

of Christ, and the corruption and vileness of our nature, are never rightly learned, but where the Spirit of Christ is the teacher.

To shut up this weighty point, let the consideration of what has been said, commend Christ to you all. You that are brought out of your natural state of corruption, unto Christ, be humble; still come to Christ, and improve your union with him, to the farther weakening of your natural corruption. Is your nature changed? It is but in part so. If you are cured, remember the cure is not yet perfected, you still go halting. Though it were better with you than it is, the remembrance of what you were by nature should keep you low. You that are yet in your natural state, take this with you: believe the corruption of your nature; and let Christ and his grace be precious in your eyes. O that you would at length be serious about the state of your souls! What do you intend to do? You must die; you must appear before the judgment-seat of God. Will you lie down and sleep another night at ease in this case? Do it not: for, before another day, you may be summoned before God's dreadful tribunal, in the grave-clothes of your corrupt state; and your vile souls be cast into the pit of destruction, as a corrupt lump, to be for ever buried out of God's sight. For I testify unto you all, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven, for you, in your natural state: there is but a step between you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord; if the brittle thread of your life, which may break with a touch ere you are aware, be broken while you are in this state, you are ruined for ever, without remedy. But come speedily to Jesus Christ: he has cleansed souls as vile as yours; and he will yet "cleanse the blood that he has not cleansed," Joel iii. 21. Thus far of the sinfulness of man's natural state.

PART II.

THE MISERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE.

We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

EPHESIANS ii. 3.

HAVING shewn you the sinfulness of man's natural state, I come now to lay before you the misery of it. A *sinful* state cannot but be a *miserable* state. If sin go before, wrath follows of course. Corruption and destruction are so knit together, that the Holy Ghost calls destruction, even eternal destruction, "corruption," Gal. vi. 8. He that

soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption," that is, everlasting destruction; as is clear from its being opposed to life everlasting, in the following clause. The apostle having shewn the Ephesians their real state by nature, namely, that they were dead in sins and trespasses, altogether corrupt; he tells them, in the words of the text, their relative state, namely, that the pit was dug for them, while in that state of corruption: being dead in sins, they "were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

In the words we have four things:

1. The misery of a natural state; it is a state of wrath, as well as a state of sin. "We were," says the apostle, "children of wrath," bound over and liable to the wrath of God; under wrath in some measure; and, in wrath, bound over to more, even the full measure of it, in hell, where the floods of it go over the prisoners for ever. Thus Saul, in his wrath, adjudging David to die, 1 Sam. xx. 31; and David, in his wrath, passing sentence of death against the man in the parable, 2 Sam. xii. 5, says, each of them, of his supposed criminal, "He shall surely die;" or, as the words in the first language are, "He is a son of death." So the natural man is "a child of wrath, a son of death." He is a malefactor, dead in law, lying in chains of guilt; a criminal, held fast in his fetters, till the day of execution; which will not fail to come, unless a pardon be obtained from his God, who is his judge and his opponent too. By that means, indeed, children of wrath may become children of the kingdom. The phrase in the text, however common in the holy language, is very significant. And as it is evident that the apostle, calling natural men the "children of disobedience," verse 2, means more than that they were disobedient children; for such may the Lord's own children be: so, to be children of wrath, is more than simply to be liable to, or under wrath. Jesus Christ was liable to, and under wrath; but I doubt whether we have any warrant to say he was a child of wrath.—The phrase seems to intimate, that men are, whatever they are in their natural state, under the wrath of God; that they are wholly under wrath: wrath is, as it were, woven into their very nature, and mixes itself with the whole of the man, who is, if I may so speak, a very lump of wrath, a child of hell, as the iron in the fire is all fire. For men naturally are children of wrath; come forth, so to speak, out of the womb of wrath; as Jonah's gourd was the "son of a night," which we render, "came up in a night," Jonah iv. 10; as if it had come out of the womb of the night, as we read of the "womb of the morning," Psalm cx. 3. Thus sparks of fire are called "sons of the burning coal," Job v. 7; Marg. Isa. xxi. 10, "O my thrashing, and the corn" or son "of my

floor," thrashed in the floor of wrath, and, as it were, brought forth by it. Thus the natural man is a "child of wrath;" it "comes into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, Psalm cix. 18. For, though Judas was the only son of perdition amongst the apostles; yet all men, by nature, are of the same family.

2. Here is the rise of this misery; men have it by nature. They owe it to their nature, not to their substance or essence; for that neither is nor was sin, and therefore cannot make them children of wrath; though, for sin, it may be under wrath: not to their nature, as qualified at man's creation by his Maker; but to their nature, as vitiated and corrupted by the fall; to the vicious quality, or corruption of their nature, as before noticed, which is their principle of action, and, ceasing from action, the only principle in an unregenerate state. Now, by this nature, men are children of wrath; as, in time of pestilential infection, one draws in death with the disease then raging. Wherefore seeing, from our first being as children of Adam, we are corrupt children, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, we are also from that moment children of wrath.

3. The universality of this misery. All are by nature children of wrath, "we," says the apostle, "even as others;" Jews as well as Gentiles. Those that are now, by grace, the children of God were, by nature, in no better case than those that are still in their natural state.

4. Here is a glorious and happy change intimated, we *were* children of wrath, but are not so now; grace has brought us out of that state. This the apostle says of himself, and other believers. And thus, it well becomes the people of God to be often standing on the shore, and looking back to the Red Sea, or the state of wrath, which they were once weltering in, even as others.

DOCTRINE, The state of nature is a state of wrath.—Every one, in a natural unregenerate state, is in a state of wrath. We are born children of wrath; and continue so, until we be born again. Nay, as soon as we are children of Adam, we are children of wrath.

I shall introduce what I am to say on this point, with a few observations, as to the universality of this state of wrath, which may serve to prepare the way for the word into your consciences.

Wrath has gone as wide as ever sin went. When angels sinned, the wrath of God broke in upon them like a flood. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell," 2 Pet. ii. 4. It was thereby demonstrated, that no natural excellence in the creature can shield it from the wrath of God, if it once becomes a sinful creature. The finest and nicest piece of the workmanship of heaven, if once the Creator's image upon it be defaced by sin,

God can and will dash in pieces in his wrath, unless satisfaction be made to justice, and that image be restored; neither of which the sinner himself can do. Adam sinned; and the whole lump of mankind was leavened, and bound over to the fire of God's wrath. From the text you may learn, 1. That ignorance of this state, cannot free men from it. The Gentiles, that knew not God, "were by nature children of wrath, even as others." A man's house may be on fire, his wife and children perishing in the flames, while he knows nothing of it; and therefore is not concerned about it. Such is your case, O ye that are ignorant of these things! Wrath is silently sinking into your souls while you are blessing yourselves, saying,— "We shall have peace." You need not a more certain token that you are children, of wrath, than that you never saw yourselves such. You cannot be the children of God, who never yet saw yourselves the children of the devil. You cannot be in the way to heaven, who never saw yourselves by nature in the high road to hell. You are grossly ignorant of your state by nature; and so ignorant of God and of Christ, and your need of him, and though you look on your ignorance as a covert from wrath, yet take it out of the mouth of God himself, that it will ruin you if it be not removed: Isa. xxvii. 11, "It is a people of no understanding:—therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them." See also 2 Thess. i. 8; Hos. iv. 6. 2. No outward privileges can exempt men from this state of wrath, for the Jews, the children of the kingdom, God's peculiar people, were "children of wrath, even as others." Though you be church members, partakers of all church privileges; though you be descended of godly parents, of great and honourable families; be what you will, you are by nature heirs of hell, children of wrath. 3. No profession, no attainments in a profession of religion, do or can exempt men from this state of wrath. Paul was one of the strictest set of the Jewish religion, Acts xxvi. 5, yet a child of wrath, even as others, till he was converted. The close hypocrite, and the profane, are alike as to their state, however different their conversation be; and they will be alike in their fatal end, Psalm cxxv. 5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." 4. Young ones, who are but setting out in the world, have not that to do to make themselves children of wrath, by following the graceless multitude: they are children of wrath by nature; so it is done already. They were born heirs of hell; and they will indeed make themselves more so, if they do not, while they are young, flee from that wrath to which they are born, by fleeing to Jesus Christ. 5. Whatever men are now by grace, they were even as others by nature. This

may be a sad meditation to them that have been at ease from their youth, and have had no changes.

