STATE III.
THE STATE OF GRACE.

PART I.
ON REGENERATION.

1 Peter i. 23,
Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

We proceed now to the state of grace, the state of begun recovery of human nature, into which all that shall partake of eternal happiness are translated, sooner or later, while in this world. It is the result of a gracious change made upon those who shall inherit eternal life: which change may be taken up in these two particulars: 1. In opposition to their natural real state, the state of corruption, there is a change made upon them in regeneration; whereby their nature is changed. 2. In opposition to their natural relative state, the state of wrath, there is a change made upon them in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ; by which they are placed beyond the reach of condemnation. These, therefore, regeneration and union with Christ, I desire to treat on as the great and comprehensive changes on a sinner, bringing him into the state of grace.

The first of these we have in the text; together with the outward and ordinary means by which it is brought about. The apostle here, to excite the saints to the study of holiness, and particularly of brotherly love, puts them in mind of their spiritual original. He tells them that they were born again; and that of incorruptible seed, the word of God. This shows them to be brethren, partakers of the same new nature: which is the root from which holiness, and particularly brotherly love, springs. We have been once born sinners: we must be born again, that we may be saints. The simple word signifies "to be begotten;" and so it may be read, Matth. xi. 11; "to be conceived," Matt. i. 20; and "to be born," Matt. ii. 1. Accordingly, the compound word, used in the text, may be taken in its full latitude, the last idea presupposing the two former: so regeneration is a supernatural real change on the whole man, fitly compared to the natural birth, as will afterwards appear. The
ordinary means of regeneration, called the "seed," whereof the new creature is formed, is not corruptible seed. Of such, indeed our bodies are generated: but the spiritual seed of which the new creature is generated, is incorruptible; namely, "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The sound of the word of God passeth, even as other sounds do; but the word lasteth, liveth, and abideth, in respect of its everlasting effects, on all upon whom it operates. This "word, which by the gospel is preached unto you," ver. 25, impregnated by the Spirit of God, is the means of regeneration: and by it dead sinners are raised to life.

Doctrine. All men in the state of grace, are born again. All gracious persons, namely, such as are in a state of favour with God, and endowed with gracious qualities and dispositions, are regenerate persons. In discoursing on this subject, I shall shew, What regeneration is; next, Why it is so called; and then apply the doctrine.

I. Of the Nature of regeneration.

For the better understanding of the nature of regeneration, take this along with you, that as there are false conceptions in nature, so there are also in grace: by these many are deluded, mistaking some partial changes made upon them, for this great and thorough change. To remove such mistakes, let these few things be considered: (1.) Many call the church their mother, whom God will not own to be his children, Cant. i. 6. "My mother's children," that is, false brethren, "were angry with me." All that are baptized, are not born again. Simon was baptized, yet still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts viii. 13, 23. Where Christianity is the religion of the country, many are called by the name of Christ, who have no more of him than the name: and no wonder, for the devil had his goats among Christ's sheep, in those places where but few professed the Christian religion, 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us." (2.) Good education is not regeneration. Education may chain up men's lusts, but cannot change their hearts. A wolf is still a ravenous beast, though it be in chains. Joash was very devout during the life of his good tutor Jehoiada; but afterwards he quickly shewed what spirit he was of, by his sudden apostasy, 2 Chron. xxiv. 2—18. Good example is of mighty influence to change the outward man: but that change often goes off, when a man changes his company; of which the world affords many sad instances. (3.) A turning from open profanity, to civility and sobriety, falls short of this saving change. Some are, for a while, very loose, especially in their younger years; but at length they reform, and leave their profane courses. Here is a change, yet only such as may be found in men utterly void of the
grace of God, and whose righteousness is so far from exceeding, that it doth not come up to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. (4.) One may engage in all the outward duties of religion, and yet not be born again. Though lead be cast into various shapes, it remains still but a base metal. Men may escape the pollutions of the world, and yet be but dogs and swine, 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. All the external acts of religion are within the compass of natural abilities. Yea, hypocrites may have the counterfeit of all the graces of the Spirit: for we read of "true holiness," Eph. iv. 24; and "faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. i. 5; which shews us that there is counterfeit holiness, and a feigned faith. (5.) Men may advance to a great deal of strictness in their own way of religion, and yet be strangers to the new birth, Acts xxvi. 5, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." Nature has its own unsanctified strictness in religion. The Pharisees had so much of it, that they looked on Christ as little better than a mere libertine. A man whose conscience has been awakened, and who lives under the felt influence of the covenant of works, what will he not do that is within the compass of natural abilities? It is a truth, though it came out of a hellish mouth, that "skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life," Job ii. 4. (6.) A person may have sharp soul-exercises and pangs, and yet die in the birth. Many "have been in pain," that have but, "as it were, brought forth wind." There may be sore pangs of conscience, which turn to nothing at last. Pharaoh and Simon Magnus had such convictions, as made them to desire the prayers of others for them. Judas repented himself: and, under terrors of conscience, gave back his ill-gotten pieces of silver. All is not gold that glitters. Trees may blossom fairly in the spring, on which no fruit is to be found in the harvest: and some have sharp soul-exercises, which are nothing but foretastes of hell.

The new birth, however in appearance hopefully begun, may be marred two ways. Some have sharp convictions for a while: but these go off, and they become as careless about their salvation, and as profane as ever, and usually worse than ever; "their last state is worse than their first," Matt. xii. 45. They get awakening grace, but not converting grace; and that goes off by degrees, as the light of the declining day, till it issues in midnight darkness. Others come forth too soon; they are born, like Ishmael, before the time of the promise, Gen. xvi. 2; compare Gal. iv. 22, &c. They take up with a mere law work, and stay not till the time of the promise of the gospel. They snatch at consolation, not waiting till it be given them; and foolishly draw their comfort from the law that wounded them. They apply the healing plaster to themselves, before their
wound, is sufficiently searched. The law, that rigorous husband, severely beats them, and throws in curses and vengeance upon their souls; then they fall to reforming, praying, mourning, promising, and vowing, till this ghost be laid; which done, they fall asleep again in the arms of the law: but they are never shaken out of themselves and their own righteousness, nor brought forward to Jesus Christ. There may be a wonderful moving of the affections, in souls that are not at all touched with regenerating grace. When there is no grace, there may, notwithstanding, be a flood of tears, as in Esau, who “found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears,” Heb. xii. 17. There may be great flashes of joy; as in the hearers of the word, represented in the parable of the stony ground, who “soon with joy receive it,” Matt. xiii. 20. There may be also great desires after good things, and great delight in them too; as in those hypocrites described in Isa. lviii. 2, “Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways:—they take delight in approaching to God.”—See how high they may sometimes stand, who yet fall away, Heb. vi. 4—6. They may be “enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift,” “be partakers of the Holy Ghost, taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” Common operations of the divine Spirit, like a land-flood, make a strange turning of things upside down: but when they are over, all runs again in the ordinary channel. All these things may be, where the sanctifying Spirit of Christ never rests upon the soul, but the stony heart still remains; and in that case these affections cannot but wither, because they have no root.

