these,

[1.] Stated public enemies, who, in their principles and by open profession, are opposite to us, and practise accordingly. Such were the unbelieving Jews, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees, to the followers of Christ, inwardly hating them, openly cursing them, and accordingly persecuting them. But, says our text, *love your enemies.* This party-enmity is frequent in the world, and it is the bane of the church. It is the native fruit of the corruption of our nature. Men are by a certain propensity of nature led to hate and bear enmity and grudge against those they differ from: it grows up like thistles and other weeds of its own accord, so that no man shall be kept from it, if he set not himself by grace to bear it down, and root it up. And the mischief of it is in church-differences especially, that people look on this brood of hell as the offspring of heaven, and so call

it zeal and duty ; and the more of it they have, think they are the better men. Hence said our Lord, John xvi. 2. "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service." But O how far are they deceived in this ! Jam. iii. 13, &c. Our Lord crushed the appearance of this in his disciple, Luke ix. 54, 55. Nay, he shed his blood to quench this unhallowed fire, Eph. ii. 16, "That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." This is the design of the parable of the man that fell among the thieves, Luke x. 30.

[2.] Stated private enemies, who set themselves in a course of enmity against such and such persons. Such enemies were Herod and Pilate to one another, Luke xxiii. 12. We call this state *variance*, Gal. v. 20. and this kind of enmity *feud*, a settled, stated, continued enmity. Such had Joseph's brethren against him, Ahab against Maccaiah, and Absalom against his brother Amnon. This is frequent every where, spreading itself like venom among neighbours, yea among relations, and among neighbours of all sorts. And they that have such enemies, think it not to be enough to be wise as serpents, to be on their guard as to them ; but they think they are warranted to join therewith the venom of the serpent too : and so they are even with them. Hence they will not speak together, but on all occasions are sure to be at them, and to bear hard on one another, pursuing their war. But this is not the way of God : on the contrary, says the scripture, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat : and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink, Prov. xv. 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 21. See the law, Exod. xxiii. 4, 5. These things will exclude men out of heaven, Gal. v. 21.

(2.) Occasional enemies, who, upon particular emergent occasions, do wrong to us ; but not from a stated enmity against us. If we are to love our stated enemies, much more these, Col. ii. 13. There are thousands of enmities of this nature : and such is the weakness and corruption of our nature, that there is no body but, either through inadvertency or the power of temptation, do thus wrong others. So that if men must hate those who so treat them, they will be Ishmael-like, having their hand against every man they have to do with, &c. But it is utterly unlike the gospel to blow up these sparks into a fire. But love such enemies notwithstanding : for "if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matth. vi. 15.

Both these kinds of enemies are of three sorts.

[1.] Heart-enemies, who in their hearts are set against us, burning with grudge, malice, and rancour at us. The text is plain as to

our duty in that case, *Do good to them that hate you.* Love begets love, even among those void of the grace of God; so if ye love them who love you, ye are not one step beyond the profane in that point, ver. 46. But if ye would show the power of God's grace in you, ye must be heart-friends to your heart-enemies, having your heart towards them, whose heart is away from you.

[2.] Tongue-enemies, who employ their tongues against us like swords, arrows, fire, and scourges. *Bless them that curse you.* These are very dangerous enemies, and sometimes give very deep and galling wounds, Psal. lvii. 4. "My soul (says David,) is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." One does not know how to get out of their way. Men may flee from the hands of their enemies, but who can flee from their tongues? Only God himself can be a refuge herein, Job v. 21. "Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue." But even to these you owe love, Psal. cix. 3, 4, 5. And tongue-love will not pay that debt, it must be heart-love, Prov. x. 18. Wit may furnish the former, but true wisdom must furnish the latter in that case.

[3.] Hand-enemies, who in their actions and deeds are enemies to us; not only in their hearts wishing us ill, and with their tongues speaking ill of us, but to their power, and as they have occasion doing ill to us, "Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Our Lord binds us even to love these, and that while they are doing against us. So he gave us example, Luke xxiii. 34. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." So the first martyr followed the blessed example, Acts vii. 60, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And so must we shew ourselves to be the children of the blessing, 1 Pet. iii. 9. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." The corrupt heart's motion is to do ill for ill, but by grace we must do good for ill: that is heaven's exchange.

