

THE
DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS
OF
TRUE BELIEVERS.

VIII. IN RELATION TO THEIR FRIENDSHIP TO CHRIST, AND EVIDENCING IT,
BY DOING WHATSOEVER HE COMMANDS THEM.*

BELIEVERS THE FRIENDS OF CHRIST.

JOHN XV. 14.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

IN these words we have two things.

1. A high and honourable privilege which some enjoy : they are *Christ's friends*. It is a relation, and a kindly and honourable one. Some are his enemies, and he will treat them as such, saying, "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me," Luke xix. 27. Yea all are so by nature, Rom. viii. 7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." But there is a party of mankind brought into a state of friendship with him, whom he has done and will do the office of the best of friends to.

2. The character of those who enjoy that privilege. Many are pretenders to it ; but few can make it out. Here is the badge they bear, the sign they are known by, *If ye do whatsoever I command you*. Those who bear it, Christ will own. This character Christ lays before his disciples and all the visible church, (1.) That they may strive to answer it, as ever they would evidence to the world, and their own consciences, this relation. (2.) That they may at

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times examine themselves by it, and so clear their interest in him : "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

The character is taken from practice. Friends must show themselves friendly. This Christ's friends do by *doing whatsoever he commands them*. This doing is not the foundation of the friendship : that is faith applying Christ's reconciling blood, Rom. v. 10, 11 : but it is the fruit of the friendship, and therefore follows after it. It necessarily springs from it, and so manifests and makes it known, as the fruit doth the tree. So John viii. 31. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. Heb. iii. 14. We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Thus obedience is not the condition upon which the privilege is obtained ; but there is a necessary connection betwixt the privilege and the duty, which is all that the *if* here signifies : as if one should say, If there is smoke, there is fire ; if there is good fruit, there is a good tree. Now observe here,

(1.) The character itself, universal obedience to the commands of Christ. Christ our Friend is our Lord and our God : he requires obedience of us : he must command, and we must obey, and that without exception, with unlimited obedience. The friendship betwixt Christ and his people reserves still the distance of Sovereign and subjects, Psal. xlv. 11. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*.

(2.) The decision on this character, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (1.) In that case, ye really are, and prove yourselves to be my friends. Fair words and a profession will not do it ; but the practice of a friend will do it ; and sincere obedience is the touchstone of friendship to Christ. (2.) Ye shall be owned to be real friends. Christ himself will take it as full evidence of your friendship to him.

The substance of this text may be summed up in the three following observations.

DOCT. I. It is the privilege of some of mankind-sinners to be the friends of Christ.

DOCT. II. It is the distinguishing character of the friends of Christ to do whatsoever he commands them.

DOCT. III. They are the friends of Christ, who are in a gospel-sense universal in their obedience to his commands.

I shall handle each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. It is the privilege of some of mankind-sinners to be the friends of Christ.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What this privilege is in general.

II. How this friendship is made up.

III. What a privilege this is.

IV. Make application.

I. I am to shew what this privilege is in the general. It is a state of peace and oneness of interest with Jesus Christ. In these two it lies, as is evident from the common nature of friendship.

1. The friends of Christ, whereas naturally they were in a state of enmity with God, they are now in a state of peace with Christ, and God through Christ, Eph. ii. 14. "For he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." All the children of Adam in their natural state, the elect not excepted, are in a state of enmity with God. God bears a legal enmity against them, as the judge against the criminal whom he condemns, according to law: and they have a real enmity against him appearing in their hearts, Rom. viii. 7. and in their works, Col. i. 31. But now those enjoying this privilege are now in a state of peace and reconciliation with God. God's legal enmity against them is now removed; he condemns them no more, there being *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 1. The countenance of the wrathful Judge is now laid by as to them. And their real enmity against him is removed too, out of their hearts and lives, that it reigns no more, Col. i. 21, 22. "You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight." So that most dangerous fever in their case, is cooled.

2. Whereas they had divided interests as to heaven, now there is an unity of interests betwixt Christ and them, 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Many are at peace, who yet are not in a state of friendship: so this is more than to be at peace with God simply. When Christ makes up the peace with sinners, he enters into a friendship with them: there is an alliance, a covenant betwixt God and them, offensive and defensive: their interests are woven together from that moment: they have common friends and common enemies. Christ espouses their interests, and they espouse his; and they mutually pursue the interests of one another as a common interest.

II. The next head is, How this friendship is made up.

1. The first spring and source of it is everlasting free love. Hence says the Lord to the prophet, Jer. xxxi. 3. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." It is as ancient in the design of it as from eternity. Sometimes one friend will say to another, When I saw you in such a place, or at such a time, there was some-

thing in you that I liked extremely, and from that time I was still desirous of a friendship with you. So Christ may say to his people, Since I saw you from eternity, lying in the corrupt ruined mass of mankind, I liked you, my delights were with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31.

2. The plot for compassing it was laid from eternity between the Father and the Son, Tit. i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." The covenant of grace was made for bringing about this friendship: the method was there laid down, how, with the honour of the divine perfections, these enemies to God might be brought into a state of friendship; how they might be won into it.

3. The foundation of it was laid in the blood of Christ, in the fulness of time, Gal. iv. 4, 5. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The friendship with them, as little worth as they were, could not be purchased, but by blood that might satisfy justice; for they were criminals under a sentence of death; Heb. ix. 22. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." So Christ died for them, and gave them the greatest demonstration of friendship for them; therefore says he, John xv. 13. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Hence we are often said to be redeemed by his blood.

4. It was moved to them in the gospel, 2 Cor. v. 20. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. In the word of the gospel Christ courts the acquaintance of sinners, and proposes a strict friendship betwixt him and them. He sends his letters to them in the written word for that effect, which many times have remained unanswered, or got an ill answer. He sends some of their own acquaintance, earthen vessels, to prevail with them to enter into this friendship, who many times labour in vain.† But he continues his solicitations till he win them.

5. They are won to it by his own Spirit, Is. xlv. 3, 5. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob: and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." They will not be friends with him, till the Spirit take the work in hand. Their old friends, the devil, the world, and their lusts, have the ascendant so over them, that they cannot value Christ's friend-

ship, till the Spirit open their eyes, display it to them, and change their minds and hearts: and he does it effectually when once he takes it in hand.

6. By faith they go into the friendship with him, Eph. iii. 17. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." So they come to him, and unite with him. And thus the bonds of the friendship are the Spirit on Christ's part, whereby he apprehends them, and faith on their part, whereby they lay hold on him. So the friendship is made up inviolable and most strict, and Christ and they are in the bond of the same covenant; he as the head, and they as the members.