Now these things being premised, I shall, in the first place, shew what this state of wrath is; secondly, confirm the doctrine; and, thirdly, apply it.

I. I am to shew what the state of wrath is. But who can fully describe the wrath of an angry God? None can do it. Yet so much of it may be discovered, as may serve to convince men of the absolute necessity of fleeing to Jesus Christ, out of that state of wrath. Anger, in men, is a passion and commotion of the spirit, for an injury received; with a desire to resent the same. When it comes to a height, and is fixed in one's spirit, it is called wrath. Now there are no passions in God, properly speaking: they are inconsistent with his absolute unchangeableness, and independency: therefore Paul and Barnabas, to remove the mistake of the Lycaonians, who thought they were gods, tell them, "they were men of like passions with themselves," Acts xiv. 15. Wrath, when it is attributed to God, must not be considered in respect of the affection of wrath, but the effects thereof. Wrath is a fire in the affections of men: tormenting the man himself: but there is no perturbation in God. His wrath does not in the least mar that infinite repose and happiness which he hath in himself. It is a most pure and undisturbed act of his will, producing dreadful effects against the sinner. It is little that we know of the infinite God; but, condescending to our weakness, he is pleased to speak of himself to us after the manner of men. Let us therefore notice man's wrath, but remove every thing in our consideration of the wrath of God, that implies imperfection; and so we may attain to some view of it however scanty. By this means we are led to consider the wrath of God against the natural man in these three particulars.

1. There is wrath in the heart of God against him. The Lord approves him not, but is displeased with him. Every natural man lies under the displeasure of God; and that is heavier than mountains of brass. Although he be pleased with himself, and others be pleased with him too, yet God looks down on him displeased.

1. His person is under God's displeasure; "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity," Psalm v. 5. A godly man's sin is displeasing to God, yet his person is still "accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. But "God is angry with the wicked every day," Psalm vii. 11. There is a fire of wrath burns continually against him in the heart of God. They are as dogs and swine, most abominable creatures in the sight of God. Though their natural state be gilded over with a shining profession, yet they are abhorred of God; and are

to him as smoke in his nose, Isa. lxxv. 5, and lukewarm water, to be spewed out of his mouth, Rev. iii. 16; whited sepulchres, Matt. xxiii. 27; a generation of vipers, Matt. xii. 34; and a people of his wrath, Isa. x. 6. 2. He is displeased with all they do: it is impossible for them to please him, being unbelievers, Heb. xi. 6. He hates their persons; and so hath no pleasure in, but is displeased with their best works, Isa. lxvi. 3, "he that sacrificeth a lamb, is as if he cut off a dog's neck," &c. Their duty as done by them, is "an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 8. And as men turn their back on those with whom they are angry, so when the Lord refuses communion with the natural man in his duties, it is a plain indication of his wrath.

2. There is wrath in the word of God against him. When wrath is in the heart, it seeks a vent by the lips: so God fights against the natural man with the sword of his mouth, Rev. ii. 16. The Lord's word never speaks good of him, but always curseth and condemneth him. Hence it is, that when he is awakened, the word read or preached often increases his horror. 1. It condemns all his actions, together with his corrupt nature. There is nothing he does, but the law declares it to be sin. It is a rule of perfect obedience, from which he always, in all things, declines; and so it rejects every thing he doth, as sinful. It pronounces his doom, and denounces God's curse against him, Gal. iii. 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." However well in the world, it pronounces a wo from heaven against him, Isa. iii. 11. The Bible is a quiver filled with arrows of wrath against him, ready to be poured in on his soul. God's threatenings, in his word, hang over his head as a black cloud, ready to shower down on him every moment. The word is indeed the saint's security against wrath: but it binds the natural man's sin and wrath together, as a certain pledge of his ruin, if he continue in that state. So the conscience being awakened, and perceiving this tie made by the law, the man is filled with terrors in his soul.

3. There is wrath in the hand of God, against the natural man. He is under heavy strokes of wrath already, and is liable to more.

(1.) There is wrath on his body. It is a piece of cursed clay, which wrath is sinking into by virtue of the threatening of the first covenant, Gen. ii. 17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." There is not a disease or pain that affects him, but it comes on him with the sting of God's indignation in it. They are all cords of death, sent before to bind the prisoner.

(2.) There is wrath upon his soul. 1. He can have no communion with God; he is "foolish, and shall not stand in God's sight," Psalm v. 5. When Adam sinned, God turned him out of paradise: and natural men are, as Adam left them, banished from the gracious presence of the Lord; and can have no access to him in that state. There is war between heaven and them; and so all commerce is cut off. "They are without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. The sun is gone down on them, and there is not the least glimpse of favour towards them from heaven. 2. Hence the soul is left to pine away in its iniquity: the natural darkness of their minds, the averseness to good in their wills, the disorder of their affections, and distemper of their consciences, and all their natural plagues, are left upon them in a penal way; and, being so left increase daily. God casts a portion of this world's goods to them, more or less, as a bone is thrown to a dog: but alas! his wrath against them appears, in that they get no grace. The Physician of souls comes by them, and goes by them, and cures others on each side of them, while they are consuming away in their iniquity, and ripening daily for utter destruction. 3. They lie open to fearful additional plagues on their souls, even in this life. Sometimes they meet with deadening strokes, silent blows from the hand of an angry God; arrows of wrath, that enter into their souls without noise, Isa. vi. 10, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes," &c. God strives with them for a while, and convictions enter their consciences; but they rebel against the light; and by a secret judgment, they receive a blow on the head; so that, from that time, they do as it were live and rot above ground. Their hearts are deadened; their affections withered; their consciences stupified; and their whole souls blasted; "cast forth as a branch, and withered," John xv. 6. They are plagued with judicial blindness. They shut their eyes against the light; and they are given over to the devil, the god of this world, to be blinded more, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Yea, "God sends them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie," 2 Thess. ii. 11. Even conscience, like a false light on the shore, leads them upon rocks: by which they are broken in pieces. They harden themselves against God, and he leaves them to Satan and their own hearts, whereby they are hardened more and more. They are often "given up unto vile affections," Rom. i. 26. The reins are laid on their necks; and they are left to run into all excess, as their furious lusts drive them. Sometimes they meet with sharp fiery strokes, whereby their souls become like mount Sinai, where nothing is seen but fire and smoke; nothing heard but the thunder

of God's wrath, and the voice of the trumpet of a broken law, waxing louder and louder: which makes them, like Pashur, Jer. xx. 4, "a terror to themselves." God takes the filthy garments of their sins, which they were wont to sleep in securely; overlays them with brimstone, and sets them on fire about their ears: so they have a hell within them.

