

## QUEST. V.

## WHY THE LORD SUFFERETH SIN TO REMAIN IN THE REGENERATE ?

WE have seen already, that though there is a great change wrought on the elect in their regeneration yet that change is imperfect; there shall be no perfect delivery from indwelling sin till death; the body of death, though crucified, yet lives till the death of the body: and it is not so driven out to the outworks, but that it remains, and hath its seat in the main hold, in the soul, even in the mind and will. Experience suffereth not gracious souls to doubt of the being of sin in them, while it occasions them so much struggling and wrestling; yea, while they feel the great strength of it, they are many times ready from thence to call in question the being of grace in them, and to put forth that which was Rebekah's question, in another case, "If it be so, why am I thus?"\* And therefore, although we are not to call God to an account of his doings with supercilious boldness, flowing from an obstinate and stubborn heart; yet it may very well be allowed, that we go humbly, and with her inquire of the Lord.

The soul, in regeneration, gets a new nature, though the grace received is not of such efficacy as totally to drive away the old. The regenerate get a real love to God in their hearts, and a real hatred against sin; so that the man would fain leave sin, if it would leave him. And the truth is, that although sin and the soul are inseparable till death, yet sin rather cleaves to the soul than the soul to it. But, alas! though hated, it will not depart; following the man closely, as the shadow doth the body. But could it be lulled asleep, could it be so intoxicated as to leave off action, the child of God might have so much the better occasion to serve God without distraction while in the body. But how can the devil be quiet, when he knows his time is short? How can this old man sleep, while so many and various ensnaring objects still present themselves unto his view? Or how can the flesh be at rest, when it is nailed to a cross? Wherefore sin cannot but both be, and be active in the soul while on this side of time; even till that terrible soldier death come, and thrust his spear into its side, and bring forth its heart-blood.

"But are not two sparrows sold for one farthing? yet one of them cannot fall to the ground without our heavenly Father; yea, the very hairs of our head are numbered." We must not therefore think, that the children of God are left in this case by a fatal necessity, and that God is here an idle spectator. He hath

\* Gen. xxv. 22.

the hearts of all men in his hand. If the centurion knew that he, being a poor mortal, clothed with a shadow of authority, having rude soldiers under him, could say to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; faith might well thence draw the conclusion, That, much more, God, the sovereign Lord of all, can say to distempers, whether of body or soul, Go, and they should be gone; Come, and they should immediately be at hand. He raised up the soul when it was dead in sin spiritually; now the living soul is sick, how can any doubt of his power to cure it, and make it every whit whole. Yet the distemper remains with his dearest children, though he be a hater of iniquity, and his people groan to him daily under it. Though he can, yet we see he will not free them from it till death. But whatever be the reason or reasons of this dispensation, we believe, that when once his people have got over Jordan into the heavenly Canaan, they shall say without all reluctancy or doubting, "He hath done all things well."

As when a man hath newly recovered out of a severe fit of sickness, he is then most ready to take care of himself, and will be afraid of the least cold blast, and more narrowly than before inquire into the causes of his distemper, by which he hath so sore smarted; and if he find himself in such circumstances, that he cannot miss but again fall into his old distemper, he will long to be rid of that condition, and seriously think how he comes to be in such pitiful circumstances: even so I think it will be with a thinking soul, after a recovery from a dead frame and disposition of spirit, into which, by his unwatchfulness, the power of corruption within, and the malice of the devil from without, he had before been cast. Contraries set together appear then best in their own colours; therefore the disadvantages of a bad frame can never so well appear, as when they are fresh in the memory of the newly recovered saint, who hath now the candle of the Lord shining on his tabernacle; and consequently the way leading to that bad frame of spirit, never appears so hateful as at such a time. Suppose then the thoughts of a certainty of his falling back to be observant unto him, what thoughts of heart will this create? It is true, sometimes a child of God, when matters go right with his soul, may be thinking on building tabernacles here, as Peter on the mountain; and, with David, saying, "My mountain standeth sure, I shall not be moved." But this is a piece of the levity of the vain and foolish heart, when men look only above them, without deep consideration of the way of God's dispensation. But I suppose, that when in this case they look about them, through the world, where so many snares are laid for them, amongst which of necessity they must walk: and look also within them, and see