7. *Lastly*, The friendship is sealed by the sacraments, particularly that of his body and blood. It was an ancient custom to confirm a covenant of friendship with a feast, Gen. xxxi. 54. And so the Lord has been confirming his friendship with his true friends among us of late, saying, as Cant. v. 1. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." And O how fit is it to confirm the friendship! Can there be a greater instance of friendship than what is there! John xv. 13. forecited.

III. I go on to shew what a privilege this is. Men nor angels cannot fully express the value of it, for it is of infinite value, 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." To raise your esteem of it, consider,

1. It is an honourable friendship. Many value themselves to little purpose on their great friends, while perhaps they and their friends both are enemies to God, and though they have greatness, want grace. But the believer may justly, yea only, value himself on his friends, 1 Cor. i. *ult.* *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.* Their Friend is the Prince of the kings of the earth; and through him God is their friend. They are allied to heaven: though they were come of the dunghill, the blood-royal of heaven runs in their veins.

2. It is a beneficial friendship. The friendship of many in the world is no more but an empty name: if a good word will serve their friend, they will give it him, but for any good deed, it is far from them, Jam. ii. 16. Yea, the friendship of many is destructive; it serves for nothing but to be a snare, a trap, and a bond of iniquity, Jam. iv. 4. as between Herod and Pilate. But Christ's friendship is most beneficial: it is enriching and upmaking. The benefits of it who can tell? they will tell out for time and eternity;

they are for the soul and for the body. One needs no more to make him happy: they are for prosperity, and for adversity.

3. It is an intimate friendship. There is no such close and intimate friendship betwixt any relations on earth, 1 Cor. vi. 17. *He that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit.* Many whose friendship is very valuable and beneficial, are very reserved even to their friends, allowing them little intimacy with them. But Christ communicates himself most intimately to his friends, lodges his greatest secrets with them, Psal. xxv. 14; and they on the other hand pour out their hearts to him, with greater freedom than they can do to their nearest relations, where oft-times they find it necessary to be on the reserve.

4. It is an universal friendship, of universal influence. There is no friendship in the world, but it is limited to some particulars. There are some things to which men's friendship doth not extend, and in which they do not concern themselves with their friend. But Christ's friendship is of universal influence: from the greatest to the least of the concerns of his friends, he interests himself; he manages all about them in a friendly manner; from their eternal salvation, to the least hair falling from their head. And there is no case wherein one can come wrong to him for help.

5. It is a sure and lasting friendship. The friendships in the world are very uncertain. Sometimes the greatest friendship ends in great enmity, and often doth it degenerate into a coolness and indifference: and rarely doth it fall out, but adversity slackeneth the bond, if not puts it loose for altogether. Hence proceed the complaints of the saints, Job xix. 14. "My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me." Psal. xxxviii. 11. "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore: and my kinsmen stand afar off." But Christ's friendship never dies out, John xiii. 1. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He may hide his love from his people, but never lifts it away from them. Hence is that comfortable passage, Is. xlix. 14, 15, 16. "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." They may grieve his Spirit, and he may correct them with the rod: but the sharpest rod on their backs is a friendly one; the heaviest hand he lays on them, is still the hand of a friend, not of an enemy, Psal. lxxxix. 31.—34. And their adversity is so far from making his friendship cool toward them, that he bears a part with them in all

their burdens; *in all their afflictions he is afflicted*; and while he smites with the one hand, he supports with the other. He afflicts not willingly; and he turns all their bed in their sickness.

A short word of improvement shall conclude this doctrine.

USE I. of information. Hence see,

1. The wonderful condescension of heaven to mankind-sinners, in that God was pleased to take any of them into friendship with him. The angels fell, but there was no offer of peace for them, no Saviour provided: but men may not only be at peace, but in friendship with God. We are rebels to God naturally, but may become friends through Christ.

2. They that are Christ's are most happy. They are provided with a stock, upon which they may travel through all difficulties, and make their way through all storms. Christ is their Friend, and he is both able and willing to provide for them. And they may travel comfortably through all, if they had faith in exercise to improve the friendship.

3. Jesus Christ is the best and most generous of masters. He makes all his servants friends; he treats them generously. He needs none of their service; none of their service can make him more happy: but he rewards their service nobly. O! who would not choose to have such a friend? who would not serve such a liberal Master?

4. How friendless persons, who have none to regard them, may best bestow themselves, and get a friend, that will be better to them than all the world. Come to Christ, O friendless sinners! for the fatherless find mercy in him, even the outcasts of Israel, whom no body cares for. Come to him, and he will shew you the most distinguishing marks of friendship, more eminent than those that ever took place among men.

USE II. Of exhortation.

1. Let sinners seek this friendship. Christ, in the days of his flesh, was called "*a friend of publicans and sinners*": and it was so far true, that he was and is ready to befriend sinners, to save them from their sins, but not to befriend them in their sins. Here is a privilege, and the worst of sinners may obtain it in the way of believing now, as well as many have done heretofore; witness Manasseh, Mary Magdalen, Paul, yea the whole of those that are now the redeemed from among men, sitting at his right hand in glory. But if ye continue in your state of enmity against him, ye will find at last that he will treat you as enemies: and as he is the best of friends, if you remain impenitent, he will be the most dreadful of enemies, and consign you to everlasting burnings. Accept of his friendship therefore in time.

2. Ye that profess to be the friends of Christ, walk worthy of your privilege. Carry yourselves friendly towards him. Discover it by your respect to his commands, submission to his will in all things, and employing him in all your needs. And do not pretend to be his friends, while ye are regardless of keeping his way. Ye must distinguish yourselves from his pretended friends, by a sincere and universal obedience to whatsoever he says or enjoins in his word.

Doct. II. It is the distinguishing character of the friends of Christ, to do whatsoever he commands them.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Inquire into this character of the friends of Christ, of doing whatsoever he commands them.

II. Shew why this is made their trying and distinguishing character.

III. Conclude with some practical improvement.

1. I shall inquire into this character of the friends of Christ, of doing whatsoever he commands them. I take it up in three things.

First, The friends of Christ are doers of his commands. They are all his servants, Luke vi. 46. Christ is their Lord and Law-giver, and they do his commandments, Rev. xxii. 14. His enemies may feign submission; they may say fair, and profess obedience to him: but his friends are doers of what he commands, in a holy life and practice, Jam. i. 22. It imports the following things.