(3.) There is wrath on the natural man's enjoyments. Whatever be wanting in his house, there is one thing that is never wanting there, Prov. iii. 33, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." Wrath is on all that he has, on the bread that he eats, the liquor he drinks, the clothes which he wears. "His basket and store are cursed," Deut. xxviii. 17. Some things fall wrong with him; and that comes to pass by virtue of this wrath: other things go according to his wish, and there is wrath in that too; for it is a snare to his soul, Prov. i. 32. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." This wrath turns his blessings into curses, Mal. ii. 2, "I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already." The holy law is "a killing letter to him," 2 Cor. iii. 6. The ministry of the gospel "a savour of death unto death," chap. ii. 16. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "he eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," 1 Cor. xi. 29. Nay, more than all that, Christ himself is to him a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," 1 Pet. ii. 8. Thus wrath follows the natural man, as his shadow doth his body.

(4.) He is under the power of Satan, Acts xxiv. 18. The devil has overcome him, so he is his by conquest, his lawful captive Isa. xlix. 24. The natural man is condemned already, John iii. 18, and therefore under the heavy hand of "him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil." He keeps his prisoners in the prison of a natural state, bound hand and foot, Isa. lxi. 1, laden with divers lusts, as chains wherewith he holds them fast. Thou needest not, as many do, call on the devil to take thee; for he has a fast hold of thee already, as a child of wrath.

(5.) The natural man hath no security for a moment's safety, from the wrath of God coming on him to the uttermost. The curse of the law, denounced against him, has already tied him to the stake: so that the arrows of justice may pierce his soul; and, in him, may meet all the miseries and plagues that flow from the avenging wrath of God. See how he is set as a mark to the arrows of wrath, Psalm vii. 11—13, "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death." Does he lie down to sleep? There is not a promise

that he knows of, or can know, to secure him that he shall not be in hell ere he awake. Justice pursues, and cries for vengeance on the sinner; the law casts the fire-balls of its curses continually upon him; wasted and long-tired patience is that which keeps in his life. He walks amidst enemies armed against him: his name may be Magor-missabib, that is, terror round about, Jer. xx. 3. Angels, devils, men, beasts, stones, heaven and earth, are in readiness, on a word of command from the Lord, to ruin him.

Thus the natural man lives, but he must die too; and death is a dreadful messenger to him. It comes upon him armed with wrath, and puts three sad charges in his hand. 1. Death charges him to bid an eternal farewell to all things in this world; to leave it, and haste away to another world. Ah, what a dreadful charge must this be to a child of wrath! He can have no comfort from heaven, for God is his enemy: as for the things of the world, and the enjoyment of his lusts, which were the only springs of his comfort, these are in a moment dried up to him for ever. He is not ready for another world: he was not thinking of removing so soon: or, if he was, yet he has no portion secured to him in the other world, but that which he was born to, and was increasing all his days, namely, a treasure of wrath. But go he must; his clay god, the world, must be parted with, and what has he more? There was never a glimmering of light, or favour from heaven, to his soul: the wrath which hung in the threatening, as a cloud like a man's hand, is darkening the whole heaven above him: if he "look unto the earth," from whence all his light was wont to come, "behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and he shall be driven to darkness;" Isa. viii. 22. 2. Death charges soul and body to part, till the great day. His soul is required of him, Luke xii. 20. O what a miserable parting must this be to a child of wrath! Care was indeed taken to provide for the body things necessary for this life; but, alas! there is nothing laid up for another life, nothing to be a seed of a glorious resurrection; as it lived, so it must die, and rise again, sinful flesh, fuel for the fire of God's wrath. As for the soul, he was never solicitous to provide for it. It lay in the body, dead to God, and all things truly good; and so must be carried out into the pit, in the grave-clothes of its natural state; for now that death comes, the companions in sin must part. 3. Death charges the soul to appear before the tribunal of God, while the body lies to be carried to the grave, Eccl. xii. 7, "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment." Well were it for the sinful soul, if it might be buried together with the body. But that

cannot be ; it must go, and receive its sentence ; and shall be shut up in the prison of hell, while the cursed body lies imprisoned in the grave, till the day of the general judgment.

When the end of the world, as appointed of God, is come, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead arise. Then shall the weary earth, at the command of the Judge, cast forth the bodies, the cursed bodies, of those that lived and died in their natural state ; "The sea, death, and hell, shall deliver up their dead," Rev. xx. 13. Their miserable bodies and souls shall be reunited, and they summoned before the tribunal of Christ. Then shall they receive that fearful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. Whereupon "they shall go away into everlasting punishment," ver. 46. They shall be eternally shut up in hell, never to get the least drop of comfort, nor the smallest alleviation of their torment. There they will be punished with the punishment of loss, being excommunicated for ever from the presence of God, his angels, and saints. All means of grace, all hopes of a delivery, will be for ever cut off from their eyes. They shall not have a drop of water to cool their tongues, Luke xvi. 24, 25. They will be punished with a punishment of sense. They must not only depart from God, but depart into fire ; into everlasting fire ! There the worm that shall gnaw them will never die ; the fire that will scorch them, shall never be quenched. God will, through eternity, hold them up with the one hand, and pour the full vials of wrath into them with the other.

This is that state of wrath natural men live in ; being under much of the wrath of God, and liable to more. But, for a further view of it, let us consider the qualities of this wrath : 1. It is irresistible, there is no standing before it ; "Who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry?" Psalm lxxvi. 7. Can the worm or the moth defend itself against him that designs to crush it? Can the worm man stand before an angry God? Foolish man indeed practically bids a defiance to Heaven ; but the Lord often, even in this world, opens such sluices of wrath upon them, as all their might cannot stop : they are carried away thereby, as with a flood ! How much more will it be so in hell ! 2. It is insupportable. What a man cannot resist, he will try to endure : but, Who shall dwell in devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings? God's wrath is a weight that will sink men into the lowest hell. It is a burden which no man can stand under. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. 3. It is unavoidable to such as go on impenitently, and die in their sinful course. "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Prov. xxix. 1. We may now

flee from it, indeed, by fleeing to Jesus Christ: but such as flee from Christ, will never be able to avoid it. Whither can men flee from the avenging God? Where will they find a shelter? The hills will not hear them. The mountains will be deaf to their loudest supplications, when they cry to them to "hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." 4. It is powerful and fierce wrath, Psalm xc. 11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." We are apt to fear the wrath of man more than we ought; but no man can apprehend the wrath of God to be more dreadful than it really is: the power of it can never be known to the utmost; for it is infinite, and, properly speaking, has no utmost. How fierce soever it be, either on earth or in hell, God can still carry it farther. Every thing in God is most perfect in its kind; and therefore no wrath is so fierce as his. O sinner! how wilt thou be able to endure that wrath, which will tear thee in pieces, Psalm l. 22, and grind thee to powder! Luke xx. 18. The history of the two she-bears, that tare the children of Bethel, is an awful one, 2 Kings ii. 23, 24. But the united force of the rage of lions, leopards, and she-bears bereaved of their whelps, is not sufficient to give us even a faint view of the power of the wrath of God: Hos. xiii. 7, 8, "Therefore I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart," &c. 5. It is penetrating and piercing wrath. It is burning wrath, and fiery indignation. There is no pain more exquisite than that which is caused by fire; and no fire so piercing as the fire of God's indignation, that burns unto the lowest hell, Deut. xxxii. 22. The arrows of men's wrath can pierce flesh, blood, and bones, but cannot reach the soul; but the wrath of God will sink into the soul, and so pierce a man in the most tender part, like as, when a person is thunderstruck, oft-times there is not a wound to be seen in the skin; yet life is gone, and the bones are melted, as it were: so God's wrath can penetrate into, and melt a man's soul within him, when his earthly comforts stand about him entire and untouched; as in Belshazzar's case, Dan. v. 6. 6. It is constant wrath, running parallel with the man's continuance in an unregenerate state; constantly attending him from the womb to the grave. There are few days so dark, but the sun sometimes looketh out from under the clouds: but the wrath of God is an abiding cloud on the objects of it, John iii. 36, "The wrath of God abideth on him" that believeth not. 7. It is eternal. O, miserable soul! if thou flee not from this wrath unto Jesus Christ, though thy misery had a beginning, yet it will never have an end. Should devouring death wholly