what bosom enemies are yet alive, ready to betray them into the hand of the devil; and do take pains to consider what a vile heart yet they have, from whence such mists and fogs are ready to arise, as may again make a thick cloud betwixt them and their Lord, and make them lose sight of the guide of their youth, and captain of their salvation; they will then even stand in need of new comfort, and something from above to establish their hearts. And here I think we may stand, and see a gracious soul joining trembling with mirth, and bemoaning itself thus:—

“O happy hour when the Lord awakened me out of my spiritual sleep! The devil and mine own corruptions had lulled me asleep; though even in the time my heart waked, and I found an inefficacious dissatisfaction with myself, which was not able to rouse me up, but made me sometimes as it were to start in my sleep: but my Beloved left me not, as justly he might, to sleep a perpetual sleep; but knocked at the door of my heart, saying, Open to me, my sister, my spouse: and though I was long a stirring to get up, he stood still, till his head was filled with the dew, and his locks with drops of the night; at last he put in his hand at the hole of the door, gave the rousing knock, spoke to my heart the overcoming word, captivated my soul, so as my bowels moved towards him. I opened to my Beloved; he came in; I supped with him, and he with me. He hath brought me into the banqueting-house, his banner over me is love. O how does my soul love him! my Lord and my God!—But, ah Lord! my soul fails; I have been here before, but a cloud overtook me, darkened the holy place, I lost the light of thy countenance; and, which now pierceth my soul, the very enemies remain in me, who before carried me back into the borders of Egypt, set me down in the land of darkness and shadow of death, and put out my two eyes. Now is sin to me more bitter than death and hell; yet I know assuredly I must again meet with that terrible ghost; and if I live long in this tabernacle, I shall lose all I now enjoy; my song shall be turned into lamentation and howling, the now smiling countenance shall again be provoked to frown, my wine is mixed with water; corruption will again lift up the head, the sorrowful day of my captivity will, I fear, ere long overtake me, this heart of mine will have me back to where I was before. O to be gone! I see, with a sorrowful heart and weeping eyes, a necessity of sinning, into which we poor mortals have brought ourselves, and the Lord leaves me yet under it. Lord, why are not the cursed Canaanites utterly rooted out?”

I judge, that a man in this case needs not fear his enjoyment to be a delusion, there is so much of an evangelical spirit breathing

in it. The sound hatred that appears here against sin, while the soul doth feelingly apprehend it as the greatest of evils, is so far above the sphere of elevated nature, that it is a clear discovery of a renewed nature. A man willing to part with all, so that he might be free of sin, is one made partaker of the divine nature, aspiring to a more accomplished participation of it. This case savours of much real burning love to the Lord Jesus Christ, while the soul hath such an ardent desire of being nearer to him, and would fain be so near him, as to have such communion with him, as might never be interrupted, nor overclouded any more. It is also an evidence, that the soul hath tasted of the sweetness of Christ and fellowship with him, while it is so filled with fear of losing his presence. And many such things may be discerned in it.

Yet I dare not justify the soul through the whole of this case. So true it is, *Nihil est ab omni parte beatum*. I conceive, there may be something here in the mourner which is not allowable, and may justly be new grounds of mourning to him. There seems to appear here a kind of spiritual selfishness, when the soul hath its own spiritual advantage (which is so seemingly at least) so much upon the heart, that it keeps not due respect to the sovereign will of God, to which belongs the free disposal of all good, and particularly of the influences of his grace; so that the creature, as a creature, is indispensably bound to a silent submission, whatever way sovereignty doth cast the balance. When Peter was upon the mount with Christ, "It is good for us to be here, let us make tabernacles," says he; but the verdict of the Spirit of God thereupon is, that he wist not what he said. Sense is much addicted to self; and though it had specious pretences, yet its language is not always to be heard; for it is certain it is an ill judge of controversies betwixt Christ and the soul. But faith is sure always to decide in Christ's favour. If Christ smile on the soul, faith saith, He doth well; and sense says so too. If he frown, then sense cries out against him; but faith says, He doth all things well; let him desert, afflict, yea, kill the man, faith says, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good; good is the will of the Lord." Faith puts a knife to the throat of self-love, and self-wit, to sacrifice them to the will of God, who is infinitely wise; it teacheth a man to lay his mouth in the dust, and wraps up the will in the will of God. In the hearts of the godly exercised, pride goeth much abroad in vail, though not in dress; it is there transformed into an angel of light, appearing in a shape different from that wherein it doth appear in others. Pride in the