But regeneration is a real, thorough change, whereby the man is made a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. The Lord God makes the creature a new creature, as the goldsmith melts down a vessel of dishonour, and makes it a vessel of honour. Man is, in respect of his spiritual state, altogether disjointed by the fall; every faculty of the soul is, as it were, dislocated: in regeneration, the Lord loosens every joint, and sets it right again. Now this change made in regeneration, is,

1. A change of qualities or dispositions: it is not a change of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. Vicious qualities are removed, and the contrary dispositions are brought in, in their room. “The old man is put off,” Eph. iv. 22; “the new man is put on,” ver. 24. Man lost none of the rational faculties of his soul by sin: he had an understanding still, but it was darkened; he had still a will, but it was contrary to the will of God. So in regeneration, there is not a new substance created, but new qualities are infused; light instead of darkness, righteousness instead of unrighteousness.
2. It is a supernatural change; he that is born again, is born of the Spirit, John iii. 5. Great changes may be made by the power of nature, especially when assisted by external revelation. Nature may be so elevated by the common influences of the Spirit, that a person may thereby be turned into another man, as Saul was, 1 Sam. x. 6, who yet never becomes a new man. But in regeneration, nature itself is changed, and we become partakers of the divine nature; and this must needs be a supernatural change. How can we, who are dead in trespasses and sins, renew ourselves, any more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave? Who but the sanctifying Spirit of Christ can form Christ in a soul, changing it into the same image? Who but the Spirit of sanctification can give the new heart? Well may we say, when we see a man thus changed, "This is the finger of God!"

3. It is a change into the likeness of God, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "We—beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." Every thing generates its like: the child bears the image of the parent; and they who are born of God, bear God's image. Man aspiring to be as God, made himself like the devil. In his natural state he resembles the devil, as a child doth his father, John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil." But when this happy change comes, that image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God is restored. Christ himself, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, is the pattern after which the new creature is made, Rom. viii. 29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Hence he is said to be formed in the regenerate, Gal. iv. 19.

4. It is a universal change; "all things become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. It is a blessed leaven, that leavens the whole lump, the whole spirit, and soul, and body. Original sin infects the whole man; and regenerating grace, which is the cure, goes as far as the disease. This fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness; goodness of the mind, goodness of the will, goodness of the affections, goodness of the whole man. He gets not only a new head, to know religion, or a new tongue, to talk of it; but a new heart, to love and embrace it, in the whole of his conversation. When the Lord opens the sluice of grace, on the soul's new-birth day, the waters run through the whole man, to purify and make him fruitful. In those natural changes spoken of before, there are, as it were, pieces of new cloth put into an old garment; new life to an old heart: but the gracious change is a thorough change; a change both of heart and life.

Yet, though every part of the man is renewed, there is no part of him perfectly renewed. As an infant has all the parts of a man
but none of them come to a perfect growth; so regeneration brings a perfection of parts, to be brought forward in the gradual advances of sanctification, 1 Pet. ii. 2, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Although, in regeneration, there is heavenly light let into the mind; yet there is still some darkness there: though the will is renewed, it is not perfectly renewed; there is still some of the old inclination to sin remaining: and thus it will be, till that which is in part is done away, and the light of glory come. Adam was created at his full stature; but those who are born, must have their time to grow up; so those who are born again, come forth into the new world of grace as new-born babes: Adam being created upright, was at the same time perfectly righteous, without the least mixture of sinful imperfection.

6. Nevertheless, it is a lasting change, which never goes off. The seed is incorruptible, saith the text; and so is the creature that is formed of it. The life given in regeneration, whatever decays it may fall under, can never be utterly lost. "His seed remaineth in him" who "is born of God," 1 John iii. 9. Though the branches should be cut down, the root abides in the earth; and being watered with the dew of heaven, shall spout again: for "the root of the righteous shall not be moved," Prov. xii. 3. But to come to particulars.

1. In regeneration the mind is savingly enlightened. There is a light let into the understanding; so that they who were "some time darkness, are now light in the Lord," Ephes. v. 8. The beams of the light of life make their way into the dark dungeon of the heart: then the night is over, and the morning light is come, which will shine more and more unto the perfect day. Now the man is illuminated,

(1.) In the knowledge of God. He has far other thoughts of God, than ever he had before, Hos. ii. 20, "I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." The Spirit of the Lord brings him back to this question, "What is God?" and catechises him anew upon that grand point, so that he is made to say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee," Job xlii. 5. The spotless purity of God, his exact justice, his all-sufficiency, and other glorious perfections revealed in his word, are by this new light discovered to the soul, with a plainness and certainty, which as far exceed the knowledge it had of these things before, as ocular demonstration exceeds common report. For now he sees what he only heard of before.

(2.) He is enlightened in the knowledge of sin. He has different
thoughts of it than he used to have. Formerly his sight could not pierce through the cover Satan laid over it: but now the Spirit of God removes it, wipes off the paint and varnish; and so he sees it in its natural colours, as the worst of evils, exceedingly sinful, Rom. vii. 13. O what deformed monsters do formerly beloved lusts appear! Were they right eyes, he would pluck them out; were they right hands, he would consent to their being cut off. He sees how offensive sin is to God, how destructive it is to the soul; and calls himself a fool, for fighting so long against the Lord, and harbouring that destroyer as a bosom friend.

(3.) He is instructed in the knowledge of himself. Regenerating grace brings the prodigal to himself, Luke xv. 17, and makes men full of eyes within, knowing every one the plague of his own heart. The mind being savingly enlightened, the man sees how desperately corrupt his nature is; what enmity against God, and his holy law, has long lodged there: so that his soul loathes itself. No open sepulchre so vile and loathsome, in his eyes, as himself, Ezek. xxxvi. 31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." He is no worse than he was before: but the sun is shining; and so those pollutions are seen, which he could not discern, when there was no dawning in him, as the word is, Isa. viii. 20, while as yet there was no breaking of the day of grace with him.