SECONDLY, I come to shew what that love is which we owe to our enemies: We must love them. It is necessary to explain this, both negatively and positively.

*First, Negatively.* We are not bound to love them,

1. So as for their sakes to be reconciled to and at peace with their sin. Our Lord obliges us to love the persons of our enemies, but not the wrong they do to us, and much less the wrong they do to God. We are not, under pretence of this love, to give over opposing them in evil: that were to hate them, not to love them, whatever they may think, Lev. xix. 17. Or if it is called love, it is

to love them more than God, 1 Sam. ii. 29. We must love and strive to please one another, but *to edification, not to destruction*. Not only does the father love his child, though he chastens him; but because he loves him, therefore he chastens him. And the more we love any truly, the more we will hate their sin.

2. Neither does this love bar seeking redress of wrongs in an orderly way. If God had meant that men should be in the earth, like the fishes in the sea, where the greater swallow up the lesser, without possibility of redress, nothing being left to the weaker but to yield themselves, he had never appointed the magistrate, "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil," Rom. xiii. 4. And Jesus Christ never extended his precepts to the pulling down of the fence of human society, government, governors, and laws. And what he said of turning the other cheek to him that smote the one, himself explained, John xviii. 23. "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" being ready to receive a second stroke rather than to revenge that he had got; but withal complaining of the wrong before a judge. Men may do this, and love the enemy that wrongs them notwithstanding.

3. Neither doth it bind us to a love of complacency in them. That is, we are not obliged to take delight in them, make them our intimate and familiar companions, associate with them as our friends, being in a course of enmity against God. Jehoshaphat was reprov'd for that, 2 Chron. xix. 2. David makes it a mark of his sincerity, that he abstained from it, Psal. cxxxix. 21. Solomon tells us, Prov. xiii. 20. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." And everywhere the scripture calls us off from complacency and intimate communion with evil men. It holds too in the case of those who are really our enemies simply, otherwise we were to make no difference between our friends and our foes! hence says Christ, Matth. x. 16, 17. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues." Wise walking is a Christian duty, wherein the wisdom of the serpent is kept, but separate from its venom, Prov. xiv. 15. *The prudent man looketh well to his going.*

*Secondly, Positively.* There is a threefold love that uses to be distinguished. (1.) A love of complacency; (2.) of good will; and (3.) of beneficence. As to the first, I have already shewed, that it is not owing to our real enemies. Our Lord bids us *bless*, but not sing and rejoice with those that curse us: *do good to*, but not delight in and take them into our bosom, that hate us: *pray for*, but not as-



sociate, as with our best friends, with those who despitefully use us, and persecute us. It is the two latter kinds of love that we owe to them. And this is evidently clear from the whole of this context, to be the full compass of the love to our enemies; which is explained,

1. Of the love of good-will to them, ver. 44. "Bless them,—pray for them. So, ver. 47. If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" The publicans salute, i. e. bear and show good will to those who bear and show it to them.

2. Of the love of beneficence, ver. 44. *Do good to them.* So do the publicans, verse 46. rewarding one another's good deeds. Of these two it is explained from God's own example, verse 45. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." God doth not entertain a love of complacency in evil and unjust men; but that is the peculiar portion of the good and just from the Lord. But he follows the evil and the good, just and unjust, with a love of good-will, making his sun to rise on them; so heaven opens its eye, and looks to them as wishing them well. And he follows them with a love of beneficence, making his rain to fall, whereby fruitful seasons are made.

These two together make the perfection of that love that men promiscuously are fit objects of, ver. 48. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If we consider men as just and good, they are fit objects of the divine and human complacency: as evil and unjust, they are not fit objects of the one nor of the other. But the worst of them may be fit objects of good will and beneficence. And God's love is perfect in affording them both these: and if we afford them the same, our love that we owe to them will be perfect too, no due part being lacking. Then,

*First,* We owe to our enemies, our real enemies, a love of good-will, Rom. xiii. 9. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Our hearts ought to be lovingly disposed towards them, and they to have a room in them, as we when we were yet enemies had in the heart of Christ. If we be not so disposed, we have not the Spirit of Christ. Good-will is a debt we owe to mankind, even the worst of them: and though it takes nothing out of our pocket, it is not easily paid. There is need of a stock of grace, for nature's stock will soon be exhausted, Tit. iii. 3. This good-will lies in,