hearts of natural men, when Christ comes to them, says, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy name; but pride in the hearts of the godly exercised, when Christ seems to be going away, or they know they will not have always the present measure of communion with him, will not suffer Christ to be master of his own process; though it is certain, that we are obliged to a holy submission, and the potsherd must not quarrel with the potter, but the Lord must have leave to go and come as he pleaseth. Humble-hearted Mary, when Christ says unto her, "Touch me not, Mary, for I am not yet ascended:" though her love would have carried her forward, yet her deniedness to her spiritual self, at Christ's command, makes her hold up her hands. It were good in such a case to learn that lesson.

Moreover, Satan may be working here under ground to blow up the present enjoyment with a fear of distrust. Satan grudgeth the happiness of the people of God, and endeavoureth by all means, seeing he cannot hinder these refreshing influences of the Spirit, and comfortable manifestations, to make them as short-lived as possible, and for this end he goeth about to fill the soul with a distrustful fear, holding before his eyes, the certainty of his backsliding, and of losing the present enjoyment: which breeds in the soul a sinful jealousy of Christ, while the man is either ignorant of, or doth not consider the end and design of God in his dispensation; which Satan is now busy to misrepresent, wrest, and make use of to his great disadvantage: which once taking place, blasts the comfort of the present enjoyment, mars our thankfulness for what God hath given already. And whereas it is now time for the man to improve his access to God, for more strength against the devil and his own corruption, this fear takes up the man so, as he lets that good occasion slip out of his hands, and so is more easily overcome by the temptation; even as the fear of the battle in a soldier takes away his stomach, that he cannot eat, whereby he is the more unfit for his work. And, in fine, God may hereby be provoked to withdraw, so as they shall be made to say, That which I feared, is come upon me. *Probatum est.*

For the cure of this jealousy of Christ in the soul, arising from the consideration of his dispensation in leaving sin to be and act in those who wrestle against it, and account it their greatest burden, it is necessary the soul be acquainted with, and seriously consider of the true reason or reasons thereof, in regard we are ready to suspect the worst. A wife observing her husband frequently to carry towards her reservedly, and to wrap up himself from her,

though he may be doing so for his own and her good, will yet be ready to suspect, that such carriage flows from his want of love towards her; and will not be satisfied easily, till she know the true reason of his so doing. So is it here. And surely the Lord doth not deal thus with his people, but with great reason; which being known and seriously pondered will make the soul conclude, he doth all things well.

To a soul then in this case several things may be proposed.

I. In the first place, God hath so ordered the matter of the believer's sanctification, that sin is left to be active in their souls while here, for their further humiliation. They are hereby taught to bear low sails all the days of their lives, and, with "Hezekiah,\* to go softly all their years in the bitterness of their souls." Wherefore we read, that lest Paul† should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan is sent to buffet him. And so we find David,‡ after his grievous fall, grows in the grace of humility.

II. Next, This gives the soul many errands to God, stirs him up to the frequent exercise of prayer, and calling on the name of the Lord. The soul feels the continual need of pardon, and therefore must needs be much lying at God's footstool. The experience of the godly seals the truth of this, while, many times, they feeling the children (grace and corruption) struggling together within them, are made, as Rebekah,|| to "go and inquire of the Lord." Hence, when they grow remiss in their duty, the Lord sometimes, for their awakening suffers them to fall into some sin or sins grievously wounding the conscience; and so, like a presumptuous, self-willed child falling into the fire, they cry for and value the help of their father more.