(4.) He is enlightened in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The truth is, unregenerate men, though capable of preaching Christ, have not, properly speaking, the knowledge of him, but only an opinion, a good opinion, of him; as one has of many controverted points of doctrine, wherein he is far from certainty. As when you meet with a stranger on the road, who behaves himself discretely, you conceive a good opinion of him, and therefore willingly converse with him: but yet you will not commit your money to him; because, though you have a good opinion of the man, he is a stranger to you, you do not know him: so may they think well of Christ; but they will never commit themselves to him, seeing they know him not. But saving illumination carries the soul beyond opinion, to the certain knowledge of Christ and his excellency, 1 Thess. i. 5, "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The light of grace thus discovers the suitableness of the mystery of Christ to the divine perfections,
and to the sinner's case. Hence the regenerate admire the glorious plan of salvation, through Christ crucified; rest their whole dependence upon it, heartily acquiesce therein; for whatever he be to others, he is to them "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." But unrenewed men, not seeing this, are offended in him: they will not venture their souls in that vessel, but betake themselves to the broken boards of their own righteousness. The same light convincingly discovers a superlative worth, a transcendent glory and excellence in Christ, which darken all created excellencies as the rising sun makes the stars hide their heads: it engages the "merchantman to sell all that he hath, to buy the one pearl of great price," Matth. xii. 45, 46, makes the soul heartily content to take Christ for all, and instead of all. An unskilful merchant, to whom one offers a pearl of great price, for all his petty wares, dares not venture on the bargain; for though he thinks that one pearl may be worth more than all he has, yet he is not sure of it: but when a jeweller comes to him and assures him it is worth double all his wares, he then eagerly makes the bargain, and cheerfully parts with all he has for that pearl. Finally, this illumination in the knowledge of Christ, convincingly discovers to men a fulness in him, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, enough to satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul. And they are persuaded that such fulness is in him, and that in order to be communicated: they depend upon it as a certain truth; and therefore their souls take up their eternal rest in him.

(5.) The man is instructed in the knowledge of the vanity of the world, Psalm cxix. 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection." Regenerating grace elevates the soul, translates it into the spiritual world, from whence this earth cannot but appear a little, yea, a very little thing; even as heaven appeared before, while the soul was grovelling in the earth. Grace brings a man into a new world: where this world is reputed but a stage of vanity, a howling wilderness, a valley of tears. God has hung the sign of vanity at the door of all created enjoyments: yet how do men throng into the house, calling and looking for somewhat that is satisfying; even after it has been a thousand times told them, that there is no such thing in it, it is not to be got there, Isa. lvi. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way: yet saidst thou not, There is no hope." Why are men so foolish? The truth of the matter lies here, they do not see by the light of grace, they do not spiritually discern that sign of vanity. They have often indeed made a rational discovery of it: but can that truly wean the heart from the world? Nay, no more than painted fire can burn off the prisoner's bands.
But the light of grace, is the light of life, powerful and efficacious.

(6.) To sum up all. In regeneration, the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of spiritual things, 1 John ii. 20, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," that is, from Jesus Christ, Rev. iii. 18. It is an allusion to the sanctuary, whence the holy oil was brought to anoint the priest, "and ye know all things" necessary to salvation. Though men be not book-learned, if they are born again, they are Spirit-learned; for all such are taught of God, John vi. 45. The Spirit of regeneration teaches them what they knew not before and what they knew by the ear only, he teaches them over again as by the eye. The light of grace is an overcoming light, determining men to assent to divine truths on the mere testimony of God. It is no easy thing for the mind of man to acquiesce in divine revelation. Many pretend great respect to the Scriptures; whom, nevertheless, the clear Scripture testimony will not divorce from their preconceived opinions. But this illumination will make men's minds run, as willing captives, after Christ's chariot wheels, which they are ready to allow to drive over, and "cast down" their "imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," 2 Cor. x. 5. It will bring them to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child," Mark x. 15, who thinks he has sufficient ground to believe any thing, if his father do but say it is so.

2. The will is renewed. The Lord takes away the stony heart, and gives a heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, and so of stones raiseth up children to Abraham. Regenerating grace is powerful and efficacious, and gives the will a new turn. It does not indeed force it; but sweetly, yet powerfully draws it, so that his people are willing in the day of his power, Psalm cx. 3. There is heavenly oratory in the Mediators lips to persuade sinners, Psalm xlv. 2. "Grace is poured into thy lips." There are cords of a man, and bands of love in his hands, to draw them after him, Hos. xi. 4. Love makes a net for elect souls, which will infallibly catch them, and bring them to land. The cords of Christ's love are strong cords: and they need to be so, for every sinner is heavier than a mountain of brass; and Satan, together with the heart itself, draws the contrary way. But love is strong as death; and the Lord's love to the soul he died for, is the strongest love; which acts so powerfully, that it must come off victorious.

(1.) The will is cured of its utter inability to will what is good. While the opening of the prison to them that are bound, is proclaimed in the gospel, the Spirit of God comes and opens the prison door, goes to the prisoner, and, by the power of his grace, makes his chains fall off; breaks the bonds of iniquity, wherewith he was held
in sin, so as he could neither will nor do any thing truly good; brings him forth into a large place, "working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. Then it is that the soul, that was fixed to the earth, can move heavenward; the withered hand is restored, and can be stretched out.

(2.) There is wrought in the will a fixed aversion to evil. In regeneration, a man gets a new spirit put within him, Ezek. xxxvi. 26; and that spirit striveth against the flesh, Gal. v. 17. The sweet morsel of sin, so greedily swallowed down, he now loathes, and would fain be rid of it, even as willingly as one who had drunk a cup of poison would throw it up again. When the spring is stopped, the mud lies in the well unmoved; but when once the spring is cleared, the waters, springing up, will work the mud away by degrees. Even so, while a man continues in an unregenerate state, sin lies at ease in the heart; but as soon as the Lord strikes the rocky heart with the rod of his strength, in the day of conversion, grace is "in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14, working away natural corruption, and gradually purifying the heart, Acts xv. 9. The renewed will riseth up against sin, strikes at the root thereof, and the branches too. Lusts are now grievous, and the soul endeavours to starve them; the corrupt nature is the source of all evil, and therefore the soul will be often laying it before the great Physician. O what sorrow, shame, and self-loathing till the heart, in the day that grace makes its triumphant entrance into it! For now the madman is come to himself, and the remembrance of his follies cannot but cut him to the heart.