swallow thee up, and for ever hold thee fast in the grave, it would be kind: but thy body must be re-united to thy immortal soul, and live again, and never die; that thou mayest be ever dying, in the hands of the living God. Cold death will quench the flame of man's wrath against us, if nothing else do: but God's wrath, when it has come on the sinner for millions of ages, will still be the wrath to come, Matt. iii. 7; 1 Thess. i. 10; as the water of a river is still coming, how much soever has passed. While God is, he will pursue the quarrel. 8. However dreadful it is, and though it be eternal, yet it is most just wrath: it is a clear fire, without the least smoke of injustice. The sea of wrath, raging with greatest fury against the sinner, is clear as crystal. The Judge of all the earth can do no wrong: he knows no transports of passion, for they are inconsistent with the perfection of his nature. "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then, how shall God judge the world?" Rom. iii. 5, 6.

II. I shall confirm the doctrine of the State of Wrath. Consider, 1. How peremptory the threatening of the first covenant is: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," Gen. ii. 17. Hereby sin and punishment being connected, the veracity of God makes the execution of the threatening certain. Now, all men being by nature under this covenant, the breach of it lays them under the curse. 2. The justice of God requires that a child of sin be a child of wrath; that the law being broken, the sanction thereof should take place. God, as man's ruler and judge, cannot but do right, Gen. xviii. 25. Now, it is "a righteous thing with God to recompense sin" with wrath, 2 Thess. i. 6. He "is of purer eyes than to behold evil," Hab. i. 13. And "he hates all the workers of iniquity," Psalm v. 5. 3. The horrors of a natural conscience prove this. Conscience, in the breasts of men, tells them that they are sinners, and therefore liable to the wrath of God. Let men, at any time, soberly commune with themselves, and they will find that they have the witness in themselves, "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death," Rom. i. 32. 4. The pangs of the new birth, the work of the Spirit on elect souls, in order to their conversion, demonstrate this. Hereby their natural sinfulness and misery, as liable to the wrath of God, are plainly taught them, filling their hearts with fear of that wrath. As it is the Spirit's work to "convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment," John xvi. 8, this testimony must needs be true; for the Spirit of truth cannot witness an untruth. But true believers, being freed from the state of wrath, "receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but receive the Spirit of adoption,"

Rom. viii. 15. Therefore, if fears of that nature do arise, after the soul's union with Christ, they come from the saint's own spirit, or from a worse. 5. The sufferings of Christ plainly prove this doctrine. Wherefore was the Son of God a son under wrath, but because the children of men were children of wrath? He suffered the wrath of God; not for himself, but for those who were liable to it in their own persons. Nay, this not only shews us to have been liable to wrath, but also that wrath must have a vent, in the punishment of sin. If this was done in the green tree, what will become of the dry? What a miserable case must a sinner be in, that is out of Christ; that is not vitally united to Christ, and partakes not of his Spirit! God, who spared not his own Son, surely will not spare such a one.

But the unregenerate man, who has no great value for the honour of God, will be apt to rise up against this Judge, and in his own heart condemn his procedure. Nevertheless, the Judge being infinitely just, the sentence must be righteous. Therefore, to stop thy mouth, O proud sinner! and to still thy clamour against thy righteous Judge, consider, 1. Thou art a sinner by nature; and it is highly reasonable, that guilt and wrath be as old as sin. Why should not God begin to vindicate his honour, as soon as vile worms attempt to impair it? Why shall not a serpent bite the thief, as soon as he leaps over the hedge? Why should not the threatening take hold of the sinner, as soon as he casts away the command? The poisonous nature of the serpent affords a man sufficient ground to kill it, as soon as ever he can reach it; and by this time thou mayest be convinced that thy nature is a very compound of enmity against God. 2. Thou hast not only enmity against God in thy nature, but hast discovered it by actual sins, which are, in his eye, acts of hostility. Thou hast brought forth thy lusts into the field of battle against thy sovereign Lord. And because thou art such a criminal, thy condemnation is just: for, besides the sin of thy nature, thou hast done that against Heaven, which if thou hadst done against men, thy life must have gone for it; and shall not wrath from Heaven overtake thee? 1. Thou art guilty of high treason and rebellion against the King of heaven. The thought and wish of thy heart, which he knows as well as the language of thy mouth, has been, "No God," Psalm xiv. 1. Thou hast rejected his government, blown the trumpet, and set up the standard of rebellion against him, being one of those that say, "We will not have this man to reign over us," Luke xix. 14. Thou hast striven against, and quenched his Spirit; practically disowned his laws proclaimed by his messengers; stopped thine ears at their voice, and sent them away mourning for thy

pride. Thou hast conspired with his grand enemy, the devil. Although thou art a servant of the King of glory, daily receiving of his favours, and living on his bounty, thou art holding a correspondence, and hast contracted a friendship, with his greatest enemy, and art acting for him against thy Lord; for "the lusts of the devil you will do," John viii. 44. 2. Thou art a murderer before the Lord. Thou hast laid the stumbling-block of thine iniquity before the blind world, and hast ruined the souls of others by thy sinful course. Though thou dost not see now, the time may come when thou shalt see the blood of thy relations, neighbours, acquaintances, and others upon thy head, Matth. xviii. 7. "Woe unto the world because of offences—Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Yea, thou art a self-murderer before God: Prov. viii. 36, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death." Ezek. xviii. 31, "Why will ye die?" The laws of men mark the self-murderer; what wonder is it, that the law of God is so severe against soul-murderers? Is it strange, that they who will needs depart from God now, cost what it will, should be forced to depart from him at last, into everlasting fire? But, what is yet more criminal, thou art guilty of the murder of the Son of God; for the Lord will reckon thee amongst those that pierced him, Rev. i. 6. Thou hast rejected him, as the Jews did; and by rejecting him, thou hast justified their deed. They indeed did not acknowledge him to be the Son of God, but thou dost. What they did against him, was in his state of humiliation; but thou hast acted against him, in his state of exaltation. These things will aggravate thy condemnation. What wonder then, if the voice of the lamb change to the roaring of the lion, against the traitor and murderer!