III. Yea hereby we are made more watchful and observant of the heart. When the prisoner, having escaped, is retaken, he will be put in more close custody than before. When men find by experience what a bankrupt the heart is, they will learn not to give it credit. We live in a world where there are traps set before, and behind, and on each side, to catch us; we walk amidst many snares, yet are ready to fall secure, and careless, and to let down our watch. It is not amiss then, that we sometimes smart in order to our being kept awake.

IV. Further, as God left the Canaanites in the land to try his people, so he hath left the remains of natural corruption in his

\* Is. xxxviii. 15.

† 2 Cor. xii. 7.

‡ Psal. li.

|| Gen. xxv. 22.

people for their exercise and trial; that having listed themselves to war under Christ's banner, they may have whom to fight with, and whom by strength from above they may overcome. God gives his people armour at their conversion; is it reasonable it should lie by them rusting? If the Canaanites were at the first dash utterly expelled the land, many of the graces of the Spirit should be laid by as useless. "Hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it?" Had we no enemies, or were we put beyond their reach utterly, there should be no occasion for the exercise of the grace of watchfulness. Patience should not have its perfect work; yea faith itself, as being "the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for," should be of no more use. What should become of ordinances? God hath set up a ministry in his church to be for working together with him, to bring down the kingdom of darkness by degrees; he hath set up his word for a light to travellers towards Zion, not being well acquainted with the way; he hath given us his holy sacraments for our confirmation in faith, growth in grace, and comfort through the Spirit: these all might be laid aside, were it not that our sanctification is carried on by degrees.

V. Moreover, by this dispensation of grace, we are made more and more to feel our need of Christ, and his precious blood for the removal of guilt daily contracted anew, and for strengthening of our souls in our Christian course; so that we must come up out of the wilderness leaning on our Beloved. And we see that our stock is not in our hand; and if it were, that it would quickly be lost. Is not the soul made hereby to bless the Lord, that it is not left to be its own pilot while sailing through the troublesome sea of this world; but that Jesus Christ is his great steersman, by whose conduct he shall come safe to Immanuel's land?

VI. I add, That it may be observed, it is God's ordinary way to bring about great works by degrees; amongst which the sanctification of a sinner deservedly takes place. God could have created the world in a moment, yet he was pleased to take six days for it. As soon as Adam fell, he could have sent Christ to have died; but thousands of years must pass before this great work be accomplished. It is determined to the last days, the time of the world's old age. A dark revelation of this his purpose was made to Adam in the primitive gospel-promise; it was made more manifest to Abraham; revealed yet more clearly to and by Moses, more to the prophets, till John the Baptist at last pointed him out with the finger. He could have brought Israel out of Egypt into Canaan easily in a few days; but it pleased him, that they should wander forty years in

the wilderness. So that it is but consonant hereunto, that he exerciseth his people so long in the wilderness of the world, after he hath brought them forth of the spiritual Egyptian bondage. And as it is God's ordinary method to carry on great works by degrees, so to bring them to pass through many difficulties—Joseph must be sold for a slave, and laid in irons in a strange land, before he be advanced; the Israelites must endure hard bondage and grievous affliction in Egypt, before they are brought into the land flowing with milk and honey; yea, the man Christ must first suffer, and then enter into his glory. So that in this dispensation he holds but his ordinary road. Finally,

VII. A learned man\* lays down the whole matter thus:—“While we bear about a mortal body, this domestic tyrant cannot be altogether expelled;—because it is neither expedient for the glory of Christ, nor for our salvation. For the glory of Christ is so much the more illustrious, as his benefit is the better felt by us, while that enemy doth indeed dwell in us, but by the grace and Spirit of Christ is so repressed and holden captive, that it cannot domineer over us nor destroy us;—yea while we experience in us the grace of Christ so efficacious, that by it he makes us overcomers. Moreover, the glory of Christ becomes more illustrious, while, by reason of indwelling sin, we in very deed feel that we cannot be justified but by the perfect obedience of Christ, which we apprehend by faith. It is also expedient for our salvation, that the enemy abide in us till death, that we may have one to fight with perpetually, and fighting by the grace of Christ may overcome, and by overcoming may gain a greater crown to ourselves,” Rev. iii.; 2 Tim. iv.