1. Their lusts are not their domineering lords, to whom they yield themselves to obey, Rom. vi. 13, 14. If they have become Christ's friends, they are become enemies to their lusts, seeking the pleasing of Christ, and the destruction of their corrupt affections, saying, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name, Is. xxvi. 13. They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. *To walk after one's own lusts*, is the character of *scoffers*, 2 Pet. iii. 3. Christ's friends have changed masters, and renounced their own will and corrupt affections.

2. The course of the world is not their rule, Eph. ii. 2. It has the force of a command on Christ's enemies: hence so frequent is the following a multitude to do evil, as if the commonness of a sin did licentiate it. But Christ's commands contradict the course of the world, and his friends will obey them over the belly of the torrent of the example of a godless generation, as Noah did, Gen. vi. 9.

3. But as they look for salvation by him, it is the business of their life, to please, serve, and glorify him, to *walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing*, Col. i. 10. There are two works seriously

plied by all Christ's friends. (1.) Salvation-work, that they may be saved from sin and wrath, and set beyond hazard of eternal ruin. This is done by faith. (2.) Their generation work, *servng their generation by the will of God*, as David did, Acts xiii. 36; that they may be useful for Christ in their day, to advance his honour and glory, "Showing forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9. This is done by obedience. In the former they look for their own safety, and in the latter for the honour of their Saviour. Christ's enemies either slight both, or if they seem to be concerned for the former, that is all, they have no due concern for the latter. Why? because they have no regard to the honour of Christ, but to their own salvation. Here lies the mystery of the inconsistent lives of many, who pray like angels, and yet live like devils, as if there were no God to whom obedience were due. But Christ's friends pursue both, and labour to serve and obey him, with the same earnestness as to be saved by him; and so are doers of all his commandments, as well as seekers of his salvation.

This is evident, if ye consider,

1st, That all Christ's friends are true believers in him, endowed with saving faith, being *called, and chosen, and faithful*, Rev. vii. 14. For by faith it is that one enters into the state of friendship with him. And all real believers are doers of Christ's commands, making it their business to obey him. For *faith without works is dead*, Jam. ii. 20. True faith is a working grace, *working by love*, Gal. v. 6. For it knits the soul to Christ, in whom is the fulness of the Spirit of holiness, Eph. iii. 17; joins to him as to a husband, whose spouse is always fruitful, Rom. vii. 4; as the true vine, making branches really united to it, bring forth fruit, John xv. 2. And so faith is virtually all good works. Hence Christ says, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And says the beloved disciple, 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And it receives Christ as a King, Lord, and Head, Psal. cx. 3.

2dly, The very end for which Christ purchased the friendship of heaven to any, and actually communicates it to them, is, that they might be doers of his commands. He laid down his life to purchase it for that cause. Hence says the apostle, Eph. v. 25, 26. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by his word. Tit. ii. 14. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He brings them forth from among his and their enemies, for the

same end, Luke i. 74, 75. "That he would grant unto us, (said Zacharias) that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." It was their misery while they were his enemies, that they neither would nor could do his commands: but in the day of their reconciliation he delivers them, knocks off their chains, and gives them both heart and hand in some measure for obedience.

3. Regardlessness of Christ's commands, and walking contrary to them, is the native product of the enmity of heart against him. This is the very way how men evidence themselves enemies to him: for it is walking contrary to him. What is the reason that men cannot be subject to the holy law? Their enmity to God, a transcript of whose nature it is, Rom. viii. 7. They will be their own lords, and will not leave Christ to reign over them: they are his enemies, Luke xix. 27. Men may pretend esteem of Christ, while they are regardless of his commands: but all such pretences are vain, Col. i. 21.

4thly, Where there is friendship there is love without dissimulation; and where there is love, there will be care to please the party beloved. Christ puts our love on this trial, John xiv. 15. *If ye love me*, says he, *keep my commandments*. And it is a most rational convincing trial. What man among us would reckon one to love us who were still walking contrary to us, grieving and vexing us with doing the things which we cannot endure? An unholy life is grieving to the Spirit of Christ: it is a smoke in his nostrils. How then can men pretend love or friendship to him, who are regardless of his holy laws? Whatever we call love to God, see what he calls so, 1 John v. 3. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

Secondly, The friends of Christ are doers of his commands, because they are his commands; as his will is the rule of their obedience, so it is the reason of it too: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." This is what touches the hearts of his friends, and sets the wheels of their souls in motion in obedience: That he commands it, that he requires it, Col. iii. 17. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Christ's pretended friends sometimes do what he commands; but it is not from any regard to him, but to themselves. But real regard to Christ weighs with his friends. This imports, that,

1 They do his commands out of respect to his authority, Psal. cxix. 4. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." They perceive the impress of a divine authority on every command, and in compliance with that authority close with the duty enjoined.

Hence where they cannot see any reason for a command, but that such is the will of Christ, they find even there sufficient ground for obedience : as being those who are not to dispute his commands, but obey them ; those to whom the will of the great Lawgiver is reason enough, Heb. xi. 8. " By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out not knowing whither he went."

2. They do his commands out of love to him. Hence we read of their " work and labour of love, shewed toward his name," Heb. vi. 10. Being saved by his blood, they give themselves to be ruled by his laws, and obey him from love and gratitude, *the love of Christ constraining them*, 2 Cor. v. 14. Love lines the yoke of Christ to believers, and makes it sit easy on his friends, while it is very grievous to his enemies, John v. 3. And the stronger faith is, the stronger is love ; and the stronger that love to Christ is, the soul is the more ready for duty. His commands are acceptable to them, because they are his.

3. They do his commands as sons redeemed by his blood, not as bond-servants working for their own redemption ; to please their Benefactor, not to render themselves accepted by their own obedience, Rom. viii. 15. Col. i. 10. Christ has brought in everlasting righteousness by his obedience, and put it on all his friends, whereby they stand accepted to God : and he commands them, being righteous through faith, to be holy ; and their souls say, as 2 Cor. vii. 1. " Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The mercy of God, and the love of Christ in dying for sinners, makes them to say, " What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me ?"

4. *Lastly*, They do his commands with heart and good-will, Eph. vi. 7. and that is the obedience only that is acceptable, Isa. lxiv. 5. " Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness." What is done for Christ's sake by his friends, will be done heartily ; while the obedience of his pretended friends, his real enemies, is done against their will. The cords of love will draw swiftly and easily : and what backwardness to duty is found at any time, will be grievous to them.

