

## THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DENIAL.

A Sermon preached, on a sacramental occasion, at Galashiels.

## LUKE ix. 23.

*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

THEY that are rash and indeliberate in their setting away after Christ among his followers, will readily be found to break away from him again, and desert him, ere they come to the end of the course. Therefore our Lord Jesus fairly intimates here how he is to be followed of all that would come to the end of the course with him; that men may count the cost ere they begin to build; and lay their account with what they are to expect in his company, in the way to the kingdom. And in the words there is,

1. The case which this intimation refers to, "If any man will come after me." It is not the case of coming to Christ, as if none might come to him, or believe on him, till once they have denied themselves, and taken up their cross daily: for as none can come after Christ in the sense of the text, till once they have come to him; so none shall ever be able to reach these things, till once they have believed on him. But it is the case of coming after Christ; which is more than following him; and consists of two parts. (1.) Following him in the way to the kingdom, upon which one is set by believing. This part of it our Lord points at, Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;" as it is plainly imported in the expression. (2.) Coming in at his back into the kingdom; as the term to which Christ with his followers was moving: where he being set down, they also come in after him, and in his right. And this part of it is expressed, ver. 24, "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

2. What is necessary to that case, to one's following Christ in the way to, and coming in at his back into the kingdom of heaven. Two things are necessary thereto. (1.) Self-denial; "Let him deny himself," otherwise he will not follow me in the way to the kingdom: for I deny myself, Rom. xv. 3, "For even Christ pleased not

himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." John v. 30, "I can of mine own self do nothing—I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." The original word is very forcible, "Let him deny away himself," like those that desert a party, to have no more to do with them, and content that all the world know it. They must deny themselves as the Jews denied Christ, Acts iii. 14, "But ye denied the holy One, and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." And how that was ye see, John xix. 15, "But they [the Jews] cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him—we have no king but Cæsar." Away with self, crucify it: we have no king but Christ. They must deny themselves, as they must deny ungodliness, Tit. ii. 12, denying its cravings, starving it, till it dwindle away into nothing. (2.) Taking up the cross daily, and following him with it on our back, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily;" otherwise he will not come in at my back to the crown; for so I go to it with the cross on my back, and that daily. The cross is any trouble or adversity which the Lord lays upon his followers.

Now, these things are necessary in this case, absolutely necessary; otherwise we do not follow Christ in the way to the kingdom, but self in the way to destruction: and so we cannot come in at his back to the kingdom, and there is no other way to get into it. They are universally necessary: "If *any man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Be who they will, ever so delicate or dainty; they must lay their fair necks under this yoke, or perish.

3. The parties to whom this intimation is made: "He said to them *all*." Peter gave the occasion for this, by his rashness in advising or wishing Christ might spare himself as to the cross: for which he got a particular rebuke. But Mark tells us, that thereupon he called together the people, and his disciples also, chap. viii. 34. And here he said to them all, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The matter nearly concerning them all, as well as Peter, the intimation was made to all accordingly.

DOCTRINE. Whosoever will follow Christ in the way to the crown, and come in at his back to the kingdom of heaven, must of necessity deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Christ with it on his back.

Three things fall here to be considered. I. One's coming after Christ, which is the case put; II. One's denying himself; and, III.

One's taking up his cross, and following Christ; which are the two things necessary in that case.

I. *First*, We are to consider the coming after Christ, which is the thing some do aim at, and all should. For clearing of that, consider,

1. Christ in the world was in the way to his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven: Luke xix. 12. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom." As he was God everywhere present, he was there even when on earth, John iii. 13. "the Son of man which is in heaven:" but as he was man, he was but in his way to it. That was the joy set before him, which he had in view all along while he travelled through our wilderness-world.

2. Accordingly he was in the world, not as a native thereof, but as a stranger travelling through it, with his face always away-ward from it, home to his Father's house. Therefore, though he was sometime courted to set up for himself in it, he would not hearken to the solicitations to stay, and take his kingdom here. The Jews would have forced their kingdom on him, John vi. 15; but he fled from it, departing into a mountain, where he was nearer heaven, out of the din of the world. Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world, Matth. iv. 8, 9. but he rejected his proposal with indignation.

3. Our Lord Jesus made his way to his kingdom through many bitter storms blowing on his face in the world, and is now entered into it: Heb. xii. 2—"who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." His life here was a life of sorrows; but now he has reached the fulness of joy. Death wrought on him all along to the grave; now it has no more dominion over him.