That the consideration of these things may be very useful to a soul exercised with the consideration of this dispensation of providence in the matter of sanctification, as above declared, I think none can deny. To see how God makes such an excellent medicine of such poisonous ingredients, cannot be but very delightful. Yet I doubt, if the principal, if not the only reason, be yet explained; or if those things in this mould and frame be very likely to satisfy the soul, when this puzzling question comes more closely home upon the heart; but that very plausible objections may be raised against the same, to show their invalidity as to the main point in hand.

The great matter is, to find out the reason or reasons why it hath pleased the Lord to leave sin in the elect after conversion, and not to make them perfectly free from the indwelling of it at that very

\* Zanch.



time, as he could certainly have done if it had pleased him. Now, I observe upon the whole of those grounds formerly laid down, which are usually pleaded in this case, That the case under consideration is resolved either into our own advantage, and the quickening of inherent grace, or into the will of God simply; and this by all of them, except the first part of the last ground assigned. As to the last of the two; it is indeed in effect that God would have it so because he would have it so; which I do confess may suffice, and no more can be had in some cases, Rom. ix. 18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy." But I suppose that this case is not of that sort. As to the first; sin now appearing to the soul in its blackest colours, the creature's advantage being laid in the balance therewith, can have but little weight. As for the three first grounds, they do plainly suppose the question. The fourth seems to go the same way. As for the first part of the last ground, it points out the truth in general. But the explication of it mars all, while it is declared by our proper feeling of the benefits of Christ; which doth indeed hold good considered absolutely, but comparatively understood it doth not. Now, it is plain, that any thing that can be here said satisfyingly, must be by way of comparison. But I think no man can doubt, but that the more free of sin a Christian is, he feels the benefits of Christ the better. The same is to be said of the fifth reason. As to the rest, they do at least come under the disadvantage proposed in the general observation (to say no more upon them) resolving the case as said is.

To all of these grounds the following replies seem not to be unreasonable. You tell me (says the Christian under the supposed exercise) That this is God's design by this dispensation to humble me, to stir me up to call on his name, to make me more watchful, to let me see my need of Christ more. But my pride, slothfulness, unwatchfulness, unsensibleness of my need of Christ, are the great burdens I groan under. That which I would be at, is to have all these rooted out of my heart; and I know God could have done this at first, can do it still, yet he does not: What shall I say? As for faith, hope, &c. it is my soul's trouble, that I have so little of them; I would fain be at the full measure; and I know the graces of the Spirit are inseparable; whoso hath one, hath all. But though the exercise of these graces were inconsistent with the state of perfection that I would fain be at, which nevertheless is not so, (for if I were perfect in this life, or altogether free from sin, I could not but exercise faith, hope, and patience, as the man Christ did; and watchfulness, as Adam did, or at least might