(3.) The will is endowed with an inclination, bent, and propensity to good. In its depraved state, it lay quite another way, being prone and bent to evil only: but now, by the operation of the omnipotent, all-conquering arm, it is drawn from evil to good, and gets another turn. As the former was natural, so this is natural too, in regard to the new nature given in regeneration, which has its holy strivings, as well as the corrupt nature has its sinful lustings, Gal. v. 17. The will, as renewed, points towards God and godliness. When God made man, his will, in respect of its intention, was directed towards God, as his chief end; in respect of its choice, it pointed towards that which God willed. When man unmade himself, his will was framed to the very reverse hereof: he made himself his chief end, and his own will his law. But when man is new made, in regeneration, grace rectifies this disorder in some measure, though not perfectly: because we are but renewed in part, while in this world. It brings back the sinner out of himself, to God, as his chief end, Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?
and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” Phil. i. 21, “For me to live is Christ.” It makes him to deny himself, and whatever way he turns, to point habitually towards God, who is the centre of the gracious soul, its home, its “dwelling place in all generations,” Psalm xc. 1. By regenerating grace, the will is brought into a conformity to the will of God. It is conformed to his preceptive will, being endowed with holy inclinations, agreeable to every one of his commands. The whole law is impressed on the gracious soul: every part of it is written on the renewed heart. Although remaining corruption makes such blots in the writing, that oft-times the man himself cannot read it, yet he that wrote it can read it at all times; it is never quite blotted out, nor can be. What he has written, he has written; and it shall stand: “For this is the covenant—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts,” Heb. viii. 10. It is a covenant of salt, a perpetual covenant. It is also conformed to his providential will; so that the man would no more be master of his own process, nor carve out his lot for himself. He learns to say, from his heart, “The will of the Lord be done.” “He shall choose our inheritance for us,” Psalm xlvii. 4. Thus the will is disposed to fall in with those things which, in its depraved state, it could never be reconciled to.

Particularly, 1. The soul is reconciled to the covenant of peace. The Lord God proposes a covenant of peace to sinners, a covenant which he himself has framed, and registered in the Bible: but they are not pleased with it. Nay, unregenerate hearts cannot be pleased with it. Were it put into their hands to frame it according to their minds, they would blot many things out of it which God has put in, and put in many things which God has kept out. But the renewed heart is entirely satisfied with the covenant, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire.” Though the covenant could not be brought down to their depraved will, their will is, by grace, brought up to the covenant: they are well pleased with it; there is nothing in it which they would have out; nor is any thing left out of it, which they would have in.—2. The will is disposed to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. The soul is content to submit to him. Regenerating grace undermines, and brings down the towering imaginations of the heart, raised up against its rightful Lord; it breaks the iron sinew, which kept the sinner from bowing to him; and disposes him to be no more stiff-necked, but to yield. He is willing to have on the yoke of Christ's commands, to take up the cross, and to follow him. He is content to take Christ on any terms, Psalm cx. 3, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”
The mind being savingly enlightened, and the will renewed, the sinner is thereby determined and enabled to answer the gospel call. So the chief work in regeneration is done; the fort of the heart is taken; there is room made for the Lord Jesus Christ in the inmost parts of the soul; the inner door of the will being now opened to him, as well as the outer door of the understanding. In one word, Christ is passively received into the heart; he is come into the soul, by his quickening Spirit, whereby spiritual life is given to the man, who in himself was dead in sin. His first vital act we may conceive to be an active receiving of Jesus Christ, discerned in his glorious excellencies; that is a believing on him, a closing with him, as discerned, offered and exhibited in the word of his grace, the glorious Gospel: the immediate effect of which is union with him, John i. 12, 13, "To as many as received him to them gave he power," or privilege, "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Eph. iii. 17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Christ having taken the heart by storm, and triumphantly entered into it, in regeneration, the soul by faith yields itself to him, as it is expressed, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. Thus, this glorious King who came into the heart, by his Spirit, dwells in it by faith. The soul being drawn runs; and being effectually called, comes.

3. In regeneration there is a happy change made on the affections; they are both rectified and regulated.

(1.) This change rectifies the affections, placing them on suitable objects. 2 Thess. iii. 5, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." The regenerate man's desires are rectified; they are set on God himself, and the things above. He, who before cried with the world, "Who will shew us any good?" has changed his note, and says, "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us," Psalm iv. 6. Before, he saw no beauty in Christ, for which he was to be desired; but now he is all he desires, he is altogether lovely, Cant. v. 16. The main stream of his desires is turned to run towards God; for there is the one thing he desires, Psalm xxvii. 4. He desires to be holy as well as happy; and rather to be gracious than great. His hopes, which before were low, and fastened down to things on earth, are now raised, and set on the glory which is to be revealed. He entertains the hope of eternal life, founded on the word of promise, Tit. i. 2. Which hope he has, as an anchor of the soul, fixing the heart under trials, Heb vi. 19. It puts him upon purifying himself, even as God is pure 1 John iii. 3. For he is begotten again unto a lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3. His
love is raised, and set on God himself, Psalm xviii. 1; on his holy law, Psalm exix. 97. Though it strike against his most beloved lust, he says, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," Rom. viii. 12. He loves the ordinances of God," Psalm lxxxiv. 1, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" Being passed from death unto life, he loves the brethren, 1 John iii. 14; the people of God, as they are called, 1 Pet. ii. 10. He loves God for himself; and what is God's, for his sake. Yea, as being a child of God, he loves his own enemies.—His heavenly Father is compassionate and benevolent: "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust:" therefore he is in like manner disposed, Matt. v. 44, 45.

His hatred is turned against sin, in himself and others, Psalm ci. 3, "I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me." He groans under the body of it, and longs for deliverance, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" His joys and delights are in God the Lord, in the light of his countenance, in his law, and in his people, because they are like him. Sin is what he chiefly fears: it is a fountain of sorrow to him now, though formerly a spring of pleasure.

(2.) It regulates the affections placed on suitable objects. Our affections, when placed on the creature, are naturally exhorbitant: when we joy in it, we are apt to overjoy; and when we sorrow, we are ready to sorrow overmuch: but grace bridles these affections, clips their wings, and keeps them within bounds, that they overflow not all their banks. It makes a man "hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children; yea, and his own life also," comparatively; that is, to love them less than he loves God, Luke xiv. 26. It also rectifies lawful affections; bringing them forth from right principles, and directing them to right ends. There may be unholy desires after Christ and his grace; as when men desire Christ, not from any love to him, but merely out of love to themselves. "Give us of your oil," said the foolish virgins, "for our lamps are gone out," Matt. xxv. 8. There may be an unsanctified sorrow for sin; as when one sorrows for it, not because it is displeasing to God, but only because of the wrath annexed to it, as did Pharaoh, Judas, and others. So a man may love his father and mother from mere natural principles, without any respect to the command of God binding him thereto. But grace sanctifies the affections, in such cases, making them to run in a new channel of love to God, respect to his commands, and regard to his glory. Again, grace raises the affections where they are too low. It gives the chief seat in them to God, and pulls down all other rivals, whether persons or things,
making them lie at his feet. Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." He is loved for himself, and other persons or things for his sake. What is lovely in them, to the renewed heart, is some ray of the divine goodness appearing in them: for unto gracious souls they shine only by borrowed light. This accounts for the saints loving all men; and yet hating those that hate God, and contemning the wicked as vile persons. They hate and contemn them for their wickedness; there is nothing of God in that, and therefore nothing lovely nor honourable in it: but they love them for their commendable qualities or perfections, whether natural or moral; because, in whomsoever these are, they are from God, and can be traced to him as their fountain.