4. There is no coming into that kingdom, for a sinner, but at his back, in fellowship with him: John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." If we pretend to come into it otherwise, justice will cast the door on our face, and tumble us down into the pit. He is the captain of our salvation, that is on the head of the whole company of the saved: he is the door of the sheep, and there is no entering but through him. So, "If any man will come after me," is in effect, If any man will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

5. *Lastly*, There is no coming in at his back into the kingdom, without following him in the way: Psal. cxxv. 5. "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth

with the workers of iniquity." John xv. 6. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." He is the author as well as the finisher of our faith; the chief guide in the way, as well as the giver of the prize at the end of the race. Certainly the merit of Christ is effectual on none unto salvation but those whom it conforms to his example. If we have any saving part in his death, we will be conformed to him in his life. Wherefore, since Christ went to his kingdom, denying himself, and taking up his cross, we must lay our account to go and do likewise, if we mind to be there.

II. *Secondly*, Let us then consider briefly, one's denying himself to come after Christ. And,

1. It implies two things. It implies,

*1st*, That Christ and self are contraries, leading contrary ways: "If any man will come after *me*, let him deny *himself*." Self is Christ's great rival in the world; and no man can serve the two masters: he must either deny himself, and go after Christ; or he will deny Christ, and go after self. There is no compromising the matter betwixt the two: for Christ is the leader of God's upsetting; self of the devil's, when man fell off from God. Hence it implies,

*2dly*, That the self to be denied is our corrupt self, the old man, the unrenewed part; for that only is contrary to Christ. And, indeed it is not possible there can be any true self-denial but in sound believers, regenerate persons; in whom there is a renewed part, which is that which denies, and an unrenewed, which is that which is denied.

2. Wherein it consists. It consists in a holy refusal to please ourselves, that we may please God in Christ: for it is a denying of ourselves in competition: and God is the competitor, whom the self-denying Christian prefers to himself, after Christ's example, Rom. xv. 3. "For even Christ pleased not himself," &c. And it is God in Christ for whom a sinner denies himself, as saith the text: for an absolute God out of Christ being a consuming fire, with which we can have no comfortable communion, the sight of him frights away the sinner, and causeth self to gather together all its strength in its own defence against him; whereas the view of God in Christ draws the sinner to lie down at his feet in hope. Hence, in self-denial there is,

*1st*, Faith and hope, as the necessary springs thereof: Phil. i. 29. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ,—to believe on him." Rom. xii. 12. "Rejoicing in hope." Cut off these, and you cut off self-denial: for the heart of man will never quit hugging

one's dear self, till it get a God to rest in; nor let go its gripes of what it has, till it have hope of better.

*2dly*, A practical setting up of God as our chief end; and a bringing down ourselves to lie at his feet: Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." This is true conversion, whereby a man is brought back to his primitive situation, out of which he was turned by sin, setting self on the throne as his chief end, and laying the honour of God at its feet. The which unnatural situation all natural men are in; their whole life being one uninterrupted course of practical blasphemy, making themselves their chief end, and God the means.

*3dly*, An unlimited resignation of ourselves unto God in Christ: 2 Cor. viii. 5.—"first gave their own selves to the Lord." Faith taking hold of God as our God, according to the measure of faith, the whole man is swallowed up in him; God is all, and we become nothing in our own eyes: the whole soul, the whole man, the whole lot, is resigned to him.

*4thly*, A refusing to please ourselves in any thing in competition with God; but denying the cravings of self, as they are contrary to what God craves of us: Tit. ii. 12.—"denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts." And herein lies the exercise of self-denial, which there will always be occasion for while we are here. We may take it up in two generals.

1. Denying our self-wit, which is ready to crave of us a quite other belief and judgment than God demands of us by his word and works: Prov. iii. 5. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." If we will come after Christ, we must in this case shut our own eyes, or refuse to believe our own eyes. So did Abraham, Rom. iv. 17, 18.—"who against hope believed in hope," &c. There are two cases particularly wherein this self-wit is to be denied.

(1.) In the case of truths revealed in the word, be they never so mysterious: 2 Cor. x. 5. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The want of this is causing many unhumiliated men to make shipwreck of the faith at this day, to sap the foundations of Christianity in gratification of their self-wit. But the grace of God will make the greatest wits and profoundest scholars receive revealed truths like a child, if ever it touch their hearts: Luke xviii. 17. "Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

(2.) In the case of wants, crooks, and hardships that we find in our lot. God in his providence says, that trial, cross, &c. is best for you: self-wit says, it is very bad; and thinks it sees well how that work of God might be mended, and made far better. And thus many walk in a course of contradiction to the judgment of God declared in his works of Providence. Holding fast by self-wit, they will not quit their opinion of the matter to him. That is walking after self-wit.