have done in paradise); yet I am sure the spirits of just men made perfect above, are at no loss in that they do not, nor need not exercise those graces; neither is the glory of God thereby impaired, but indeed made more illustrious. I desire to value ordinances more than my necessary food, both because they have Christ's stamp upon them, and because in this my weary state I cannot want them. But, Oh! should I not be content, though all the stars were set, and had hid their heads, so that the Sun of Righteousness were risen with perfect healing under his wings? What though the inns were blocked up, if once the traveller were at his journey's end? But surely, if I were as I would be, I could manage ordinances far more to the glory of my Lord, and to mine own satisfaction, than I can now do at my best. The first and second Adam wanted not sacraments, and made use of them too. And I am persuaded, that if I were free of sin, I would have a far more deep sense of Christ's benefits, and of my need of him, than now I either have or can have. Self-righteousness, that spawn of the old serpent, is one of my greatest burdens, that makes me weary of this longsome night, and long to see the day when I shall be able to sing the song of the redeemed ones, and to give my Lord all and hail the glory, in which my wretched heart now will needs share with him. Though I cannot love him as I ought, nay nor as I would; yet would I be well content to continue in the fight never so long, so that I could but manage it without dishonour to my captain. It is not suffering, but sinning that affrights me. And I cannot but think that ten thousand jewels in my crown are too dear bought at the rate of one sin against my Lord; whereas there is not one sin, but many in my most complete actions now. It is God's ordinary method, I confess, to bring about great works by degrees, and over the belly of many difficulties. And O how early did God begin with me, how many times did he lay siege to my graceless heart, how long did he follow a poor miserable worm nothing, ere I would give consent? What great difficulties did grace break through, what iron gates did it lay by, when at first it shined into my soul? And yet I would cheerfully bear, and go through difficulties, if they were only in the kind of suffering, so that I were free of sin, that evil of all evils.

By all this we may see farther into the nature of the case proposed, and may discover what it is that is at the bottom of all, and what that is which most toucheth them in the quick. The case then terminates in an ardent desire of, and an unfeigned respect unto his glory, who hath brought the soul from darkness to light, and crowned it with loving-kindness and tender mercies; to which glory sin is so opposite. Wherefore I am of opinion, the whole is

to be resolved into the praise of the glory of his grace, Eph. i. 6. which seems most exactly to answer the point.

I confess, that as none can bear a wounded spirit, so none can cure it but the great physician of souls. "It is he that smiteth, and it is only he that can bind up; he kills and he makes alive." He is the healer of all the soul's diseases and pains. An exercised soul hath great dexterity in raising objections, and is not easily satisfied; and its doubts and difficulties can no man resolve to its satisfaction, till he who is the great interpreter of the mind of God, and hath the tongue of the learned, take the work in hand, "and speak a word in season to the weary soul," by his Holy Spirit. Yet the Scripture shews that the Spirit teacheth and comforteth by the word: "He shall receive of mine," says Christ, speaking of the Spirit, "and shall shew it unto you," John xvi. 14.; which is more clearly delivered chap. xiv. 26. "But the Comforter, he shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." So that from the word souls are to be dealt with for their comfort and satisfaction, looking to the Lord Jesus to send his Spirit to render the same effectual.

It plainly appears to such as read the Scriptures with a humble mind, and consider the doctrine therein delivered, and take notice of the Lord's way of dealing with his own, that the grand design of God in the contrivance of the elect's salvation, is, *to exalt the riches of the free grace of God in Christ*: Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace." Eph. ii. 8, 9. "For by grace are ye saved;—not of works, lest any man should boast." Most plainly does the apostle resolve the whole of man's salvation into this, Eph. i. 3—6. "To the praise of the glory of his grace." I say, not simply to exalt grace, (which is always here to be understood of the free favour of God, or the grace of God without us); for even by the first covenant, the grace of God was exalted, and manifestly appeared in God's condescending to enter into a covenant with Adam, and to require obedience of him by virtue of a covenant, and that with a promise of so great a reward, to which his best works could bear no proportion; when, by virtue of his sovereignty merely, he might have exacted all obedience; here was grace, though, as Bayn\* calls it, a more common and inferior grace: But I say the riches of grace, in respect of which the former was but a small scantling of grace. Thus the apostle holds it forth, Eph. i. 7. "According to the riches of his grace." Chap. ii. 4. "But God, who is rich in mercy;" and ver. 7. "That in the ages to come

\* Com. on Eph. p. 238.

he might show the exceeding riches of his grace." This then is clearly the great design of God in the contrivance of man's salvation. Now the heart of a child of God is (if I may so term it) shapen out in breadth and length to this design: for what is faith but an hearty acquiescing in the way of salvation held forth in the gospel, as suited both to man's necessity, and the divine perfections, and particularly tending unto the manifestation of the riches of grace whereby Christ is made all, and the creature nothing ?