Finally, regenerating grace sets the affections so firmly on God, that the man is disposed, at God's command, to quit his hold of every thing else, in order to keep his hold of Christ; to hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ, Luke xiv. 26. It makes even lawful enjoyments, like Joseph's mantle to hang loose about a man, that he may quit them, when he is in danger of being ensnared by holding them.

If the stream of our affections were never turned, we are, doubtless, going down the stream into the pit. If "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life," have the throne in our hearts, which should be possessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; if we never had so much love to God, as to ourselves; if sin has been somewhat bitter to us, but never so bitter as suffering, never so bitter as the pain of being weaned from it; truly we are strangers to this saving change.—For grace turns the affections upside down, whenever it comes into the heart.

4. The conscience is renewed. As a new light is set up in the soul, in regeneration, conscience is enlightened, instructed and informed. That candle of the Lord, Prov. xx. 27, is now snuffed and brightened; so that it shines, and sends forth its light into the most retired corners of the heart; discovering sins which the soul was not aware of before: and, in a special manner, discovering the corruption or depravity of nature, that seed and spawn whence all actual sins proceed. This produces the new complaint, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Conscience, which lay sleeping in the man's bosom before, is now awakened, and makes its voice to be heard through the whole soul; therefore there is no more rest for him in the sluggard's bed; he must get up and be doing, arise, "haste, and escape for his life." It powerfully incites to obedience, even
in the most spiritual acts, which lie not within the view of the natural conscience; and powerfully restrains from sin, even from those sins which do not lie open to the observation of the world. It urges the sovereign authority of God, to which the heart is now reconciled, and which it willingly acknowledges: and so it engages the man to his duty, whatever be the hazard from the world; for it fills the heart so with the fear of God, that the force of the fear of man is broken. This has engaged many to put their life in their hand, and follow the cause of religion, which they once contemned, and resolutely walk in the path they formerly abhorred, Gal. i. 23, "He which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed." Guilt now makes the conscience smart. It has bitter remorse for sins past, which fills the soul with anxiety, sorrow, and self-loathing. And every new reflection on these sins is apt to affect, and make its wounds bleed afresh with regret. It is made tender, in point of sin and duty, for the time to come: being once burnt, it dreads the fire, and fears to break the hedge where it was formerly bit by the serpent. Finally, the renewed conscience drives the sinner to Jesus Christ, as the only Physician who can draw out the sting of guilt; and whose blood alone can purge the conscience from dead works, Heb. ix. 14, refusing all case offered to it from any other hand. This is an evidence that the conscience is not only fired, as it may be in an unregenerate state, but oiled also, with regenerating grace.

5. As the memory wanted not its share of depravity, it is also bettered by regenerating grace. The memory is weakened, with respect to those things that are not worth their room therein; and men are taught to forget injuries, and drop their resentments, Matt. v. 44, 45, "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you—that ye may be," that is, appear to be, "the children of your Father which is in heaven." It is strengthened for spiritual things. We have Solomon’s receipt for an ill memory, Prov. iii. 1, "My son," saith he, "forget not my law." But how shall it be kept in mind? "Let thine heart keep my commandments.” Grace makes a heart-memory, even where there is no good head-memory, Psalm cxix. 11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart.” The heart, truly touched with the powerful sweetness of truth, will help the memory to retain what is so relished. If divine truths made deeper impressions on our hearts, they would impress themselves with more force on our memories, Psalm cxix. 93, "I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.” Grace sanctifies the memory. Many have large, but unsanctified memories, which serve only to gather knowledge, whereby to aggravate their condem-
nation: but the renewed memory serves to "remember his commandments to do them," Psalm ciii. 18. It is a sacred storehouse, from whence a Christian is furnished in his way to Zion; for faith and hope are often supplied out of it, in a dark hour. It is the storehouse of former experiences; and these are the believer's way-marks, by noticing of which he comes to know where he is, even in a dark time. Psalm xlii. 6, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan," &c. It also helps the soul to godly sorrow and self-loathing, presenting old guilt anew before the conscience, and making it bleed afresh, though the sin be already pardoned; Psalm xxv. 7, "Remember not the sins of my youth." Where unpardoned guilt is lying on the sleeping conscience, it is often employed to bring in a word, which in a moment sets the whole soul on the stir; as when "Peter remembered the words of Jesus—he went out and wept bitterly," Matt. xxvi. 75. The word of God laid up in a sanctified memory, serves a man to resist temptations, puts the sword in his hand against his spiritual enemies, and is a light to direct his steps in the way of religion and righteousness.

6. There is a change made on the body, and the members thereof, in respect of their use; they are consecrated to the Lord. Even "the body is—for the Lord," 1 Cor. vi. 13. It is "the temple of the Holy Ghost," ver. 19. The members thereof, that were formerly "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," become "instruments of righteousness unto God," Rom. vi. 13, "servants to righteousness unto holiness," ver. 19. The eye, that conveyed sinful imaginations into the heart, is under a covenant, Job xxxi. 1, to do so no more; but to serve the soul, in viewing the works, and reading the word, of God. The ear, that had often been death's porter, to let in sin, is turned to be the gate of life, by which the word of life enters the soul. The tongue, that set on fire the whole course of nature, is restored to the office it was designed for by the Creator; namely, to be an instrument of glorifying him, and setting forth his praise. In a word, the whole man is for God, in soul and body, which by this blessed change are made his.

7. This gracious change shines forth in the conversation. Even the outward man is renewed. A new heart makes newness of life. When "the king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold," Psalm xlv. 13. "The single eye" makes "the whole body full of light," Matt. vi. 22. This change will appear in every part of a man's conversation; particularly in the following things.