It is evident there can be no acceptable obedience but what is done this way, done because Christ commands it : for if it have not a respect to his command, it may indeed contain the matter of obedience, but is destitute of the form and essence of godly obedience. Thus we see selfish ends mar obedience, Matth. vi. 1. God knows the springs of our obedience, however close they lie within our breasts ;

and he will never acknowledge that to be obedience to him, that is not influenced by his authority, and has not him for its end.

Thirdly, The friends of Christ are doers of his commands universally and without exception, Psal. cxix. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." Their obedience to Christ is unlimited as to an absolute Lord. His friends will prescribe no bounds of their obedience, but what he sets in his holy law. The obedience of hypocrites is ever defective here; they never want some secret reserve, which proves their ruin. Here then is the trial of Christ's true and pretended friends. It is certain that there is no obedience on earth legally universal: but all the friends of Christ give him universal obedience in a gospel-sense. That is,

1. They are universal in their desire to do all his commands, saying, as Psal. cxix. 5. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Perfect holiness is the desire of their souls, the aim and design which they have in view, though still they cannot as yet reach the mark. Every sin is a burden, and lies on them as an iron chain; and there is no lust they would not fain be quit of, Rom. vii. 24. Some sins lie nearer them than others, and they have greater difficulty to shake them off than others. Christ says that the right eye must be plucked out, with thine own consent. Amen, says the friend of Christ. Hypocrites have always some lust which they desire not to part with; there is some part of Christ's yoke that they cannot away with. It is no more a burden to them than a gold chain about the neck, which one would be very loath to quit. They hate not every false way.

2. They are universal in respect of their endeavour to do all, to comply with every part of Christ's will; "I count not myself to have apprehended, (says Paul) but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. 13, 14. Many please themselves with faint and lazy wishes to do all: but it is one thing to wish to do whatever Christ commands; and another to aim at it in suitable endeavours, to try one's strength at every known duty, and to put hand to work, though they cannot go cleverly through it. It is the ruin of many souls, that they put off themselves with lazy wishes, but never once try in earnest the mortification of some known lust, or setting about some known duty. But Christ's friends are universal in their endeavours.

3. They are universal in respect of their willingness to know all that Christ commands, that they may do it, Psal. cxxxix. 23. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my

thoughts." It is the voice of Christ's friends, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And hence, where the command of Christ appears in any particular, they set themselves to receive and obey it. There is a great deal of deceit among men in this point. Most men stave off the discovery of those sins which they have no mind to part with; they strive to blind their consciences, that they may enjoy their sinful courses without disturbance: they lodge some lusts under disguise, willing to give them heart-room, but unwilling to know what they are.

The reasons why Christ's friends are universal in their obedience, are,

1. Because the grace of God inclines them to do what Christ commands, because he commands it, Psal. cxix. 4. forecited. And he that does one thing, because of the authority of Christ requiring it, will endeavour to do all; for the authority of God is equal in all, Jam. ii. 11. The least coin that has the king's stamp on it, is current among the subjects as well as the greatest. The law of Christ is a chain of many links, and he that truly draws one to him, draws all; wherefore the Jewish rabbies say, "He that saith, I receive the whole except one word only, despiseth the commandment of God."

2. Because the whole law is written on their hearts in regeneration, and not scraps of it here and there, Heb. viii. 10. The new nature is suited to whatever Christ commands, because it is his own image drawn on the soul: it answers the law as the wax does the seal. Hence it is called *a new man, the new creature*, wherein all things are become new: and there is a perfection of parts, though not of degrees.

3. Because Christ hath the chief room in their hearts beyond all competitors. His interest with his friends weighs down all other interests, Luke xiv. 26. The world and cursed self have the predominant interest in the hearts of most men: hence Christ's commands must give place to theirs, and religion and conscience must bow at the foot of their desire to please men, their covetousness pride, and passion. But in the hearts of his friends all other sheaves must bow to his, and so the commands of others must give place to the commands of Christ.

4. Because he is jealous, and the least command of his that is slighted is displeasing to him, Matth. v. 19. And a tender conscience will beware of displeasing him. Many a time God's people find in their experience the danger of tampering with some bosom idol. It provokes him to depart, till they return and acknowledge their sin, Psal. lxvi. 18. Therefore says the spouse, Cant. iii. 5. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by

the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love, till he please."

5. *Lastly*, Because their hearts are reconciled to the whole law, and every part of it. Their practical judgment approves it as good in itself, and good for them too, Psal. cxix. 128. "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." And hence there is a sincere endeavour to conform to it in all the parts thereof. There is a transcript of God's image in it, which the gracious soul longs for the drawing of upon it; so every command as a lineament of that image must be precious to them. Thus the character is established.

II. The next head is to show, why this is made the trying and distinguishing character of the friends of Christ.

1. Because this hits the point in which the sincere and hypocrites differ, whether they be gross or close hypocrites. Look on both in their profession of love and friendship to Christ, and the hypocrite will vie with the sincere in it. The foolish virgins have lamps as well as the wise; the foolish man's building may be as high as the wise builder's is; the one wears the external badge of the Christian name, and of the sacraments, as well as the other. But follow them to their practice, and there they part.

The gross hypocrite has the name of a Christian, but nothing of the life and practice of one. He will call Christ *Lord, Lord*, but makes no conscience of *doing the things that he saith*. He will cry, *The temple of the Lord*, and yet will *steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely*, Jer. vii. 8, 9. His profession is sacred, but his practice is profane. He will own Christ for his Lord, but in the mean time makes no bones of trampling his holy commandments under foot. The sincere soul dare not do this: since he abides in Christ, he must endeavour to walk as he also walked. He must be obedient to his Lord, Head, and King.

The close hypocrite who does indeed many things which Christ commands, so that the world cannot determine him to be insincere; yet he never does all in known duty: his obedience is always wanting in some material part; and what he does, he doth not because of the regard he hath to the will of Christ, but the regard he has to himself. Whereas the sincere aims at and endeavours compliance with the whole will of God, and that because it is his will, Acts xiii. 22.

2. Because the reality of friendship to Christ does without controversy appear here. Solomon observes, Prov. xxvi. 23, "Burning lips, and a wicked heart, are like a potsherd covered with silver dross." Will any man reckon one his friend, because he speaks him fair;

while yet he is ever injuring him egregiously, traducing his name, and venting mischief against him? No; a man will look upon such an one as a notorious dissembler, and worse than a professed enemy. So says the Lord, "Shew your faith by your works. If ye love me, keep my commandments. Love not in word only but in deed."