Here then I apprehend, we may find the great reason of the Lord's dispensation in the matter of the believer's sanctification, the knowledge and consideration whereof is most likely to give satisfaction to the soul thus exercised. And it is briefly this: The exalting of Christ, and of the free grace of God in him, is the great design and end of the contrivance of man's salvation, as held forth in the gospel; but God's leaving of sin to be, and to be active in the regenerate while they are in this world, yea and keeping of them for a while in that case in the world, does contribute more to the advancement of that design, than the making of them sinless immediately upon their closing with Christ. Therefore may we already not only believe, but see, that in this matter he hath done all things well.

If we consider a person under this exercise before declared, we shall find he is one that is filled with a deep sense of his own vileness, emptiness, and nothingness; and hath high thoughts of Christ, and of free grace; and so he is disposed to welcome whatsoever hath a tendency to the exalting of the same. And forasmuch as the glory of that God who hath done so great things for him lies nearest his heart, and the dishonour done unto him, galls him most: when he sees this way brings more glory to Christ, and exalts grace more than the way he would be at, it may justly be expected, he shall lay his hand upon his mouth, saying, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." It remains then, that we demonstrate the truth of this, That this way does more exalt Christ and free grace than the other; which I hope will be no difficult task.

I. The more sins be pardoned to a believer, grace is the more exalted, Christ hath the more glory; the more items are blotted out of justice's debt-book by the precious blood of the immaculate Lamb, the sinner is the more deep in the debt of free grace: But it is beyond controversy, that in this dispensation more sins are pardoned to a believer than otherwise would have been. *Ergo*, Let none pretend that free grace might have been as much or more exalted in keeping the believer from sin altogether after conversion, as in pardoning of the same, lest they fall foul upon God's design

in suffering sin to enter into the world, prefer the grace of the first covenant to that of the second, and, in effect, say that God's dispensation is not suitable to his design.

II. The more sin is aggravated by its circumstances, the more is free grace exalted in pardoning it, the more illustrious is the virtue of Christ's blood; for the deeper the stain is, the harder is it to wash out: but by this dispensation, whereby sin is left in the regenerate for a while, free grace hath the glory of pardoning sins more heinous than those committed in the state of ignorance and unbelief. *Ergo*, Is not the offence of a spouse, child, friend, &c., more grievous than the offence given by a stranger? Friends' wounds pierce most deeply: "for it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it," &c. Psal. lv. 12. The godly lie under far more accessory bonds and obligations to duty than others; and it is certain, the more obligations a man lies under to duty, the sin is the greater. Adultery and murder committed by a David, are more heinous in the sight of God, than the same sins committed by a wicked man. This is so manifest, that I need not insist to enumerate those aggravating circumstances that are to be found in the sins of the godly, which by no means can be in those of the wicked. And does not the pardoning of these deep-dyed sins exalt free grace wonderfully? Let men but consult their own experience, and they shall have a clear proof of this. The pardon of any sin does much affect a godly heart with admiration of the riches of grace; but when a man, after a recovery from some sin, after vows and resolutions against it, &c. doth relapse into the same, and yet has his backslidings healed, this augments the admiration of it. Of all sinners backsliders have the greatest difficulty to believe; and upon a received pardon, as they indeed are, so they seem to be, greatest debtors to grace.

III. The more deeply sin appears to be rooted in our natures, the more is the grace of God magnified in rooting it up; the more inveterate the disease seems to be, the more is the cure of it to the honour of the physician: "Since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind," John ix. 32. If a tree were plucked up in an instant, beholders could never so clearly see how fast rooted it was, as when it abides many pulls of a strong hand. Who could have imagined the strength of sin to have been so great in David as afterwards it appeared, when he had been so often bruised and troubled in spirit, and had arrived at so great mortification? The experience of believers affords to us an example of the same. Many times, after great wrestlings, they seem to themselves to have got great victory over a particular cor-

ruption, so that they are ready to think with themselves, that it will never be able to molest them as before; but at length it gets out again, renews the assault, and makes them see how it is, like Nebuchadnezzar's tree,\* fastened in the earth of the heart with a band of iron and brass. Now, it is manifest, that were sin rooted out at the first dash, the fixedness of it in man's nature could never so much appear to beholders, as it may and doth in the way of this dispensation. *Ergo,*