Objection. But some will say, "Is there not a vast disproportion between our sin, and that wrath you talk of?" I answer, "No; God punisheth no more than the sinner deserves." To rectify your mistake in this matter, consider, 1. The vast rewards which God has annexed to obedience. His word is no more full of fiery wrath against sin, than it is of gracious rewards to the obedience it requires. If heaven be in the promises, it is altogether equal that hell is in the threatenings. If death were not in the balance with life, eternal misery with eternal happiness, where would be the proportion?—Moreover, sin deserves the misery, but our best works do not deserve the happiness: yet both are set before us; sin and misery, holiness and happiness. What reason is there then to complain? 2. How severe soever the threatenings be, yet all have enough to do to reach the end of the law. "Fear him," says our Lord, "which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell;

yea, I say unto you, Fear him," Luke xii. 5. This bespeaks our dread of divine power and majesty; yet how few fear him indeed! The Lord knows the hearts of sinners to be exceedingly intent upon fulfilling their lusts; they cleave so fondly to their beloved sins, that a small force does not suffice to draw them away from them. They that travel through deserts, where they are in hazard from wild beasts, have need to carry fire along with them; and they have need of a hard wedge that have knotty timber to cleave: so a holy law must be fenced with dreadful wrath in a world lying in wickedness. But who are they that complain of that wrath as too great, but those to whom it is too little to draw them off from their sinful courses? It was the man who pretended to fear his Lord, because he was an austere man, that kept his pound laid up in a napkin; and so he was condemned out of his own mouth, Luke xix. 20—22. Thou art that man, even thou whose objection I am answering. How can the wrath which thou art under, and liable to, be too great when, as yet it is not sufficient to awaken thee to flee from it? Is it time to relax the penalties of the law, when men are trampling the commands of it under foot? 3. Consider how God dealt with his own Son, whom he spared not, Rom. viii. 32. The wrath of God seized on his soul and body both, and brought him into the dust of death. That his sufferings were not eternal, flowed from the quality of the Sufferer, who was infinite; and therefore able to bear, at once the whole load of wrath; and, upon that account, his sufferings were infinite in value. But as the sufferings of a mere creature cannot be infinite in value, they must be protracted to an eternity.—And what confidence can a rebel subject have to quarrel with his part of a punishment executed on the King's Son? 4. The sinner doth against God what he can: "Behold, thou hast done evil things as thou couldst," Jer. iii. 5. That thou hast not done more, and worse, thanks to him who restrained thee; to the chain by which the wolf was kept in, not to thyself. No wonder that God shews his power on the sinner, who puts forth his power against God, as far as it will reach. The unregenerate man puts no period to his sinful course; and would put no bounds to it neither, if he were not restrained by divine power, for wise ends: therefore it is just that he be for ever under wrath. 5. It is infinite majesty which sin strikes against; and so it is, in some sort, an infinite evil. Sin rises in its demerit, according to the quality of the party offended. If a man wound his neighbour, his goods must go for it; but if he wound his prince, his life must go for that. The infinity of God makes infinite wrath the just demerit of sin. God is infinitely displeased with sin; and when he acts, he must act like himself, and shew his displeasure by pro-

portionable means. 6. Those who shall lie for ever under this wrath will be eternally sinning, and therefore must eternally suffer; not only in respect of divine judicial procedure, but because sin is its own punishment, in the same manner as holy obedience is its own reward.

III. I now proceed to apply this doctrine of the misery of man's natural state.

USE I. Of information. Is our state by nature a state of wrath? Then,

1. Surely we are not born innocent. Those chains of wrath, which by nature are upon us, shew us to be born criminals. The swaddling-bands, wherewith infants are bound hand and foot as soon as they are born, may put us in mind of the cords of wrath, with which they are held prisoners, as children of wrath.

2. What desperate madness is it, for sinners to go on in their sinful course! What is it but to heap coals of fire on thine own head! to lay more and more fuel to the fire of wrath! to "treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath!" Rom ii. 5. Thou mayest perish, "when his wrath is kindled but a little," Psalm ii. 12. Why wilt thou increase it yet more? Thou art already bound with such cords of death, as cannot easily be loosened; what need is there of more? Stand, careless sinner, and consider this.

3. Thou hast no reason to complain, as long as thou art out of hell. "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" Lam. iii. 39. If one, who has forfeited his life, be banished from his native country, and exposed to many hardships; he may well bear all patiently, seeing his life is spared. Do you murmur, because you are under pain and sickness? Nay, bless God, you are not there where the worm never dieth. Dost thou grudge, that thou art not in so good a condition in the world as some of thy neighbours are? Be thankful, rather, that you are not in the case of the damned. Is thy substance gone from thee? Wonder that the fire of God's wrath hath not consumed thee. Kiss the rod, O sinner! and acknowledge mercy; for God "punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve," Ezra ix. 13.

4. Here is a memorandum, both for poor and rich.

(1.) The poorest, that go from door to door, and have not one penny left them by their parents, were born to an inheritance. Their first father Adam left them "children of wrath:" and, continuing in their natural state, they cannot escape it; for "this is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God," Job xx. 29. An heritage that will furnish them with a habitation, who have not where to lay their head; they shall

be "cast into outer darkness," Matt. xxv. 30, for to them "is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever," Jude, ver. 13, where their bed shall be sorrow; "they shall lie down in sorrow," Isa. l. 11; their food shall be judgment, for God will "feed them with judgment," Ezek xxxiv. 16; and their drink shall be the red wine of God's wrath, "the dregs whereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them," Psalm lxxv. 8. I know that those who are destitute of worldly goods, and withal void of the knowledge and grace of God, who therefore may be called the devil's poor, will be apt to say here, "We hope God will make us suffer all our misery in this world, and that we shall be happy in the next;" as if their miserable outward condition, in time, would secure their happiness in eternity. A gross and fatal mistake! there is another inheritance which they have, namely, "Lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit," Jer. xvi. 19. But, "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies," Isa. xxviii. 17. Dost thou think, O sinner, that God, who commands judges on earth "not to respect the person of the poor in judgment," Levit. xix. 15, will pervert judgment for thee? Nay, know for certain, that however miserable thou art here, thou shalt be eternally miserable hereafter, if thou livest and diest in thy natural state.

(2.) Many that have enough in the world, have far more than they know of. Thou hadst, it may be, O unregenerate man! an estate, a good portion, a large stock, left thee by thy father; thou hast improved it, and the sun of prosperity shines upon thee; so that thou canst say, with Esau, Gen. xxxiii. 9, "I have enough." But know, thou hast more than all that, an inheritance which thou dost not think of: thou art a child of wrath, an heir of hell. That is an heritage which will abide with thee amidst all the changes in the world, as long as thou continuest in an unregenerate state. When thou shalt leave thy substance to others, this will go along with thee into another world. It is no wonder a slaughter ox is fed to the full, and is not set to work as others are, Job xxi. 30, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." Well then, "Rejoice, let thine heart cheer thee, walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." Live above reproofs and warning from the word of God; shew thyself a man of a fine spirit, by casting off all fear of God; mock at seriousness; live like thyself, "a child of wrath," "an heir of hell:" "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment," Eccl. xi. 9. Assure yourself, thy "breaking shall come suddenly at an instant," Isa. xxx. 13. "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool," Eccl. vii. 6. The fair blaze, and the

great noise which they make, are quickly gone: so shall thy mirth be. Then that wrath, that is now silently sinking into thy soul, shall make a fearful hissing.

5. Wo to him, that, like Moab, "hath been at ease from his youth, Jer. xlviii. 11, and never saw the black cloud of wrath hanging over his head. There are many who "have no changes, therefore they fear not God," Psalm lv. 19. They have lived in a good belief, as they call it, all their days; that is, they never had power to believe an ill report of their soul's state. Many have come by their religion too easily: and as it came lightly to them, so it will go from them, when the trial comes. Do ye think men flee from wrath in a morning dream? Or will they flee from the wrath they never saw pursuing them?

6. Think it not strange, if you see one in great distress about his soul's condition, who was wont to be as jovial, and as little concerned for salvation as any of his neighbours. Can one get a right view of himself, as in a state of wrath, and not be pierced with sorrows, terrors, and anxiety? When a weight quite above a man's strength, lies upon him, and he is alone, he can neither stir hand nor foot; but when one comes to lift it off him, he will struggle to get from under it. Thunder-claps of wrath from the word of God, conveyed to the soul by the Spirit of the Lord, will surely keep a man awake.