1. We must not wish them ill as ill to them, Psal. xl. 14. We must pluck up the roots from which ill wishes to them do spring up. Envy, which looks with an ill eye on their welfare, and would eat

it up, James iii. 16; hatred, which blocks up all good from us to them, Lev. xix. 17; grudge, which is a train lying within the heart, ready to be blown up on occasion for mischief to them, Lev. xix. 18; and malice, which like a burning fire pursues them with ill-will, Eph. iv. 31. Our ill wishes can do them no ill, but they do ourselves much. Every ill wish is an item in our accounts before God, and the reigning root of ill-will to our neighbour proves one to be naught, 1 John ii. 11. "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

But this extends not to these two cases. (1.) The wishing one an ill for good to him, *e. g.* the losing of such an one's favour, the having of which is a snare to his soul: the lowering of one's outward circumstances, whose prosperity makes him forget God and himself. But in this case the thing wished, though in itself an evil, is wished as a mean of good, and of good to the person. (2.) The wishing evil to a person for the good of many, as that one who is a corrupter of others, and incorrigible in it, may be taken out of the way. For the honour of God and the public good is always preferable to the private good of one, Gal. v. 12.

2. We must not take pleasure in any ill that befalls them, as ill to them, Prov. xxiv. 17. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth." To make the miseries of others our delight, is unbecoming the spirit of the gospel; it is a feeding with the serpent on dust; that is to say, a joining issue with the devil in our rejoicing. But O how much of that spirit is in the world; yea, how naturally does the heart of man take that bias! Though perhaps men will not do them ill, yet it is a pleasure to them to hear of others doing it, or of Providence's reaching them some stroke. The former cases must be excepted here too. But otherwise it is a very wicked disposition, to take pleasure in our enemy's hurt. Job clears himself in that point, Job xxxi. 29. "If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lift up myself when evil found him." There is no exception, Rom. xii. 15. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

3. We must heartily wish them well, 1 Tim. i. 5. "Pray for them," says the text. We must wish them the best things, that they may be for ever happy; may have favour and peace with God, Luke xxxiii. 34.; and that for that cause God may grant them faith, repentance, and all other saving graces. For it is a vain wish, and worse than vain, to wish people happy, living and going on in their sins: therefore our wishes must be so regulated as God's

stated method of grace may be kept in due regard. And as for other things that are temporal, we must wish them these as they may best promote those ends.

4. We must wish them well, as well to them, Psal. cxxii. 8. Men may wish well to their enemies, from a mere carnal principle, not as being well for them, but for themselves. That is, they may wish them repentance, &c. for their own ease, not from any love to their souls. But God sees through that, and will account it no more than it is, that is, self-love, not love to our enemies. To overlook our own interest, and from love to God, and our neighbour, to wish well to those that are our enemies, is worthy of a Christian.

*Secondly,* We owe to our enemies, our real enemies, a love of beneficence, whereby we will be ready to do them good as we have access; and therefore says the apostle, 1 John iii. 18. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth." And certain it is, that where the heart in good earnest wisheth them good, the tongue and the hands will be ready to do them the good we wish them, and can do them. Man was born for society, and no man was born for himself only, but is obliged to seek the good of others too; and their enmity to us looseth not that bond.

1. We must not practise revenge upon them, by doing one ill turn for another they have done us, Rom. xii. 19. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath." They that are farthest behind with their neighbour here, are in best case: for revenge for wrongs done is a debt that will be paid, and the longer it is a-paying, it will be the heavier charge at length. But God has kept the clearing of that debt in his own hand, and we are not to meddle with it. Revenging ourselves on our enemies is the utmost remove from the love we owe to them. It is hatred, flaming hatred against them, instead of love. It tends to their destruction, and therefore denominates men *murderers* before the Lord, 1 John iii. 15. O that men would consider how they will answer it to him, who having set us a pattern, commands us to love our enemies. So forbearing positive revenge is the lowest step of this love.