3. Because where Christ's friendship to a person takes effect, it certainly has this effect, Eph. v. 25, 26. How does it appear that Christ died for such a person, that he has justified him, &c.? If that man be not holy in his life, it cannot appear; if he be, it appears by his sanctification, Tit. ii. 14. For that was the end of the friendship, to bring back the sinner to obedience.

4. Because though the free grace of God tends to holiness, Tit. ii. 11, 12. yet there is a disposition in the children of men to turn it to licentiousness, Jude, 4. Therefore the apostle cautions the Galatians, chap. v. 13. "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Wherefore our Lord puts the trial of faith on good works, and of his friendship on universal obedience to his commands; that men may not by their unholy lives joined to a holy profession, make Christ the minister of sin, and deceive and destroy their own souls.

I shall now make some application of this doctrine.

USE 1. Of information. This shews us,

1. What the life of a Christian is. It is a life of doing whatsoever Christ commands. And so it is,

(1.) A doing life, an active not an idle life. Hence is that exhortation, Phil. ii. 12. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and that, Rev. xiv. 13. where we are told the saints at death "rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." And they have so much to do, the commandment being exceeding broad, Psal. cxix. 96. that they have no time to be idle. Christ went about doing good, and Christians must imitate him therein. God has set every one their work and post, and they must be busy in the work of their general and particular vocation.

(2.) A well doing life. Many are busy enough doing mischief: but the Christian's life is a life of doing good, for God's honour, and their own and their neighbour's good. Many do what is good on the matter, but they do it not well. The Christian's life is a life of doing good, from a good principle, to a good end, for a good reason, and in a good manner, 1 Tim. i. 5.

(1.) A watchful life, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. *Watch ye*, says the apostle. One will never do whatsoever Christ commands without watchfulness. A loose careless life will never make it. If one do not watch, they

will let the season of some duties slip; they will go contrary to his commands.

(4.) A resolute life. Eph. vi. 15. It is not possible but that, in such an evil world, the Christian must have some times the trial of advices and commands laid on him, contrary to the commands of Christ. But he must be precise in his adherence to the commands of Christ, say the contrary or be displeased who will. So there is need of resoluteness in this case, and need of a brow for a bargain. "For the fearful, and unbelieving, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8.

2. That there are few friends of Christ in the world, his flock is a *little flock*, Luke xii. 32. It is little wonder that there are so many opposers of the interests of Christ, so many neutralists in his cause, and so many enemies to his people and way: for certainly his friends are very few in number: there are so few disposed to do whatsoever he commands them. If we examine the number of them by this character, it is but here one and there one will be found. The most part declare themselves none of his friends, but his haters, John xv. 18.

3. Sincere Christians may take comfort from this, whose conscience witnesseth their conscientious regard to all the commands of Christ, and their sincere endeavour to come up to the obedience of them all. They are, and are accounted of Christ his friends. Though in many things they offend, yet in every known duty they aim at obedience; and our Lord makes a difference betwixt weakness and wickedness. Hence David says, "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God," Psal. xviii. 21. Though they want not their sin that easily besets them, yet their consciences witness that they are set against it as well as other sins: and the Lord will distinguish between voluntary yielding and involuntary, the reign and tyranny of sin, ver. 23. "I was also upright before him, (says the same holy man) and I kept myself from mine iniquity."

Let all such as make not conscience of universal obedience know, that their pretences to Christ's friendship are in vain. For, says he, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Luke vi. 46. If your life be not in some measure suited to that character, ye do but deceive yourselves thinking ye have that privilege. If ye do not what Christ commands, but what the devil, the world, and your own passions command you, theirs you are to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, not Christ's. Ye are self-pleasers, men-pleasers if the will of Christ is not the reason of your obedience, and does not influence you to universal obedience.

5. *Lastly*, The doctrine of free grace gives no encouragement to looseness of life : for there is no separating of faith and holiness. If ye be Christ's friends by faith, ye will be his faithful and tender servants in obedience. Though ye are not to gain heaven by works, yet having the right to it made over to you as his friends, you will work good works as the native fruit of the friendship.

USE II. Of exhortation. Shew yourselves Christ's friends by doing whatsoever he commands you. And do ye what Christ commands you, if you would show yourselves his friends,

1. In a time of general apostasy and backsliding from the ways of God, such as our time is, when the torrent of backsliding is running with a mighty force. It was the commendation of Noah, that he "was a just man and perfect in his generations, and walked with God," Gen. vi. 9. So did Lot in Sodom. It is a small thing to do what Christ commands, when credit, and reputation, and multitudes are on the side of religion : but to be best when others are worst, to be among the few names is the trial of a friend of Christ, Rev. iii. 4. John vi. 67. to regard his commands when the generation is trampling on them, that is friendship indeed, Psal. xii. 7.

2. Even when it must be to your temporal loss, Heb. xi. 35. While Christ and the world go together, hypocrites will follow him ; while they may do the commands of Christ on free cost, they will do them : but if once their worldly interest interfere, there they will stop. They have a sort of love to Christ, but their love to their worldly interest is stronger, and so the latter swallows up the former. Hence persecution drives many away from Christ ; and when there is no persecution, covetousness will supply its place. But shew your sincerity by following the commands of Christ over the belly of all losses that ye can meet with in the world, Luke xiv. 26.

3. When his hand is lying heavy on you by crosses and afflictions. The devil says that Job is an hypocrite, Job i. 9, 10. ; but Job was regardful of God's commands even in affliction. It is easy swimming while the head is borne up ; and to be for God while he appears to be for us in favourable dispensations, is not so hard. But to be tender of the authority of an afflicting God, to strive to please him in all things, doing and suffering, while he is afflicting, crossing, and chastising us, there is the trial of a friend of Christ, Job xxvii. 10. "Will he delight himself in the Almighty ? will he always call upon God ?"

4. When sin comes with a seen advantage in its hand, as in the case of Moses, Heb. xi. 24—26. When the poison is presented in a golden cup, and there is a seen advantage in sinning, it will readily

make Christ's pretended friends lay by their mask, and trample on Christ's command, that they may reach the bait. So Judas betrays Christ when he could have thirty pieces of silver for it; and Demas embraced the present world, letting the world to come slip. But know ye that at such a time Christ is taking a trial of your friendship; and therefore see to yourselves.

5. When the sin that most easily besets you comes in competition with your obedience to the commands of Christ, Psal. xviii. 23. When it and the command are in the balance, and the command weighs it down, it is a hopeful sign. Many who will bear very fair in many instances, are quite undermined when this comes to be their case. They could raise their regard to the command of Christ above many temptations, but there is one thing that ever spurns his authority, Mark x. 21.