7. It is no wonder that wrath comes upon churches and nations, and upon us in this land, and that infants and children smart under it. Most of the society are yet children of wrath; few are fleeing from it, or taking the way to prevent it: but people of all ranks are helping it on. The Jews rejected Christ; and their children have been smarting under wrath these eighteen hundred years. God grant that the bad entertainment given to Christ and his gospel, by this generation, be not pursued with wrath on the succeeding one.

USE II. Of Exhortation. Here, 1. I shall drop a word to those who are yet in an unregenerate state. 2. To those who are brought out of it. 3. To all equally.

1. To you that are yet in an unregenerate state, I would sound the alarm, and warn you to see to yourselves, while there is yet hope. O you children of wrath take no rest in this dismal state; but flee to Christ, the only refuge; haste and make your escape thither. The state of wrath is too hot a climate for you to live in, Micah. ii. 10, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest." O sinner, knowest thou where thou art? Dost thou not see thy danger? The curse has entered into thy soul: wrath is thy covering;

the heavens are growing blacker and blacker above thy head; the earth is weary of thee, the pit is opening her mouth for thee, and should the thread of thy life be cut this moment, thou art thenceforth past all hope for ever. Sirs, if we saw you putting a cup of poison to your mouth, we should flee to you and snatch it out of your hands. If we saw the house on fire about you, while you were fast asleep in it, we would run to you, and drag you out of it. But alas! you are in ten thousand times greater hazard: yet we can do no more than tell you your danger; invite, exhort, and beseech you to look to yourselves: and lament your stupidity and obstinacy, when we cannot prevail with you to take warning. If there were no hope of your recovery, we should be silent, and would not torment you before the time: but though you be lost and undone, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Wherefore, I cry unto you, in the name of the Lord, and in the words of the prophet, Zech. ix. 12. "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." Flee to Jesus Christ out of this your natural state.

Motive 1. While you are in this state, you must stand or fall according to the law, or covenant of works. If you understood this aright, it would strike through your breasts as a thousand darts. One had better be a slave to the Turks, condemned to the galleys, or under Egyptian bondage, than be under the covenant of works now. All mankind were brought under it in Adam, as we heard before; and thou, in thy unregenerate state, art still where Adam left thee. It is true, there is another covenant brought in: but what is that to thee, who art not brought into it? Thou must needs be under one of the two covenants; either under the law, or under grace. That thou art not under grace, the dominion of sin over thee manifestly proves: therefore thou art under the law, Rom. vi. 14. Do not think God has laid aside the first covenant, Matth. v. 17, 18; Gal. iii. 10. No, he will "magnify the law, and make it honourable." It is broken indeed on thy part; but it is absurd to think, that therefore your obligation is dissolved. Nay, thou must stand and fall by it, till thou canst produce thy discharge from God himself, who is the party in that covenant; and this thou canst not pretend to, seeing thou art not in Christ.

Now, to give you a view of your misery, in this respect, consider these following things: 1. Hereby you are bound over to death, in virtue of the threatening of death in the covenant, Gen. ii. 17. The condition being broken you fall under the penalty. So it concludes you under wrath. 2. There is no salvation for you under this covenant, but on a condition impossible to be performed by you. The justice of God must be satisfied for the wrong which

you have done already. God has written this truth in characters of the blood of his own Son. Yea, and you must perfectly obey the law for the time to come. So says the law, Gal. iii. 12, "The man that doth them, shall live in them." Come then, O sinner! see if thou canst make a ladder, whereby thou mayest reach the throne of God: stretch forth thine arms, and try if thou canst fly on the wings of the wind, catch hold of the clouds, and pierce through these visible heavens: and then either climb over, or break through, the jasper walls of the city above. These things thou mayest do, as well as be able to reach heaven in thy natural state, under this covenant. 3. There is no pardon under this covenant. Pardon is the benefit of another covenant, with which thou hast nothing to do, Acts xiii. 39, "By him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." As for thee, thou art in the hands of a merciless creditor, who will take thee by the throat, saying, "Pay what thou owest;" and cast thee into prison, there to remain till thou hast paid the utmost farthing: unless thou be so wise as to get a surety in time, who is able to answer for all thy debt, and get up thy discharge. This Jesus Christ alone can do. Thou abidest under this covenant, and pleadest mercy; but what is thy plea founded on? There is not one promise of mercy or pardon in that covenant. Dost thou plead mercy for mercy's sake? Justice will step in between it and thee, and plead God's covenant threatening, which he cannot deny. 4. There is no place for repentance in this covenant, so as the sinner can be helped by it. For as soon as ever thou sinnest, the law lays its curse on thee, which is a dead weight thou canst by no means throw off; no, not though thine "head were waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears, to weep day and night" for thy sin. That is what the law cannot do, in that it is "weak through the flesh," Rom. vii. 3. You are another profane Esau, that has sold the blessing; and there is no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears, while under the covenant. 5. There is no acceptance of the will for the deed under this covenant, which was not made for good will, but good works. The mistake in this point ruins many. They are not in Christ, but stand under the first covenant; and yet they will plead this privilege. This is just like a man having made a feast for those of his own family, and when they sit down at table, another man's servant, that has run away from his master, presumptuously comes forward and sits down among them: would not the master of the feast give such a stranger that check, "Friend, how comest thou in hither?" and since he is none of his family, commanded him to be gone quickly. Though a mas-

ter accept the good-will of his own child for the deed, can a hired servant expect that privilege? 6. You have nothing to do with Christ while under that covenant. By the law of God, a woman cannot be married to two husbands at once: either death or divorce must dissolve the first marriage, ere she can marry another. So we must first be dead to the law, ere we can be married to Christ, Rom. vii. 4. The law is the first husband; Jesus Christ, who raises the dead, marries the widow, that was heartbroken, and slain by the first husband. But while the soul is in the house with the first husband, it cannot plead a marriage relation to Christ; nor the benefits of a marriage covenant, which is not yet entered into, Gal. v. 4, "Christ is become of no effect to you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." Peace, pardon, and such like benefits, are all benefits of the covenant of grace. You must not think to stand off from Christ, and the marriage covenant with him, and yet plead these benefits, any more than one man's wife can plead the benefit of a contract of marriage past between another man and his wife. 7. See the bill of exclusion, passed in the court of Heaven, against all under the covenant of works, Gal. iv. 30, "The son of the bond-woman shall not be heir." Compare ver. 24. Heirs of wrath must not be heirs of glory. Whom the first covenant hath power to exclude out of heaven, the second covenant cannot bring into it.

Objection. Then it is impossible for us to be saved. *Ans.* It is so while you are in that state; but if you would be out of that dreadful condition hasten out of that state. If a murderer be under sentence of death, so long as he lives within the kingdom, the laws will reach his life; but if he can make his escape, and get over the sea, into the dominions of another prince, our laws cannot reach him there. This is what we would have you to do; flee out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son; out of the dominion of the law, into the dominion of grace: then all the curses of the law, or covenant of works, shall never be able to reach you.