(1.) In the change of his company. Formerly, he despised the Vol. VIII.
company of the saints, but now they are "the excellent, in whom is all his delight," Psalm xvi. 3. "I am a companion of all that fear thee, saith the royal psalmist, Psalm cxix. 63. A renewed man joins himself with the saints; for he and they are like-minded, in that which is their main work and business; they have all one new nature: they are travelling to Immanuel's land, and converse together in the language of Canaan. In vain do men pretend to religion, while ungodly company is their choice; for "a companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20. Religion will make a man shy of throwing himself into an ungodly family, or any unnecessary familiarity with wicked men; as one who is healthy will beware of going into an infected house.

(2.) In his relative capacity, he will be a new man. Grace makes men gracious in their several relations, and naturally leads them to the conscientious performance of relative duties. It does not only make good men and good women, but makes good subjects, good husbands, good wives, children, servants, and, in a word, good relatives in the church, commonwealth, and family. It is a just exception made against the religion of many, namely that they are bad relatives, they are ill husbands, wives, masters, servants, &c. How can we prove ourselves to be new creatures, if we be just such as we were before, in our several relations? 2 Cor. v. 17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new." Real godliness will gain a testimony to a man, from the consciences of his nearest relations; though they know more of his sinful infirmities than others do, as we see in the case, 2 Kings iv. 1, "Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord."

(3.) In the way of his following his worldly business, there is a great change. It appears to be no more his all, as it was before. Though saints apply themselves to worldly business, as well as others, yet their hearts are not swallowed up in it. It is evident that they are carrying on a trade with heaven, as well as a trade with earth, Phil. iii. 20, "For our conversation is in heaven," They go about their employment in the world, as a duty laid upon them by the Lord of all, doing their lawful business as the will of God, Eph. vi. 7, working, because he has said, "Thou shalt not steal."

(4.) Such have a special concern for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world: they espouse the interests of religion, and "prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy," Psalm cxxxvii. 6. How privately soever they live, grace gives them a public spirit,
will concern itself in the ark and work of God, in the Gospel of God, and in the people of God, even in those of them whom they never saw. As children of God, they naturally care for these things. They have a new concern for the spiritual good of others: no sooner do they taste of the power of grace themselves, but they are inclined to set up to be agents for Christ and holiness in the world; as appears in the case of the woman of Samaria, who when Christ had manifested himself to her, "went her way into the city, and said unto the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" John iv. 23, 29. They have seen and felt the evil of sin, and therefore pity the world lying in wickedness. They would fain pluck the brands out of the fire, remembering that they themselves were plucked out of it. They labour to commend religion to others, both by word and example; and rather deny themselves the liberty in indifferent things, than, by the uncharitable use of it, destroy others; 1 Cor viii. 13, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

(5.) In their use of lawful comforts, there is a great change. They rest not in them, as their end; but use them as means to help them in their way. They draw their satisfaction from the higher springs even while lower springs are running. Thus Hannah having obtained a son, rejoiced not so much in the gift, as in the giver, 1 Sam. ii. 1, "And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord." Yea, when the comforts of life are gone, they can subsist without them, and "rejoice in the Lord although the fig-tree do not blossom," Hab. iii. 17, 18. Grace teaches to use the conveniences of the present life as pilgrims; and to shew a holy moderation in all things. The heart, which formally revelled in these things without fear, is now shy of being over much pleased with them. Being apprehensive of danger, it uses them warily; as the dogs of Egypt run, while they lap their water out of the river Nile, for fear of the crocodiles that are in it.

(6.) This change shines forth in the man's performance of religious duties. He who lived in the neglect of them will do so no more, if once the grace of God enter into his heart. If a man be new-born, he will desire the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. Whenever the prayerless person gets the Spirit of grace, he will be in him a Spirit of supplication, Zech. xii. 10. It is as natural for one that is born again to pray, as for the new-born babe to cry. Acts ix. 11, "Behold, he prayeth!" His heart will be a temple for God, and his house a church. His devotion, which before was superficial and formal, is now spiritual and lively; for as
much as heart and tongue are touched with a live coal from heaven: and he rests not in the mere performance of duties, as careful only to get his task done, but in every duty seeks communion with God in Christ; justly considering them as means appointed of God for that end, and reckoning himself disappointed if he miss of it. Thus far of the nature of regeneration.

II. I come to shew why this change is called regeneration a being born again. It is so called, because of the resemblance between natural and spiritual generation, which lies in the following particulars.

1. Natural generation is a mysterious thing: and so is spiritual generation, John iii. 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and then hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The work of the Spirit is felt; but his way of working is a mystery we cannot comprehend. A new light is let into the mind, and the will is renewed; but how that light is conveyed thither, how the will is fettered with cords of love, and how the rebel is made a willing captive, we can no more tell, than we can tell "how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child," Eccl. xi. 5. As a man hears the sound of the wind, and finds it stirring, but knows not where it begins, and where it ends; "so is every one that is born of the Spirit:" he finds the change that is made upon him; but how it is produced he knoweth not. One thing he may know that whereas he was blind, now he seeth: but "the seed of grace" "springs and grows up, he knoweth not how," Mark iv. 26, 27.

2. In both, the creature comes to a being it had not before. The child is not, till it be generate; and a man has no gracious being, no being in grace, till he is regenerate. Regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as "the quickening of a dead man," Eph. ii. 1—5. Man in his depraved state, is a mere nonentity in grace, and is brought into a new being by the power of Him "who calleth things that be not as though they were;" being "created in Jesus Christ unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. Therefore our Lord Jesus, to give ground of hope to the Laodiceans, in their wretched and miserable state, proposes himself as "the beginning of the creation of God," Rev. iii. 14, namely, the active beginning of it; "for all things were made by him" at first, John i. 3. From whence they might gather, that as he made them when they were nothing, he could make them over again, when worse than nothing; the same hand that made them his creatures, could make them new creatures.

As the child is passive in generation, so is the child of God in
regeneration. The one contributes nothing to its own generation; neither does the other contribute any thing, by way of efficiency, to its own regeneration: for though a man may lay himself down at the pool, yet he hath no hand in moving the water, no power in performing the cure. One is born the child of a king, another the child of a beggar: the child has no hand at all in this difference. God leaves some in their depraved state; others he brings into a state of grace, or regeneracy. If thou be thus honoured, no thanks to thee; for "who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. iv. 7.