2. Denying our self-will, which is ready to thwart with the will of God. Therefore we are taught to pray, (Matth. vi. 10.) "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." If we come after Christ, we must take God's will for our will, saying with him, (Matth. xxvi. 39.)—"Not as I will but as thou wilt." There are two cases wherein we are particularly to deny our self-will.

(1.) In the case of duty, that we may comply with the will of God's command, however cross it may lie to our inclination: Rom. vii. 22, 23, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." God's will must be a sufficient reason for our practice, and we must put the knife to the throat of all our contrary inclinations, Tit. ii. 12, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts."

(2.) In the case of our lot, that we may comply with the will of God's providence, Acts xxi. 14, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." He that made us must be allowed to manage our lot and condition; we calmly and contentedly submitting our will to his, readily embracing what he carves for us. There is reason for it, Job xxxiv. 33, "Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose."

And this denying our self-wit and self-will must extend to three kinds of things.

1. To our civil comforts; such as, our outward peace, worldly substance, liberty, and credit, and the like: all which must be laid at the Lord's feet, to do with them as he will, take them from us, or continue them with us, if so be we will come after Christ: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. To our natural enjoyments, as health, ease, relations, even life; all which also must be laid at the Lord's feet, to be disposed of as he will, not as we will, Luke xiv. 26, forecited.

3. To things of religion; not trusting in our own management for them, but depending wholly on the Lord, Psal. cxxvii. 1, "Ex-

cept the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain;" nor making ourselves the chief end of them, but the honour of God, even as in all things else, 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

And here two things are of special consideration. One is, that when we refuse to gratify our will, on some carnal motive that may feed some spiritual lust, as is the case in Popish austerities, that is not the Christian self-denial; but a gratifying of self in one thing by denying it another: and that is a bias the heart is ready to slip aside to. Another is, that there is a denying of ourselves even in spiritual things; for there is nothing wherein self may not mix while we are here. This was called for at Mary's hand, John xx. 17, "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," &c. It was exercised by Paul, Phil. i. 23, 24, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Spiritual benefits are ever to be desired: but even in those things there must be an awful regard to the will of God. Say, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

USE 1. Is it so that there is no coming after Christ but in the way of men's denying themselves? then religion is no easy business, and there are few like to see heaven. It is not a way wherein men can be allowed that latitude and self-indulgence which most men cannot want. And they do but deceive themselves, who pretend to faith, or to have come to Christ, that are not exercised to deny themselves.

2. See and consider, communicants, what ye are to lay your account with in coming after Christ, which, in communicating at his table, ye say ye are resolved on. Lay your account with the struggle against self; giving up with self-wit, and self-will: and lay your account with your cross.

3. See a weighty errand ye have at the Lord's table, with respect to denying yourselves, and taking up your cross. Ay, say ye, we are to bind ourselves solemnly to these duties. I will not deny but ye are. But I doubt ye know your errand well anent these things, if that be the main part of it: that should be, how to get strength for these duties, and to get a sealed possession of Christ and the promises for that effect. And believing is the way to attain that.

(1.) The more firmly ye believe on Christ, and apprehend God as your God in him, the more will ye be in case to deny yourselves, and take up your cross.

(2.) It is by believing we at first become new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Eph. ii. 10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And it is by believing that the new man grows. And so it is by it that there is a principle of self-denial, and by it one is strengthened to the exercise thereof.

(3.) *Lastly*, In this duty deny yourselves, and depend on the Lord.

III. *Thirdly*, We come now to consider one's taking up his cross, and that daily, and following Christ. Without this none can come after Christ to the kingdom of heaven, and in the way thereto. They who mind to come after him to mount Zion, must go as Simon the Cyrenian went after him to Calvary, Luke xxiii. 26. bearing his cross.

We offer the import of this clause in these following things.