2. We must not withhold from them the good that is due to them from us by any particular tie; but must be sure to be in our duty to them, though they be out of their duty to us, Prov. iii. 27, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." It is not enough that we do them no ill, but we must do them the good we owe them, by whatsoever such tie, whether they be special neighbours, or nearer relations. For the duty we owe one to another in our relations, is not founded on

mere compact, that when the one breaks the other is loose; but upon the authority of God, which binds both parties. If men would then turn their eyes upward, and look to God as the common Master, they would find reason from his command, to continue in their duty to those who cast off their duty to them, as far as they can have access.

3. We must be ready to do them good as Providence puts an opportunity in our hand, Gal. vi. 10. "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men." This love of beneficence takes in this also as the crowning ingredient, the highest step in it. (1.) We must do them no ill. (2.) We must do them all the good we owe them, and they can challenge of us by any particular tie. But we must go higher yet, and, (3.) Do them all the good that we have access to do them, though they cannot challenge it by any particular tie. Here is a general tie in the text, to make up that want: and in these cases though they cannot challenge it of us, our God and Lord can and doth. The Jews who crucified Christ, and stoned Stephen, could not demand their prayers for them as a debt they owed them by a particular bond: but the extensive law of love required them, and Christ fulfilled that law in that as in other points; and Stephen wrote after his copy. So that it will not be sufficient to shift a good work toward such and such persons, to say we owe them none. Now we must be ready to do them good,

*1st*, In their temporal interest, Rom. xii. 20. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Thus our Lord Jesus went about doing good in the midst of his enemies, healing their sick, curing their blind, &c. He was a public benefactor, though in the mean time he was the object of the public enmity. So if it lie in our way to advance their temporal interest, and do them a good turn for that end, we must not withhold it, whatever enmity they shew or have shewn to us.

*2dly*, In their spiritual interest, contributing our utmost endeavours as we have access for their eternal happiness, Prov. xi. 30. *He that winneth souls is wise.* Thus Christ and his apostles gave us an example in their thirsting for the soul-good of the Jews, their declared enemies. When the winning or losing of a soul comes in competition with any wrong done to us, that wrong is not worth noticing; for the redemption of the soul is precious above all. And for both these we must be ready,

(1.) To speak for their good: for a good word is often of such usefulness to men, that it may be reckoned among good deeds. This was Jeremiah's comfort, that he had so done for his people, who

were very abusive to him, chap. xviii. 20. "Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul: remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them." And when we may advance the good of those who are our enemies by our speaking for them, then is the time to speak.

(2.) To act for their good, Rom. xii. 20. forecited. The spirit of the gospel disposeth men not only to use their tongues, but their hands for the good of their enemies; and to abide some stress themselves, for doing good to them, Rom. v. 7, 8. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If men please themselves with giving one good words for their enemies, while they have access to do them good deeds, but will not, we may say, *What doth that profit?* James ii. 16.

For all this we must be,

(1.) Habitually disposed to beneficence towards them. The habitual bent and frame of our souls should be to do good to all, our enemies not excepted. For that is the native effect of the writing of the law of love on the heart.

(2.) We must readily fall in with any special opportunity that Providence puts in our hand for that effect, Gal. vi. 10. How do ill men strike in with an opportunity to do an ill turn to their enemies? So would we show ourselves Christians, by striking in with an occasion of doing good to our enemies, as knowing that then God is putting us to the trial in that point.

II. The next general head is to shew, that this loving of our enemies is a necessary mark and evidence of a child of God. Ye have heard what it is not, and what it is: consider now that you must either reach it, or forfeit your claim to God as your Father. I do not say, that without perfection in it ye cannot make that claim. It is our duty indeed, but we can no more reach a perfection of degrees in it, than in other graces and duties. But the reaching of it in a perfection of parts, the sincere aiming at, and endeavouring it, as other graces and necessary duties, in the habitual course of our lives, is such a necessary mark and evidence of a child of God, as appears from the following considerations.