4. There is a wonderful contexture of parts in both births. Admireable is the structure of man's body, in which there is such a variety of organs; nothing wanting, nothing superfluous. The psalmist, considering his own body, looks on it as a piece of marvellous work; "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," saith he, Psalm cxxxix. 14, "and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth," ver. 15; that is, in the womb, where I know not how the bones grow, any more than I know what is doing in the lowest parts of the earth. In natural generation we are curiously wrought, like a piece of needle-work; as the word imports: even so it is in regeneration: Psalm xliv. 14, "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work," raiment curiously wrought. It is the same word in both texts. What that raiment is, the apostle tells us, Eph. iv. 24. It is "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This is the raiment which he saith, in the same place, we must put on; not excluding the imputed righteousness of Christ. Both are curiously wrought, as masterpieces of the manifold wisdom of God. O the wonderful contexture of graces in the new creature! O glorious creature, new-made after the image of God! It is grace for grace in Christ, which makes up this new man, John i. 16; even as in bodily generation, the child has member for member in the parent; has every member which the parent has in a certain proportion.

5. All this, in both cases, has its rise from that which is in itself very small and inconsiderable. O the power of God, in making such a creature of the corruptible seed, and much more in bringing forth the new creature from such small beginnings! It is as "the little cloud, like a man's hand," which spread, till "heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain," 1 Kings xviii. 44, 45. A man gets a word at a sermon, which hundreds besides him hear, and let slip: but it remains with him, works in him, and never leaves him, till the little world is turned upside down by it; that is, till he becomes a new man. It is like the vapour that
got up into Ahasuerus's head, and cut off sleep from his eyes, Esth. vi. 1, which proved a spring of such motions as never ceased, until Mordecai, in royal pomp, was brought on horseback through the streets, proud Haman trudging at his foot; the same Haman afterwards hanged, Mordecai advanced, and the church delivered from Haman's hellish plot. "The grain of mustard seed becometh a tree," Mat. xiii. 31, 32. God loves to bring great things out of small beginnings.

6. Natural generation is carried on by degrees. Job x. 10, "Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?" So is regeneration. It is with the soul, ordinarily, in regeneration, as with the blind man cured by our Lord, who first "saw men as trees walking," afterward "saw every man clearly," Mark viii. 23—25. It is true, regeneration being, strictly speaking, a passage from death to life, the soul is quickened in a moment; like as when the embryo is brought to perfection in the womb, the soul is infused into the lifeless lump. Nevertheless, we may imagine somewhat like conception in spiritual regeneration, whereby the soul is prepared for quickening; and the new creature is capable of growth, 1 Peter ii. 2, and of having life more abundantly, John x. 10.

7. In both there are new relations. The regenerate may call God, Father; for they are his children, John i. 12, 13, "begotten of him," 1 Pet. i. 3. The bride, the Lamb's wife, that is, the church, is their mother, Gal. iv. 26. They are related, as brethren and sisters, to angels and glorified saints; "the family of heaven." They are of the heavenly stock: the meanest of them, "the base things of the world," 1 Cor. i. 28, the kinless things, as the word imports, who cannot boast of the blood that runs in their veins, are yet, by their new birth, near of kin with the excellent in the earth.

8. There is a likeness between the parent and the child. Every thing that generates, generates its like; and the regenerate are "partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter i. 4. The moral perfections of the divine nature are, in measure and degree, communicated to the renewed soul: thus the divine image is restored; so that, as the child resembles the father, the new creature resembles God himself, being holy as he is holy.

9. As there is no birth without pain, both to the mother and to the child, so there is great pain in bringing forth the new creature. The children have more or less of these birth-pains, whereby they are "pricked in their heart," Acts ii. 37. The soul has sore pains when under conviction and humiliation. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" The mother is pained; "Zion travails," Isaiah lxvi. 8.
She sighs, groans, cries, and has hard labour, in her ministers and members, to bring forth children to her Lord, Gal. iv. 19, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.” Never was a mother more feelingly touched with “joy, that a man child is born into the world,” than she is upon the new birth of her children. But, what is more remarkable than all this, we read not only of our Lord Jesus Christ’s “travail,” or toil “of soul,” Isaiah liii. 11, but, what is more directly to our purpose, of his “pains,” or pangs, as of one travelling in childbirth; so the word used, Acts ii. 24, properly signifies. Well might he call the new creature, as Rachel called her dear-bought son, Benoni, that is, the son of my sorrow; and as she called another, Naphtali, that is, my wrestling: for the pangs of that travail put him to “strong crying and tears,” Heb. v. 7; yea, into an “agony and bloody sweat,” Luke xxii. 44. And in the end he died of these pangs; they became to him “the pains of death,” Acts ii. 24.

I shall now apply this doctrine.

Use I. By what is said, you may try whether you are in the state of grace or not. If you are brought out of the state of wrath or ruin, into the state of grace or salvation, you are new creatures, you are born again. But you will say, How shall we know whether we are born again, or not? Answer. Were you to ask me, if the sun were risen, and how you should know whether it were risen or not? I would bid you look up to the heavens, and see it with your eyes. And, would you know if the light be risen in your heart? Look in, and see. Grace is light, and discourses itself. Look into thy mind, see if it has been illuminated in the knowledge of God. Hast thou been inwardly taught what God is? Were thine eyes ever turned inward to see thyself; the sinfulness of thy depraved state, the corruption of thy nature; the sins of thy heart and life? Hast thou ever led into a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Have thine eyes seen King Jesus in his beauty; the manifold wisdom of God in him, his transcendent excellence, and absolute fulness and sufficiency, with the vanity and emptiness of all things else? Next, What change is there on thy will? Are the fetters taken off, wherewith it was formerly bound up from moving heavenward? Has thy will get a new turn? Dost thou find an aversion to sin, and an inclination to good, wrought in thy heart? Is thy soul turned towards God, as thy chief end? Is thy will new-moulded into some measure of conformity to the preceptive and providential will of God? Art thou heartily reconciled to the covenant of peace, and fixedly disposed to the receiving of Christ, as he is offered in
the gospel? And as to a change on your affections, are they rectified, and placed on right objects? Are your desires going out after God? Are they to his name, and the remembrance of him? Isaiah xxvi. 8. Are your hopes in him? Is your love set upon him, and your hatred set against sin? Does your offending a good God affect your heart with sorrow, and do you fear sin more than suffering? Are your affections regulated? Are they, with respect to created comforts, brought down, as being too high; and with respect to God in Christ, raised up, as being too low? Has he the chief seat in your heart? And are all your lawful worldly comforts and enjoyments laid at his feet? Has thy conscience been enlightened and awakened, refusing all ease, but from the application of the blood of a Redeemer? Is thy memory sanctified, thy body consecrated to the service of God? And art thou now walking in newness of life? Thus you may discover whether you are born again or not.