IV. That which discovers, to the view of all, the creature's emptiness most, doth undeniably exalt grace most; but the emptiness of the creature, and its continual need of supply, is most discovered to the view of all this way: *Ergo,* I think, the angels themselves, who desire to pry into the mystery of grace, could not but learn a lesson of the creature's frailty and nothingness by Adam's fall, and of the riches of free grace in the way of his recovery; and the daily slips of the saints on the earth may be to them speaking testimonies of the creature's weakness; for we see the apostle thinks it not below their dignity, that they go to school in the church to learn "the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii. 10. Suppose a weak child be held up on his feet by his father's hands, so that he cannot fall; whether doth his weakness appear so as when he is left to feel his own weight, and so gets several falls? The spirits of just men made perfect, who are now above the clouds, and the confirmed angels, are still creatures; and therefore live and act by a continued dependance on God: but the emptiness of the creature appears not so clearly in their case, as in the state of the saints on earth; whose weakness we not only know, but see with our eyes, while they get so many falls, and give so many ocular demonstrations of their need of grace, and of their own emptiness. So that if the nothingness of the creature proclaim the riches of grace, free grace is most exalted this way.

V. The more cowardly, faint-hearted, and feckless the soldiers are that get the victory over a potent enemy, the more is the valour of the captain discovered, the greater glory redounds to him; but such are the saints in their Christian warfare: *Ergo,* When David attempted to take the strong hold of Zion,† the Jebusites boasting of the strength of the castle, looking on it as an impregnable fort, told him, that except he took away the blind and the lame, he could not get in there; meaning, that such was the strength of the fort, that the very blind and lame were sufficient to defend it against David and all his men, though others should sit by, looking

\* Dan. iv. 15.

† 2 Sam. v. 6.

on and doing nothing: which did mightily commend the stronghold. They are potent enemies, expert, and subtle, whom the Christian is called to encounter with: "For he wrestles not [only] against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."\* In the meantime he is a weak creature, weak naturally as a man, in comparison of them, but yet weaker as a sinful man; but he is nevertheless more than conqueror: which surely doth more advance the glory of the great Captain of our salvation, than if he had stronger and more expert soldiers. O what riches of grace appears here, which otherwise would have been in great measure smothered! And seeing the Scripture so frequently calls the Christian course "a warfare," let me also add this, That when an enemy beseigeth a town, wherein he hath a multitude of friends ready on all occasions to betray the same into his hand, yet the town holds out, and he is repulsed; what a shameful repulse is that? Is not the glory of the governor far greater in this case, than if he had forced the enemy to raise the seige, while he had plenty of his friends within the walls? The application is easy.

Finally, to shut up all; it is plain, that the more difficulties the work of man's salvation is carried through, the free grace of God is the more exalted; our Lord Jesus, the author of eternal salvation, hath the greater glory: but in this way it is carried on over the belly of more difficulties, than it would have been, if by the first grace the Christian had been made perfect. *Ergo*, And seeing (*cæteris paribus*) none can prize rest so much as they who have been sore toiled, and have come out of the greatest tribulations, I think I may be allowed to say, that a child of God having come to his journey's end after many ups and downs, falls and risings; having win through the troublesome sea of this world, and being set safe ashore, after many dangers of shipwreck, in a longsome voyage, will have the praises of free grace in his mouth sounding more loudly, and will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb in a more elevated strain and higher notes, than if he had never been in danger through the whole of his course.

From all which it appears, that this dispensation is most suitable to the grand design of the gospel, the exalting of the riches of free grace in Christ. And what lover of Christ will not say, Amen!

\* Eph. vi. 12.