6. When there is nothing to keep you back from sin, but pure regard to the command of Christ. Sometimes holy providence brings people into such circumstances for their trial. The temptation is attended with all advantages which the evil heart could wish, fair occasion, secrecy, and encouragement to it from every hand, but the hand of a holy God. So it was in Joseph's case, but he shewed himself a friend of Christ, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. Many temptations are resisted from some extrinsic considerations: but this is the trial of a friend of Christ.

7. When you are tempted to sin that has such a plausible name in the world, that ye can lose no credit by it, but rather be in hazard of risking your reputation by your making any bones of it. There are many such sins which the generation has stamped lawfulness upon, and is ready to expose as needless scrupulosity the abstaining therefrom. But conform not ye to the world, Rom. xii. 2. Tenderness has often been nicknamed preciseness, and God's people been wondered at, "thinking it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of them," 1 Pet. iv. 4. But if all the world should approve the practice and Christ disapprove it, Christ's friends must stand off from it, "walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," Eph. v. 15.

8. When the tempter appears resolute in the temptation, and being repulsed renews the attack. Shew your regard to Christ's command by a resolute and continued resistance. So Paul did, 2 Cor. xii. 8. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." They may have some respect to Christ's command at first, who being importuned will yield the cause at length, like Pilate, who condemned Christ over the belly of his conscience.

9. *Lastly*, When Christ is calling to some more than ordinary hard task. Sometimes the Lord takes a trial of men this way, calling them to some unordinary piece of obedience. So he did with Abraham, as to the command to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. And so he did with the rich young man, as to the order to sell all that he had, and give to the poor, Mark x. 21, 22.

I shall offer you the following motives to shew yourselves Christ's friends by doing whatsoever he commands you, without reserve or exception.

1. Because all his commands are the commands of an absolute Lord, to whom we owe obedience in all things, Exod. xx. 2. *I am the Lord thy God*. We were created by him, are preserved by him; whatever being we have, or means of life and being, all are from him, Acts xvii. 28. Therefore he has an unlimited power over us, and we ought to live, move, and be for him, in all things. And any command of his neglected is a withdrawing of due obedience from him.

2. All his commands are just, righteous, and reasonable, Psal. cxix. 128. Men sometimes demand unjust and unreasonable things of their subjects; but all his ways are judgment, and his commands just, Rom. vii. 12. He has linked together our duty and true interest: so that he requires nothing of us, but what is for our good: and we cannot trample on any of his commands, but we act against our real interest: and so sinning against God, we sin also against our own souls, Prov. viii. 36. The interests of men's souls, and of their lusts, are different indeed. God's commands do cross the latter, but never the former.

3. We are all of us under covenant-engagements to do whatsoever he commands us. We have all avouched him for our Lord, Luke vi. 46. Many of us have of late taken on these engagements at his table; let us not forget them. Several who have fallen off from renewing their engagements in that manner, in some former years have taken them solemnly on: let such remember that their disusing of that ordinance does not loose their engagements taken on formerly, but they lie on them before the Lord. And those who never yet sat down at the Lord's table, are yet baptized? and so are firmly engaged to him as their Lord and Master, to do whatsoever he commands them, Gal. iii. 27. So that if we do not, we must expect to be treated as rebels, apostates, covenant breakers, as men that cast off the yoke of Christ, after they have professed to take it on.

4. Christ has been the best friend ever mankind had: he has done for sinners what no creature whatsoever ever did or could have done

for them, John xv. 13. Rom. v. 8. Look ye for any share in the benefit of his death; and will ye refuse to obey him? Remember that word, Heb. v. 9. "Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." If ever he was a Priest for you, he will surely be your King: if ye be saved by his blood, ye will surely be sanctified by his Spirit.

5. He refused nothing that was laid upon him for the behoof of poor sinners; but whatever was the will of his Father for that effect, he did readily comply with it, Psal. xl. 7, 8. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." The hardest of commands were laid on him, and the hardest sufferings put upon him: but the cup given him to drink he would by no means refuse. What are we then that we should make any exceptions in our obedience to him?

6. If ye do not whatsoever he commands you, but still make some exceptions of some things ye cannot comply with, ye will lose that which ye do: the neglected known duty will spoil all the duties ye perform; the indulged known sin will mar all the other pieces of your reformation. It will be like poison to a cup of liquor. (1.) It will mar it as to acceptance with God, Jam. ii. 10. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." No partial obedience will ever be acceptable to God. He must have the whole man, the whole heart engaged in his service, or he will accept none at your hand. Hence says the psalmist, Psal. lxxvi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (2.) It mars it as to the eternal reward, 2 John, 8. Partial services may indeed receive a temporal reward, like Jehu's half reformation: but then there is no more got thereby.

7. It is necessary to evidence your sincerity, Psal. cxix. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," says David. Universal obedience in a gospel-sense is the badge of Christ's real friends. Therefore labour to know your whole duty, and readily comply with every duty you know. While ye thus supply what is lacking in your conversation, filling up all the gaps ye can discern therein, ye will discover yourselves the true friends of Christ, and you will have much comfort and peace in it, 2 Cor. i. 12. while ye leave nothing unattempted, wherewith your heart may reproach you. This will be a mean of confidence before the Lord to you, 1 John iii. 21, "If our heart condemn us not, (says the apostle) then have we confidence towards God." But if ye still retain some sweet morsel under the tongue, some secret exception against some part of Christ's yoke, ye will declare yourselves none

of Christ's friends, but his real haters and enemies. And it will prove these six sad things against you.

(1.) That ye are yet in the black state of nature, unregenerate : for, " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. For the new creature from the time of its birth is perfect in parts, though not in degrees. It is furnished with all its integral parts, though none of them are come to their full growth. There is indeed something lacking in every part of the new man, but no part altogether lacking. And if ye be not born again, ye have no right to the inheritance, John iii. 3. " Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

(2.) That whatever your attainments are, ye are but hypocrites, Psal. xviii. 23. " For sincere Christians are universal in their obedience, Psal. cxix. 6. She was the false mother who would have had the child divided ; and she is an adulteress that takes one instead of her husband. And they are false to Christ who indulge themselves in one known sin, whatever lengths they may otherwise go. And hypocrites are in a sad case, as you may see, Rev. iii. 15, 16. Matth. xxiv. 51.