1. The living in malice and envy against any, is an evidence of one in the black state of nature, a child of hell. Hence says the apostle, Tit. iii. 3. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The scripture

calls our natural state *the gall of bitterness*, Acts viii. 21, 23. and natural men *a generation of vipers*, Matth. iii. 7. Men falling into enmity against God, fell into enmity one against another; and, rendering themselves hateful to God, came also to hate one another: and there is no effectual cure for it, till they return to God, the centre of unity. See it in the case of our first parents. So this reigning enmity against any is the native produce of man's apostate state, discovering it as surely as smoke does fire. Therefore love to our enemies is a necessary mark and evidence of a child of God.

2. To love our friends and hate our enemies, is nothing above the reach of nature, corrupt as it is. The Pharisees, that generation of vipers, as short as they cut the law, left so much of it in that point, Matth. v. 43. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." The worst of men may do that; self love teaches it, and produces it: therefore there is no body, but they bear love to some others. But surely Christianity must carry men farther than the worst of men; therefore a true Christian must necessarily love both his friends and enemies, since there is no medium betwixt these, verse 46, 47. The true Christian must love all men, since the worst of men love some: else the children of heaven and of hell are alike.

3. The want of it will evince the person to want the true love of God; and he who wants that, surely is not a child of God, but a child of the devil. Men will persuade themselves, that though they can have no love to such and such a one whom they look on as their enemy; yet they love God, and that is enough. But hear what the Spirit of God says in this case, 1 John iv. 20, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Men do not love God truly, who cannot love men for his sake: and the love of our friends is loving for our own sake, if we do not love our enemies too. For if we loved for God's sake, then we would love all whom he bids us: but sticking at the love of our enemies so expressly required by him, shews that we do not love God, since we will not do that for his sake. If we love ourselves, we must love our friends, because they love us: but the great trial is in the love of our enemies, where we cannot fetch the arguments for loving them from ourselves, but from God.

4. It is a necessary consequent of regeneration, and without that no man shall see heaven, 1 John iii. 9, 10. "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doth not

righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." If we be God's children, we have got the new nature, and old things are done away. Then we will be no more living in malice, hateful, and hating one another. But these things will be laid aside. Hence it is prophesied of the gospel-days, Is. xi. 6. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the falling together, and a little child shall lead them." If we are born again, the law is written on our hearts, Heb. viii. 10. whereof love is the sum; and particularly the loving of our neighbour as ourselves, is the second great commandment. And it is evident from the Scriptures, that our enemy is our neighbour in the sense of the law. So if we are not disposed to love our enemies, we are not disposed to love our neighbour; and if we do not that, the law is not written on our hearts; and if it is not written, we are not born again, and so are not God's children.

5. If we love not our enemies, we are not like God; and if we be not like him, we are not his children; for all his children have his Spirit in them, Gal. iv. 6. and they all bear his image, Col. iii. 10. Therefore says our Lord, Matth. v. 45, "Love your enemies—that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." God loves even those that are his enemies, seeking their good, and doing them good: yea, "He loved the world so, (while yet enemies,) that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. If we look to the work of creation, he gave us our being, and the whole world; if to providence, he sustains us by his bounty; if to redemption, "God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. How can we then be like him, if we love not our enemies?

6. If we love not our enemies, we have not the Spirit of Christ, and so are none of his, Rom. viii. 9. Our Lord Jesus gave us a most complete pattern of love, extending to our enemies as well as friends. He sought the good of all, the hurt of none; he did good to those that did ill to him; he prayed for them who used him most despitefully; nay he died for them by whose hands he himself died. We can never then be reckoned his disciples, and of his family, nor to have his Spirit, without we love our enemies.

7. *Lastly*, Without this we are murderers in the sight of God, and so have no share in eternal life, 1 John iii. 15. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer

hath eternal life abiding in him." We show ourselves the children of the grand murderer, and so must have our portion with him.

I conclude this subject with some practical improvement.

USE 1. Of information. This shows us, that,

1. It is not easy to be a Christian indeed, however easy it is to take on the name and profession of it. Christianity has in it supernatural truths to be believed, and supernatural duties to be done; which the arms of natural abilities are too short to reach. Divine grace is absolutely necessary for these.

2. Christianity lies in a Christian or Christ-like disposition of heart, and a conduct of life agreeable thereto, Jam. i. 22. There is a power of godliness, which casts the heart into a mould of conformity with the example of Christ, and regulates the life in a suitableness thereto. Where that power is wanting, there is no true godliness.