Motive 2. O ye children of wrath, your state is wretched, for you have lost God, and that is an unspeakable loss. You are without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. Whatever you may call yours, you cannot call God yours. If we look to the earth, perhaps you can tell us, that land, that house, or that herd of cattle, is yours. But let us look upward to heaven; is that God, that grace, that glory, yours? Truly, you have neither part no lot in this matter. When Nebuchadnezzar talks of cities and kingdoms, O how big does he speak! "Great Babylon, that I have

built—my power—my majesty;” but he tells a poor tale, when he comes to speak of God, saying, “Your God,” Dan. ii. 47, and iv. 30. Alas, sinner! whatever thou hast, God is gone from thee. O the misery of a godless soul! Hast thou lost God? Then, 1. The sap and substance of all thou hast in the world is gone. The godless man, have what he will, is one that hath not, Matt. xxv. 29. I defy the unregenerate man to attain to soul satisfaction, whatever he possesseth, since God is not his God. All his days he eats in darkness: in every condition there is a secret dissatisfaction haunts his heart, like a ghost: the soul wants something though perhaps it knows not what; and so it will be always, till the soul return to God, the fountain of satisfaction. 2. Thou canst do nothing to purpose for thyself; for God is gone, his soul is departed from thee, Jer. vi. 8, like a leg out of joint hanging by, whereof a man has no use, as the word there used signifies. Losing God, thou hast lost the fountain of good; and so all grace, all goodness, all the saving influences of his Spirit. What canst thou do then? What fruit canst thou bring forth, more than a branch cut off from the stock? John xv. 5. Thou art become unprofitable, Rom. iii. 12, as a filthy rotten thing, fit only for the dunghill. 3. Death has come up into thy windows, yea, and has settled on thy face; for God, in whose favour life is, Psalm xxx. 5, is gone from thee, and so the life of thy soul is departed. What a loathsome lump is the body, when the soul is gone! Far more loathsome is thy soul in this case. Thou art dead while thou livest. Do not deny it, seeing thy speech is laid, thine eyes closed, and all spiritual motion in thee ceased. Thy true friends who see thy case, lament, because thou art gone into the land of silence. 4. Thou hast not a steady friend amongst all the creatures of God; for now that thou hast lost the master’s favour, all the family is set against thee. Conscience is thine enemy: the word never speaks good of thee: God’s people loathe so far as they see what thou art, Psalm xv. 4. The beasts and stones of the field are banded together against thee, Job v. 23; Hos. ii. 18. Thy meat, drink, and clothes, grudge being serviceable to the wretch that has lost God, and abuseth them to his dishonour. The earth groans under thee; yea, “the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together,” because of thee, and such as thou art, Rom. viii. 22. Heaven will have nothing to do with thee; for “there shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that defileth,” Rev. xxi. 27. Only “hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming,” Isa. xiv. 9. 5. Thy hell is begun already. What makes hell, but exclusion from the presence of God? “Depart from me, ye cursed.” You are gone from God already, with the

curse upon you. That which is now your choice, shall be your punishment at length, if you turn not. As a gracious state is a state of glory in the bud; so a graceless state is hell in the bud, which, if it continue, will come at length to perfection.

Motive 3. Consider the dreadful instances of the wrath of God; and let them serve to awaken thee to flee out of this state. Consider 1. How it is fallen on men. Even in this world, many have been set up as monuments of Divine vengeance, that others might fear. Wrath has swept away multitudes, who have fallen together by the hand of an angry God. Consider how the Lord "spared not the old world—bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly: And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly," 2 Pet. ii. 5, 6. But it is yet more dreadful to think of that weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, amongst those who in hell lift up their eyes, but cannot get a drop of water to cool their tongues. Believe these things and be warned by them, lest destruction come upon thee, for a warning to others. 2. Consider how wrath fell upon the fallen angels, whose case is absolutely hopeless. They were the first that ventured to break the hedge of the Divine law; and God set them up for monuments of his wrath against sin. They once "left their own habitation," and were never allowed to look in again at the hole of the door; but they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day," Jude ver. 6. 3. Behold how an angry God dealt with his own Son, standing in the room of elect sinners, Rom. viii. 32, "God spared not his Son." Sparing mercy might have been expected, if any at all. If any person could have obtained it, surely his own Son would have got it: but he spared him not. The Father's delight is made a man of sorrows: he who is the wisdom of God, becomes sore amazed, ready to faint away in a fit of horror. The weight of this wrath makes him sweat great drops of blood. By the fierceness of this fire, his heart was like wax melted in the midst of his bowels. Behold, here, how severe God is against sin! The sun was struck blind with this terrible sight, rocks were rent, graves opened; death, as it were, in the excess of astonishment, letting its prisoners slip away. What is a deluge, a shower of fire and brimstone, on the people of Sodom, the terrible noise of a dissolving world, the whole fabric of heaven and earth disuniting at once, and angels cast down from heaven into the bottomless pit! What are all these, I say, in comparison with this, God in human nature suffering! groaning! dying upon a cross! Infinite holiness did it, to make sin look like itself, that is, infi-

nately odious. And will men live at ease, while exposed to this wrath?

Motive 4. Consider what a God he is with whom thou hast to do, and whose wrath thou art liable unto. He is the God of infinite knowledge and wisdom; so that none of thy sins, however secret, can be hid from him. He infallibly finds out all means, whereby wrath may be executed, toward the satisfying of justice. He is of infinite power, and so can do what he will against the sinner. How heavy must the strokes of wrath be, which are laid on by an omnipotent hand! Infinite power can make the sinner prisoner, even when he is in his greatest rage against Heaven. It can bring again the several parcels of dust out of the grave, put them together again, re-unite the soul and body, summon them before the tribunal, hurry them away to the pit, and hold them up with the one hand, through eternity, while they are lashed with the other. He is infinitely just, and therefore must punish: it were acting contrary to his nature to suffer the sinner to escape wrath. Hence the executing of this wrath is pleasing to him: for though the Lord hath no delight in the death of a sinner, as it is the destruction of his own creature, yet he delights in it, as it is the execution of justice. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest." Mark the reason; "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness," Psalm xi. 6, 7, "I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted," Ezek. v. 13. "I also will laugh at your calamity," Prov. i. 26. Finally, He lives for ever, to pursue the quarrel. Let us therefore conclude, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Be awakened then, O young sinner! be awakened, O old sinner! who are yet in the state you were born in! Your security is none of God's allowance; it is the sleep of death; rise out of it, ere the pit close its mouth upon you. It is true, you may put on a breast-plate of iron, make your brow brass, and your heart as an adamant; and who can help it? But God will break that brazen brow, and make that adamantine heart at last to fly into a thousand pieces. You may, if you will labour to put these things out of your heads, that you may sleep in fancied safety, though in a state of wrath. You may run away, with the arrows sticking in your consciences, to your labour, to work them away; or to your beds, to sleep them out; or to company, to sport and laugh them away: but convictions, so stifled, will have a fearful resurrection; and the day is coming, unless thou takest warning in time, when the arrows of wrath shall so stick in thy soul, as thou shalt never be able to pluck them out through the ages of eternity.

But if any desire to flee from the wrath to come, and, for that end to know what course to take, I offer them these few advices; and implore and beseech them, as they love their own souls, to fall in with them. 1. Retire to some secret place and there meditate on this your misery. Believe it, and fix your thoughts on it. Let each put the question to himself, How can I live in this state? How can I die in it? How shall I rise again, and stand before the tribunal of God in it? 2. Consider seriously the sin of your nature, heart, and life. A proper sight of wrath flows from a deep sense of sin. They who see themselves exceedingly sinful, will find no great difficulty to perceive themselves to be heirs of wrath. 3. Labour to justify God in this matter. To quarrel with God about it, and to rage like a wild bull in a net, will but fix you the more in it. Humiliation of soul before the Lord is necessary for an escape. God will not sell deliverance, but freely gives it to those who see themselves altogether unworthy of his favour. 4. Turn your eyes, O prisoners of hope, towards the Lord Jesus Christ; and embrace him, as he offereth himself in the gospel. "There is no salvation in any other," Acts iv. 12. God is a consuming fire; you are children of wrath: if the Mediator interpose not between him and you, you are undone for ever. If you would be safe, come under his shadow: one drop of that wrath cannot fall there, for he "delivereth us from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. i. 10. Accept of him in this covenant, wherein he offereth himself to thee; so thou shalt, as the captive woman, redeem thy life, by marrying the conqueror. His blood will quench that fire of wrath which burns against thee: in the white raiment of his righteousness thou wilt be safe; for no storm of wrath can pierce it.