(3.) That ye have not the Spirit of Christ ; for wherever he dwells, he brings forth the fruits of holiness, and these are *in all goodness*, Eph. v. 9. Where then there is only some and not all goodness, there the Spirit is not : and that cuts off all your pretensions to Christ, Rom. viii. 9. " If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

(4.) That ye are not truly mortified to any thing, but under the reigning power of sin : for your right-eye sins remain untouched. Whereas, " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. True mortification is universal ; while one member is alive, the body is not dead : death removes life from every part of the body, and so does mortification with the body of sin and death. One lust on the throne is sufficient to keep Christ out of it. And this binds over the whole man to hell-fire, Matth. v. 29.

(5.) That you do not one thing right, Isa. i. 11—15. For it is hereby evident that you do nothing out of love to God, or respect to his authority : because if it were so, ye would regard his authority in that thing as well as in other things, and true love to God would not allow the placing any thing in his room.

(6.) *Lastly*, That ye are despisers of the whole law, and of the whole yoke of Christ, James ii. 10, 11. " For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For

he that said, Do not commit adultery ; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." As the breaking of one link is the breaking of the chain ; so he that despises the authority of God in one command, despises it in all. What can be expected then, but that ye are and will be treated as enemies of God ? Luke xix. 27.

8. *Lastly*, Consider the glorious privilege of those who do whatsoever Christ commands them. They are his friends and favourites. He was their friend from eternity : he is their friend in time, and he will be their friend for ever, when time is gone.

Now, if ye would walk up to this character,

1. Read the scripture much, and read it as the rule of your duty, as the book of your instructions : For, " All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Some read the Bible as it were for mere reading's sake : some that they may be masters of and able to talk of scripture-history : but few read to the end they may know what is the will of Christ as to their walk, that they may frame their life according to it.

2. Let your heart lie open to the discoveries of the will of Christ either in the written or preached word. Beware of staving off convictions of sin and duty, of slighting discoveries of the mind of God in matters of your practice : but where the Lord makes light to shine, open your hearts to receive it, and be not of those that rebel against the light.

3. Keep the word before your eye, in the whole of your conversation, knowing that whatever ye are doing, the word binds you to do it after such a manner ; and labour ye to conform to it, Psal. cxix. 9. As one walking in the dark, fixes his eye on the candle carried before him, thereby to direct every step : so do ye " take heed unto the sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place," 2 Pet. i. 19. Let not the world's good or ill opinion of a thing be what shall determine you, but what the Lord's word says of it, and let that determine you over the belly of all objections, Mark x. 15.

4. Be watchful to observe the seasons of duty, Psal. i. 3. To every thing there is a time, and every thing is beautiful in its season : and if one miss the season, he misses the duty itself in many cases. Sometimes God puts opportunity of doing such a thing in one's hand : if they let it slip, they may never have access to it again, Gal. vi. 10.

5. Whatever ye are called to, set about it in faith, *doing all in the*

name of the Lord Jesus, Col. iii. 17. Seeing your call from the word, apply yourself to it, in the faith of the promise of assistance, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Though it may seem an easy thing, venture not upon it but in faith of strength for it from the Lord: for oftentimes when men are surest in their own conceit, they are really loosest. Though never so hard, your call being clear, go forward to it, and on in it in faith; and ye shall be carried through: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," says the apostle, Phil. iv. 13. And again says he, *When I am weak, then am I strong*, 2 Cor. xii. 10.

6. Be frequent in the thoughts of love to Christ, the shortness and uncertainty of your time, and in breathings after perfection. The believing thoughts of Christ's love will oil the wheels of the soul for the course of obedience. The consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of your time will be a spur to diligence, and falling in with occasions of serving the Lord, and will shew that if your work be hard, it will not be of long continuance. And the breathing after perfection will natively lead you to be making progress.

7. Labour to get on resolution for God, and ward off the fear of man, Eph. vi. 15. Prov. xxix. 25.

8. Learn to live above the world, to keep it under your feet, and not to set your heart on it, 1 Tim. vi. 10.

9. *Lastly*, Observe the side where you are weakest, and there set double guards: and be peremptory for victory over the sin that most easily besets you; and to do what Christ commands in that part, Matth. v. 29.

Doct. III. They are the friends of Christ, who are in a gospel-sense universal in their obedience to his commands.

This is the happy state, this is the honourable relation which they stand in, who are thus tender in their practice. I have already opened this practice; it remains only to open up the privilege of such, which I offer in the following particulars.

1. Friendship properly so called is mutual: it stands not upon one side only, but is competent to each of the parties who are in the bond of friendship. And Christ's sincere servants are in the bond and state of friendship with Christ, John xv. 15. *I have called you friends*, says he.

(1.) Christ is their friend, Cant. v. *ult.* He is not only their Lord and Master, but he is their friend. He professes himself their friend whoever be their haters and enemies; he does the part of a friend to them, and they have pitched on him as their friend, and may claim his friendship as their privilege, and improve it to all intents and purposes. This honour have all the saints.

(2.) They are Christ's friends, James ii. 23. *Abraham was called the friend of God.* Most part of the world are enemies to Christ, and haters of him, for they will not be ruled by him, Luke xix. 27. The greatest length they are brought to is to feign submission to him, retaining their hatred, Psal. lxxxi. 15. Only his sincere servants are his hearty friends, as saith the text. They are that part of mankind, who really are, and are owned by him to be his real friends.

2. In friendship there is a peculiar affection, regard, love, and esteem, Deut. xiii. 6.—*thy friend, which is as thine own soul.* And such there is between Christ and his sincere servants, 1 Cor. vi. 17. *He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.* They are truly one, in the strictest bonds of one spirit.

(1.) Christ has a peculiar affection and regard for them. They are his darlings, his *only ones* in the world, Cant. vi. 9. Though the world count them unworthy of a room among them, he bears them in his heart, Exod. xxviii. 29. Though the world hates them, he has a singular love to them, Joh xv. 9. He is very mindful of them, even when they think he has forgotten them, Isa. xlix. 15, 16. He looks on them as his peculiar treasure, Psal. cxxxv. 4. 1 Pet. ii. 9; his jewels, Mal. iii. 17; and therefore he has a special concern for them in a time of common calamity, Ezek. ix. 4; till Lot be in Zoar, Sodom could not be destroyed, Gen. xix. 22. Hence is that tender address, Isa. xxvi. 20. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

(2.) They have a peculiar affection and regard for him, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? (says the psalmist) and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." All persons and things in the world are but loss and dung to them in comparison of Christ, Phil. iii. 8. They have seen a glory in him darkening all created excellency; so that he is dearer to them than all the comforts of life, yea than life itself, Luke xiv. 26.