3. Those who pick and choose in religion, taking the easier, and not meddling with the difficult duties thereof laid before them, do but deceive themselves. Though ye love professors of religion, and the children of God who are friendly to you; for all that ye are none of God's family, if ye love not your enemies too. The false mother would have the child divided; Pharaoh would have let Israel go, if they would but have left a part with him. But we must either take on Christ's whole yoke, or none at all.

4. Christianity is the best friend of human society. O how happy might the World be if it should obtain! What peace, safety, and ease would there be among nations, in neighbourhoods, and in families? It would be an effectual quench-coal to all the fightings, quarrellings, jarrings, strifes, and wrongs, that take away the comfort of society. There are indeed professors of religion, who are fire-brands and pests to society, by their injustice, contention, &c. but better a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the midst of the sea, than that such things should take place: James iv. 1. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?"

5. *Lastly*, There are few Christians in the world; the children of God's family are very rare; even as rare as they are who love their enemies. For the one and the other are of equal latitude. The children of this world are hateful, and hating one another; the badge of the saints is love, which is rare to be seen.

USE II. Hereby ye may discern, whether ye are the children of God or not. This is an evidence proposed by Christ himself, the elder brother of the family. All those of the family of heaven capable of loving or hating their neighbour, have the Spirit of the



family, which is a benign and favourable one, causing them to love even their enemies with a love of good will and beneficence. So this writes death to, and excludes out of the number of the children of God.

1. All those whose hearts are so soured with the real or imaginary wrongs they conceive themselves to have received from such and such persons, that they cannot find in their hearts really and truly to wish them well : but they desire, seek, long, and, thirst for mischief to befall them, that they may have the satisfaction of it. This is the badge of the devil's family, Tit. iii. 3, and speaks one's spirit to be leavened of hell. It is the venom of the serpent appearing in his seed, whatever profession they make, Matth. iii. 7. It was eminent in the scribes and Pharisees ; and is ordinarily most virulent in hypocritical professors, because of their reigning pride and self-love. To all such we may say, " Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ?" Matth. xxiii. 33.

2. All those whose spirits are so bitter against those who are or are accounted their enemies, that their hands are quite bound up from doing them a good turn lying in their way, but on the contrary will do them an ill turn if they can. This is the *malignity* that is the brand of hell, Rom. i. 29. to which the malignant spirit prompts men : and it reigns in those of the devil's family, who like Cain are *of that wicked one*. They must be revenged, and vengeance shall certainly be taken on them : they cannot forgive, and therefore they cannot be forgiven. Wo must be to them for ever, for the measure they mete shall be measured to them.

On the other hand, this doctrine speaks comfort to those who are so disposed habitually, as heartily to wish well to their enemies, and evidence it by doing them the good they have access to do them ; and that from an inward principle of love to them, flowing from the love of God, and from a sense of the command of Christ. See the text. No doubt hypocrites and carnal men may have the counterfeit of this. But ye may safely take the comfort of love to your enemies,

(1.) If it be a loving of them indeed and in truth, and not in word and tongue only, 1 John iii. 18. Men for their own sake may give their enemies their best words and wishes, while these are but a white cover of black hatred. But happy they who are real in their good wishes to them, and evidence the same by their deeds, as they have opportunity.

(2.) If it be evangelical in its spring and rise. A good humour, some particular interest of men's own, may go far in the counterfeit of this. But the true love to our enemies rises from gospel-principles.

The man considers his own natural enmity to God, the acts of enmity against God which himself is often falling into, the love of God to us while yet enemies in giving Christ for us, &c.; and his soul is softened and melted down into this love.

(3.) *Lastly*, If it be universal, not extending to some only for whom we retain a particular regard, but to all whom we take for our enemies. For if the spring of it be evangelical, it will be universal: since in that case the reason for bearing that love to one, is a reason for bearing it to all; for being in charity with all the world.

USE *ult.* Evidence yourselves children of God, members of the family of heaven, by loving your enemies. Set yourselves to the conscientious practice of this duty, laying aside all hatred, malice, and revenge against others. To press this, let me suggest the following motives.