2. I shall drop a few words to the saints.

(1.) "Remember—that at that time," namely, when you were in your natural state, "ye were without Christ—having no hope, and without God in the world." Call to mind the state you were in formerly; and review the misery of it. There are five memorials which I may thence give in to the whole assembly of the saints, who are no more children of wrath, but "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," though as yet in their minority. 1. Remember, that in the day our Lord first took you by the hand, you were in no better a condition than others. O! what moved him to take you when he passed by your neighbours? he found you children of wrath, even as others: but he did not leave you so. He came into the common prison, where you lay in fetters, even as others: from among the multitude of condemned malefactors, he picked you out, commanded your fetters to be taken off, put a pardon in your hand,

and brought you into the glorious liberty of the children of God, while he left others in the devil's fetters. 2. Remember there was nothing in you to engage him to love you, in the day he appeared for your deliverance. You were children of wrath, even as others; fit for hell, and altogether unfit for heaven: yet the King brought you into the palace; the King's Son made love to you, a condemned criminal, and espoused you to himself, on the day in which you might have been led forth to execution. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," Matth. xi. 26. 3. Remember, you were fitter to be loathed than loved in that day. Wonder, that when he saw you in your blood, he looked not at you with abhorrence, and passed by. Wonder, that ever such a time could be a time of love, Ezek. xvi. 8, 4. Remember, you are decked with borrowed feathers. It is his comeliness which is upon you, ver. 14. It was he that took off your prison garments, and clothed you with robes of righteousness, garments of salvation; garments wherewith you are arrayed as the lilies, which toil not, neither do they spin. He took the chains from off your arms, the rope from about your neck; put you in such a dress, as you might be fit for the court of heaven, even to eat at the King's table. 5. Remember your faults this day, as Pharaoh's butler, who had forgotten Joseph. Mind how you have forgotten, and how unkindly you have treated, him who remembered you in your low estate. Is this your kindness to your friend? In the day of your deliverance, did you think you could have thus requited him, your Lord?

(2.) Pity the children of wrath, the world that lies in wickedness. Can you be unconcerned for them, you who were once in the same condition? You have got ashore, indeed, but your companions are yet in hazard of perishing; and will not you afford them all possible help for their deliverance? What they are, you formerly were. This may draw pity from you, and engage you to use all means for their recovery. See Titus iii. 1—3.

(3.) Admire that matchless love which brought you out of the state of wrath. Christ's love was active love; he brought thy soul from the pit of corruption!—It was no easy work to purchase the life of the condemned sinner; but he gave his life for thy life. He gave his precious blood to quench the flame of wrath, which otherwise would have consumed thee. Men get the best view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit; from this pit of misery, into which thou wast cast by the fall of the first Adam, thou mayest get the best view of the Sun of Righteousness, in all his dimensions. He is the second Adam, who took thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. How broad was that love, which covered such a

multitude of sins! Behold the length of it, reaching from everlasting to everlasting, Psalm ciii. 17. The depth of it, going so low as to deliver thee from the lowest hell, Psalm lxxxvi. 13. The height of it, raising thee up to sit in heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6.

(4.) Be humble, carry low sails, walk softly all your years. Be not proud of your gifts, graces, privileges, or attainments; but remember you were children of wrath, even as others. The peacock walks slowly, hangs down his starry feathers, while he looks to his black feet. "Look ye to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged;" and walk humbly, as it becomes free grace's debtors.

(5.) Be wholly for your Lord. Every wife is obliged to be dutiful to her husband; but double ties lie upon her who was taken from a prison, or a dunghill. If your Lord has delivered you from wrath, you ought, on that very account, to be wholly his; to act for him, to suffer for him, and to do whatever he calls you to.—The saints have no reason to complain of their lot in the world, whatever it be. Well may they bear the cross for Him, by whom the curse was borne away from them. Well may they bear the wrath of men in his cause, who has freed them from the wrath of God; and cheerfully go to a fire for him, by whom hell-fire is quenched as to them. Soul and body, and all thou hadst in the world, were formerly under wrath: he has removed that wrath, shall not all these be at his service? That thy soul is not overwhelmed with the wrath of God, is owing purely to Jesus Christ; and shall it not be a temple for his Spirit? That thy heart is not filled with horror and despair is owing to Him only; to whom then should it be devoted, but to him alone? That thine eyes are not blinded with the smoke of the pit; thy hands not fettered with chains of darkness; thy tongue is not broiling in the fire of hell; and thy feet are not standing in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone,—is owing purely to Jesus Christ! and shall not these eyes be employed for him, these hands act for him, this tongue speak for him, and these feet speedily run his errands? To him who believes that he was a child of wrath, even as others, but is now delivered by the blessed Jesus, nothing will appear too much, to do or suffer for his Deliverer, when he has a fair call to it.

3. To conclude with a word to all. Let no man think lightly of sin, which lays the sinner open to the wrath of God. Let not the sin of our nature, which wreathes the yoke of God's wrath so early about our necks, seem a small thing in our eyes. Fear the Lord because of his dreadful wrath. Tremble at the thought of sin, against which God has such fiery indignation. Look on his wrath, and stand in awe, and sin not. Do you think this is to press you to

slavish fear? If it were so, one had better be a slave to God with a trembling heart, than a free man to the devil, with a seared conscience and a heart of adamant. But it is not so; you may love him, and thus fear him too; yea, you ought to do it, though you were saints of the first magnitude. See Psalm cxix. 120; Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 5; Heb. xii. 28, 29. Although you have passed the gulph of wrath, being in Jesus Christ, yet it is but reasonable that your hearts should shiver when you look back to it. Your sin still deserves wrath, even as the sins of others; and it would be terrible to be in a fiery furnace, although by a miracle we were so protected against it, as that it could not harm us.

PART III.

MAN'S UTTER INABILITY TO RECOVER HIMSELF.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.—ROMANS v. 6.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.—JOHN v. 44.

WE have now had a view of the total corruption of man's nature, and that load of wrath which lies on him, that gulf of misery into which he is plunged in his natural state. But there is one part of his misery that deserves particular consideration; namely, his utter inability to recover himself; the knowledge of which is necessary for the due humiliation of a sinner. What I design here, is only to propose a few things, whereby to convince the unregenerate man of this his inability; that he may see an absolute need of Christ and of the power of his grace.

As a man that is fallen into a pit cannot be supposed to help himself out of it, but by one of two ways; either by doing all himself alone, or taking hold of, and improving, the help offered him by others: so an unconverted man cannot be supposed to help himself out of his natural state, but either in the way of the law, or covenant of works, by doing all himself without Christ; or else in the way of the Gospel, or covenant of grace, by exerting his own strength to lay hold upon, and to make use of the help offered him by a Saviour. But, alas! the unconverted man is dead in the pit, and cannot help himself either of these ways; not the first way; for the