1. God will lay down the cross to every one that minds for heaven, that they shall have nothing ado but to take it up, John xvi. 33. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." They shall not need to make crosses to themselves, nor to go out of their way to seek a cross: God will lay it down at every one's door. He had one Son without sin, but no son without the cross, Heb. xii. 8. "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." And God lays down the cross to be taken up by us; when it is brought to that, we must either suffer or sin, Heb. x. 35. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

2. He will lay it down daily to the followers of Christ, that they may have a daily exercise in taking it up, and bearing the cross of the day, Matt. vi. 34. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." A change of crosses may be got, but there will be no end of them as long as we are here. Our wilderness-station may be changed indeed; but it will be but for another wilderness-station, till once we are over Jordan: Psal. lxxiii. 14. "For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

3. We must not be choosers of crosses. Every one must take up his own, allotted to him by sovereign wisdom, that is the best judge what cross fits us best. We are ready to think we could bear another cross better than that which is laid before us: but that is but a deceit of the heart, that is aye for shifting the present cross; and speaks a want of self-denial. But to strike the bottom out of this humour of picking and choosing crosses, know, that if God mind to take a particular trial of you for heaven and eternal



life, and there be any one thing wherein, of all other things, ye are least able to be touched, God will choose your cross for you in that very thing: ye will be sure to be touched in the sore heel, and get rubs where ye are least able to abide them. And it is highly reasonable the trial should be there, when the competition is betwixt God and self. Mark x. 21. "One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross, and follow me."

4. We must not trample on the cross, and step over it, but take it up: Heb. xii. 5. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." The sullen manliness and Roman courage wherewith some bear their crosses is the produce of self-will, not of self-denial: and speaks contempt of God, not submission to him. When heaven is our party, it becomes us to stoop, and not to make our faces like flint, lest God be provoked to dash us in pieces.

5. Yet neither must we faint at the sight of the cross; for at that rate we will not be able to take it up: Heb. xii. 5. "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." It is unbelief which causes that fainting, whispering into the soul at the appearance of the cross, Now, ye will never be able to bear that: and when that is received, the hands hang down, and the knees become feeble: and then the soul is next door to going out of God's way for relief, Heb. xii. 12, 13. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees: and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed." But know ye it for a truth, there is no cross whatsoever so heavy but we may get it borne acceptably: there is an allowance of proportionable strength made for it, to be fetched in by faith, 2 Cor. xii. 9. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

6. As we must not go off the road of duty to shift the cross, so we must not stand still till it be rolled out of our way, but take it up, and go forward. It is easy going off the way, but not easy coming on again. There are quagmires of sin and sorrow on every side of the cross, where the shifters of it may come to stick, 1 Tim. vi. 9, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." And to follow Christ in the summer of prosperity, and desert him in the winter of adversity, speaks self-love, not the love of Christ to be predominant in us; and will shew us to be

time-servers, not servants of Christ: Job xvii. 9, "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

7. We must take up no more for our cross than what God lays down; not what Satan and our own corruptions lay to it: it will be our wisdom to shovel that off in the first place, and we will take up the cross the easier. God lays down barrenness to Rachel for her cross, Satan and her own corrupt heart lay a killing weight upon it, Gen. xxx. 1, "And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die." And then she is like to die in taking it up. O how often do men lay overweights on their cross, and then complain they are not able to heave it! Indeed, we are for the most part in the mist about our crosses, and then molehills appear mountains: but when the cross is cleared of what is laid to it, the naked cross turns little bulk; and he has it half up, that has it so cleared: 2 Cor. iv. 17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

8. But however heavy the cross be, we are not to refuse it. Our very life, which of all worldly things is dearest to us, must be laid at the Lord's feet, and we ready to part with it for Christ. The cross was an instrument of death, and that a most shameful and painful one: and the necessity of taking it up, says, that every true follower of Christ must be content to be a martyr; and will be so, either in action or affection. Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not—his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

9. We must yoke with the cross willingly and submissively: God can lay it on us, whether we will or not; but he will have us to stoop, and take it up on us: James i. 2. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." When, by the providence of God, we fall into them, we must not be like the untamed bullock, on whose neck the yoke must be forced; but like the camel that bows down on his knees till the burden is laid on him, Lam. iii. 29, 30, "He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, he is filled full with reproach." So did Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18, "He said, It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." This is done by a Christian submission of our will to the will of God in the matter.

10. We must bear it, going evenly under it, till the Lord take it down. It is what belongs to the Lord to take it off; it is our part to take it up. There must be an exercise of patience in our coming after Christ, Luke xxi. 19, "In your patience possess ye your

souls." And patience must have her perfect work, enduring to the end, James i. 4.

11. *Lastly*, We must follow Christ with the cross on our back. The example of Christ's holy life is the compass by which we must steer our course, if ever we get to the shore of Immanuel's land, 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." And the hardships of the way through the cross will not excuse our going out of the way. However we be put to suffering, we must aye be doing in imitation of Christ.