1. It is the command of God and his Son Jesus Christ. God gave us that command, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Christ opened it, and particularly enforced it as to our enemies. And it is not a naked command, but backed with the example of God and Christ, which must have weight with all who have any regard to either.

2. Ye were baptized in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all of you, and many of you have communicated in the Lord's supper. Since ye have taken on the external badge of the family, walk as becomes members of that holy society. Ye were baptized into Christ's death, which was for his enemies: the supper is the commemoration of his dying for us while yet enemies. How natively then do they bind to this duty?

3. The more ye have of this, ye are the more like God; the less ye have of it, ye are the more unlike him. Here is a piece of holy ambition, to strive to be more like God, in universal good-will and beneficence. Here is your true glory.

4. This is the way to be useful in the world. You will be useful for God this way, who will be much honoured by it, John xv. 8, "Herein is my Father glorified, (says Christ,) that ye bear him much fruit, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Ye are a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Ye will be useful to others; particularly ye may be useful to your very enemies, Rom. xii. 20, 21. And this is a noble thing; for it is *more blessed to give than to receive*.

5. It will be much to your own advantage. While others rack and torment themselves with their impotent malice, ye will enjoy a calm and serenity in your own minds. You will have the satisfac-

tion of the testimony of your own conscience, that you are not enemies to them, but in charity with them, 2 Cor. i. 12.

6. *Lastly*, Your claim to the family of God depends on it. The enmity of wicked men will perish in a little, Eccl. ix. 6; but they will eat the bitter fruits of it for ever in hell. And you will eat the fruit of love in heaven.

I shall conclude with a few directions.

1. Come to Christ, and unite with him by faith, Heb. xi. 6. Without this ye will never reach this nor any other duty acceptably. Until ye believe, ye are in the gall of bitterness; and the grapes of love to our enemies will never be gathered off such thistles. Without it ye cannot have the new nature, 2 Cor. v. 17, for it is in Christ only we are made partakers of the divine, and the power of the devilish nature is done away. Without faith ye cannot love God truly, 1 John iv. 19. How then will ye love your enemies? Would ye quench the hellish fire of malice, hatred, and revenge in your breasts? go inward, and see to your own soul's case in the first place, shew a love to your own perishing souls, be convinced of your sin and misery, and betake yourselves to Christ in the promise of the gospel. Then will ye be capable of this Christ-like disposition and duty.

2. Bear up in your hearts a deep sense of your sinfulness, with the faith of pardon thereof. This will natively produce it, Tit. iii. 2, 3. A sense of our own sinfulness against God, will blunt the edge of the enmity of others against us, that it will not pierce so deep with us, as with the proud unhumiliated sinner. The faith of pardon from heaven to ourselves, will make us easy to forgive others. To think that God has forgiven us ten thousand talents, will make us ready to forgive the hundred pence to our fellow-servants.

3. Ply your hearts with the believing thoughts of the beneficence of God to his enemies, and the love of Christ dying for his enemies to redeem them from wrath. As the darkness of the night, mists and fogs, go away before the shining sun, and wild beasts of prey creep into their dens; so would all malice and hatred before this.

4. Consider that even your enemies were made originally after God's image, Gen. ix. 6. and they may be for all you know the objects of everlasting love; for whom special favour is secured by the eternal transaction. Love all men then, lest if ye hate any, ye be found to pitch your hatred where God has pitched his free love, and so be found fighters against God.

5. As there are readily none, but they have something desirable about them; so fix ye upon that, and love them for it, as ye will

love gold, though ye should find it in a mire. Beware lest the faults of others and their blemishes blind your eyes to their beauties and excellencies. It is unbecoming among those who have no beauty without blemish themselves.

6. Consider them rather as objects of pity and compassion, than of hatred. And this ye will do, if ye consider their enmity to you, more as a sin against God, than as a wrong to yourselves, Col. iii. 25. God is judge, and he will right all wrongs, and recompense every one according to his work.

7. *Lastly*, Consider the shortness of time, their and your own, Eccl. ix. 6. We have no time to spend in these petty quarrels of this world. Death will make them all to die out. Our enemies are but enemies for a day; night comes, and they are removed. And we ourselves go accordingly. Let us therefore be ready to go, in charity with all men, loving our enemies, that we may appear to be the children of God.