3. In friendship there is a common interest of the parties; for a friend is as it were another self. So is there betwixt Christ and his sincere servants, 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

(1.) Jesus Christ espouses their interest, and concerns himself in all their concerns, Acts ix. 4. He takes part with them against all their enemies, and seconds them in all rencounters, whether with Satan, Luke xxii. 31, 32, with men, 2 Tim. iv. 17. or their own lusts, 2 Cor. xii. 9. so that there is always more with them than against them. He sympathises with them in all their griefs and afflictions, Zech. ii. 8. Isa. lxiii. 9.

(2.) They espouse Christ's interests, and concern themselves in the matters of his glory: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," says David, Psal. lxxix. 9. What wounds his honour, wounds their hearts: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law, Psal. cxix. 136. They have a natural concern for the prosperity of his kingdom, and labour to take part with it against whosoever oppose it. So that even when their own private case lies heavy on them, the public interest of Christ does so too, as in David's case, Psal. li. 18.

4. In friendship there is a peculiar freedom and familiarity which the parties use one with another, which they use not towards others. And such there is betwixt Christ and his sincere servants. There was one in David's court, 2 Sam. xv. 7. another in Solomon's, 1 Kings iv. 5. who was the king's friend, as admitted to greater freedom with the king than the rest of the courtiers. Such are all Christ's sincere servants.

(1.) Christ treats them with great familiarity, the familiarity of a friend, John xv. 15. He visits them in their lowest condition, and speaks a word in season to them, when their nearest friends on earth can do them no service, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. Lam. iii. 57. He brings them sometimes very near him, Cant. i. 4. and communicates his secrets to them, that are hid from the rest of the world, Psal. xxiv. 14.; shews them his glory, Is. xxxiii. 17; opens the mystery of providence to them, and helps them to see love in the darkest dispensations, Psal. cvii. *ult.*; and sometimes gives them a sight of everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3.

(2.) They use great familiarity with him, Cant. vii. 11. Whatever they need, and at whatsoever time, they go to him for it freely, Luke xi. 5, 6. Their most loathsome sores they can lay out before him, and freely tell him all their mind, even what they cannot communicate to any on earth, Eph. iii. 12. And if at any time it is otherwise, the fault lies in not improving the privilege of their friendship.

5. *Lastly*, In friendship there is mutual real friendliness in deeds of friendship, according to the circumstances of the parties, Prov. xviii. 24. "A man that hath friends, must shew himself friendly." Friendship animates one friend to do for another, as they are capable. And,

1st, Christ is very friendly to them. The acts of his friendship towards his sincere servants who can sufficiently declare? Many a time has he found them in the straits, wherein none but he could relieve them, and he has befriended them therein, and he will befriend them.

(1.) He befriended them in the everlasting covenant, undertaking for them in it. When they lay with the rest of mankind in a lost helpless state, there being none in the whole creation able to act for them, he befriended them, took on their person, bound himself for them, to pay their debt of duty and punishment. So he became Surety for his ruined friends, Psal. xl. 7.

(2.) He befriended them in his life and death in the world. He was born holy for them, lived holy for them, and died for them on the cross, John xv. 13. Never was there such an act of friendship as this among men, one bearing the wrath of God in the room and stead of another. O how he loved them!

(3.) He befriended them in their conversion to God, Jer. xxxi. 3. When they lay dead in sin, he quickened them; when they were going away from God, he brought them back again; while they remained in the world lying in wickedness, he separated them for himself. While the guilt of all their sins lay on them, he clothed them with his righteousness, and procured their justification by his blood; while their sins had dominion over them, he broke the yoke by his Spirit, &c.

(4.) He befriends them all their life long. On earth in all their necessities, whoever proves their enemy, he takes them by the hand, Psal. cxviii. 6. And he befriends them in heaven, pleading and managing their cause there, 1 John ii. 1. They have a friend in court there.

(5.) He befriends them at death when no other can do it, Psal. xxiii. 4. He takes the sting out of it before it comes to them: he has another habitation provided for them, a better mansion, before they remove out of the body: and he sends his angels to carry their separate souls into Abraham's bosom. O nonsuch friendship!

(6.) *Lastly*, He will befriend them at the judgment. He will raise up the bodies of his friends out of the dust by his Spirit: he will set them on his right hand, and adjudge them to the everlasting kingdom, as the blessed of his Father.

2dly Christ's sincere servants are friendly to him. But how? Their goodness extends not to him; they have nothing to give him but of his own. But he reckons them friendly to him in being friendly to his members, Matth. xxv. and in a sincere obedience to all his commandments, as saith the text.

I shall conclude all with a very brief application.

USE I. Of lamentation over the case of those who cannot be brought to a sincere endeavour to comply with whatsoever Christ commands them. How many are there who comply with very little that he commands them, but in the whole track of their conversation

shew a profane contempt of the commands of Christ? There are many who do many things, but spoil all, by the woful exceptions they put in to some particular commands, which they can never be honestly engaged in the observance of. Some are swayed by their carnal interest, and they cannot do such a command of Christ's, for it crosses their worldly interest; others cannot do another command, for it lies cross to their honour and credit: and others cannot do another command, for it is contrary to their humour, &c.

Ah! how do such stand in their own light, and deprive themselves of Christ's friendship by the way that they take! Their loss is inexpressible. Christ's friendship is what one cannot want, but he is ruined for time and eternity: and wherefore is it lost, but for a thing of nought?

USE II. Of comfort and encouragement to the sincere servants of Christ, honestly addressing themselves to the obedience of all his commands without exception.

1. This may animate you to go on in universal obedience, to stick at nothing that Christ commands, but cordially to fall in with every known duty. Our Lord takes it as a sign and proof of friendship to him, and allows you to take it as an evidence of his friendship to you, Psal. cxix. 6.

2. It may assure you of tenderness and compassion in that wherein ye come short. Christ's friendship makes your pardon sure, 1 John ii. 1; it provides a mantle of love to cast over the infirmities of his people, Numb. xxiii. 21. and takes the sincere will for the deed, 2 Cor. viii. 12.

3. This may determine you to pursue your duty, whatever displeasure, ill-will, and hatred of men ye may incur for it, Heb. xi. 27. If men say in effect, If you do such a thing which Christ commands, we will reckon you enemies; what may balance that is, what Christ says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

4. *Lastly*, It may help you to bear afflictions, that Christ is your friend. Nothing comes to you but through his hand, John v. 22. So whatever your case is, you are in a friend's hand, who sticketh closer than a brother.