USE. O Christians, communicants, and whosoever of you mind for the kingdom of heaven, lay your account with the cross; take it up meekly, and bear it after Christ. Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial. The cross is a kindly name to a Christian: be reconciled to it. For that end consider,

1. The necessity of it, in virtue of the divine appointment: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." They that cast out with the cross, do in effect cast out with heaven. Though the way of the cross is a rough way, yet it is the highway, the only way to it. The fiery trial by the cross is that whereby God tries what metal is fit to be made a vessel of glory, and what not: and it is a dreadful thing to be casten here as base metal, Jer. vi. 29, 30, "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

2. Christ bore the cross before you, for your sake; and shall it be such a frightful thing for you to bear it after him, for his sake? If ye would partake of his crown, will ye refuse your part of his cross? Rom. viii. 17, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." It is highly reasonable Christ's followers be like him in the way to the kingdom, as well as glorified with him in it. If the head bore a cross, it were unbecoming the members to go without one. When he was a man of sorrows, can his followers expect to be men of joys here? Will the world, that was a step-dame to him, be a natural mother to us?

3. Consider the relation your crosses and troubles have to the cross of Christ, O believers.

(1.) They are the cross set up again to Christ, upon which his members are now suffering: Col. i. 24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church." And the cross, piercing his members, cannot miss to touch the head, Is.

lxiii. 9. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them, all the days of old." Zech. ii. 8. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." This view of the cross, in which Christ himself appears on it with us, may render it more lovely.

(2.) They are Christ's cross to you, as he left it. Christ in person took up the cross, and there was a curse in it when he took it up: he takes off the curse, and leaves it; and bids you take it up next. O believer, the tree is left thee, but the curse is away; the nails are left, but the venom they were dipt in is away. Though bulls should push you, the horns wherewith they pushed him are cut off. Though crosses of all sorts should meet together in your case, the soul and life which the fiery law breathed into them is gone.

(3.) They grow out of the cross of Christ. Ye will, may be, not expect the Christian's bitter troubles among the fruits of Christ's cross: but mistake it not: they must either be blessings or curses. Curses they are not, Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" therefore they are blessings: and if blessings, from whence else can they drop? Eph. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." It was by the blood of his cross he procured the covenant-blessings to his people, and the cross among the rest, Psal. lxxxix. 30—33. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." We might welcome the cross in this view.

4. The cross is for the destruction of the old man, not of the new man. It is a cross to our corruptions that is much needed: but no real grace ever yet died by the cross. As the candle shines brightest in the night, and the fire burns keenest in a keen frost; so grace has ordinarily thriven best under the cross. It is indeed a cross to our corrupt will, that never goes right while it gets head: it is a cross to particular lusts, that should be mortified, Gal. v. 24. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts:" and both these need to be crossed.

5. It has been the lot of the saints in all ages. And there is no shifting of the cross, if we will go out by the footsteps of the

flock. Yea, and ordinarily they that have been most dear to God have drunk deepest of the bitter cup; the most eminent for piety and usefulness, as Job; for piety and parts, as Heman and Paul; for divine manifestations made to them, as Jacob and David.

6. *Lastly*, Public persecution for the cause of Christ is what most now alive never saw, far less felt; though our fathers had a long and dark night of it. But the way to heaven is still the same; and therefore no wonder God is making up that want another way in the case of his people; and what trial formerly he took of them, by persecutors, prisons, and gibbets, he is taking the same upon the matter of them now, by other means.

I will conclude by giving you some helps to bear the cross.

*Help* 1. Look on yourselves as strangers on earth; and keep your eye on Christ, as he went through the world; and upon heaven, as your home, where only ye expect your rest.

2. Quit not faith's gripe of the promise of through-bearing: Is. xliii. 2. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Believe firmly, that Christ lays on no cross without allowance of ability for acceptable bearing it; plead and look for it.

3. *Lastly*, Set the cross in the light of the word, and look in through it, till ye see the pleasure in it that Paul assures us from his experience to be within it, 2 Cor. xii. 10. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Why, (1.) There is a pleasure in a man's seeing himself standing a candidatè for glory, on his trials for heaven. (2.) In seeing a gracious God cross our corrupt inclinations; in seeing the thieves on the cross, and the hand of God darting one arrow after another into their heart. (3.) In seeing ourselves pass the mountains, where we see the marks of Christ's own footsteps before us. Such a paradise there is within the thorn hedge of the cross.