But, for your farther help in this matter, I will discourse a little of another sign of regeneration, namely, the love of the brethren; an evidence whereby the weakest and most timorous saints have often had comfort, when they could have little or no consolation from other marks proposed to them. This the apostle lays down, 1 John iii. 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is not to be thought that the apostle, by the brethren in this place means brethren by a common relation to the first Adam, but to the second Adam, Christ Jesus; because, however true it is, that universal benevolence, a good will to the whole race of mankind, takes place in the renewed soul, as being a lively lineament of the divine image, yet the whole context speaks of those that are "the sons of God," ver. 1, 2; "children of God," ver. 10; "born of God," ver. 9; distinguishing between "the children of God," and "the children of the devil," ver. 10; between those that are "of the devil," ver. 8, 12, and those that are "of God," ver. 10. The text itself comes in as a reason why we should not marvel that the world hates the brethren, the children of God, ver. 13. How can we marvel at it, seeing the love of the brethren is an evidence of one's having passed from death to life? Therefore it were absurd to look for that love amongst the men of the world, who are dead in trespasses and sins. They cannot love the brethren; no wonder, then, that they hate them. Wherefore it is plain, that by brethren here, are meant brethren by regeneration.

Now, in order to set this mark of regeneration in a true light, consider these three things. 1. This love to the brethren, is a love to them as such. Then do we love them in the sense of the text,
when the grace, or image of God in them, is the chief motive of our love to them. When we love the godly for their godliness, the saints for their sanctity or holiness, then we love God in them, and so may conclude were born of God; for “every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,” 1 John v. 1. Hypocrites may love saints, on account of civil relations to them; because of their obliging conversation; for their being of the same opinion as to outward religious matters; and on many other such like accounts, whereby wicked men may be induced to love the godly. But happy they who love them merely for grace in them; for their heaven-born temper and disposition; who can pick this pearl even out of infirmities in and about them; lay hold of it, and love them for it. 2. It is a love that will be given to all in whom the grace of God appears. They that love one saint, because he is a saint, will have “love to all the saints,” Eph. i. 15. They will love all, who, in their view, bear the image of God. Those that cannot love a gracious person in rags, but confine their love to those of them who wear gay clothing, have not this love to the brethren in them. Those who confine their love to a party, to whom God has not confined his grace, are souls too narrow to be put among the children. In what points soever men differ from us, in their judgment or way; yet if they appear to agree with us, in love to God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in bearing his image, we shall love them as brethren, if we are of the heavenly family. 3. If this love be in us, the more grace any person appears to be possessed of, he will be the more beloved by us. The more vehemently the holy fire of grace doth flame in any, the hearts of true Christians will be the more warmed in love to them.—It is not with the saints as with many other men, who make themselves the standards for others; and love them so far as they think they are like themselves. But, if they seem to outshine and darken them, their love is turned to hatred and envy, and they endeavour to detract from the due praise of their exemplary piety; because nothing relisheth with them, in the practice of religion, that goes beyond their own measure; what of the life and power of religion appears in others, serves only to raise the serpentine grudge in their pharisaical hearts. But as for those who are born again, their love and affection to the brethren bears proportion to the degrees of the divine image they discern in them.

Now, if you would improve these to the knowledge of your state, I would advise you, 1. To set apart some time, when you are at home, for a review of your case, to try your state by what has been said. Many have comfort and clearness as to their state, at a ser-
mon, who in a little time lose it again; because while they hear the word preached, they make application of it; but do not consider these things more deliberately and leisurely when alone. The impression is too sudden and short to give lasting comfort; and it is often so inconsiderate, that it has bad consequences. Therefore set about this work at home, after earnest and serious prayer to God for his help in it. Complain not of your want of time while the night follows the busy day; nor of place, while fields and outhouses are to be got. 2. Renew your repentance before the Lord. Guilt lying on the conscience, unrepented of, may darken all your evidences and marks of grace. It provokes the Spirit of grace to withdraw; and when he goes, our light ceases. It is not a fit time for a saint to read his evidences, when the candle is blown out by some conscience-wounding guilt. 3. Exert the powers of the new nature; let the graces of the divine Spirit discover themselves in you by action. If you would know whether there is sacred fire in your breast, or not, you must blow the coal; for although it exist, and be a live coal, yet if it be under the ashes, it will give you no light. Settle in your hearts a firm purpose, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to comply with every known duty, and watch against every known sin, having readiness of mind to be instructed in what you know not. If gracious souls would thus manage their inquiries into their state, it is likely that they would have a comfortable issue. And if others would take such a solemn review, and make trial of their state, impartially examining themselves before the tribunal of their consciences, they might have a timely discovery of their own sinfulness; but the neglect of self-examination leaves most men under sad delusions as to their state, and deprives many saints of the comfortable sight of the grace of God in them.

But that I may afford some farther help to true Christians in their inquiries into their state, I shall propose and briefly answer some cases or doubts, which may possibly hinder some persons from the comfortable view of their happy state. The children's bread must not be withheld; though, while it is held forth to them, the dogs should snatch at it.

Case 1. "I doubt if I be regenerate, because I know not the precise time of my conversion; nor can I trace the particular steps of the way in which it was brought to pass." Answer. Though it is very desirable to be able to give an account of the beginning, and the gradual advances, of the Lord's work upon our souls, as some saints can distinctly do, the manner of the Spirit's working being still a mystery, yet this is not necessary to prove the truth of grace.
Doubts Resolved.

163

Happy be that can say, in this case, as the blind man in the Gospel, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. As, when we see flame, we know there is fire, though we know not how or when it began; so the truth of grace may be discerned in us, though we know not how or when it was dropped into our hearts. It thou canst perceive the happy change which is wrought on thy soul; if thou findest thy mind is enlightened, thy will inclined to comply with the will of God in all things; especially to fall in with the divine plan of salvation, through a crucified Redeemer; in vain dost thou trouble thyself, and refuse comfort, because thou knowest not how and what way it was brought about.

Case 2. “If I were a new creature, sin could not prevail against me as it doth.” Answer. Though we must not lay pillows for hypocrites to rest their heads upon, who indulge themselves in their sins, and make the doctrine of God’s grace subservient to their lusts, lying down contentedly in the bond of iniquity like men that are fond of golden chains; yet it must be owned, “the just man falleth seven times a-day; and iniquity may prevail against the children of God. But if thou art groaning under the weight of the body of death, the corruption of thy nature; loathing thyself for the sins of thy heart and life; striving to mortify thy lusts; fleeing daily to the blood of Christ for pardon; and looking to his spirit for sanctification: though thou mayest be obliged to say with the Psalmist, “Iniquities prevail against me;” yet thou mayest add with him, “As for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away, Psal. lxv. 3. The new creature does not yet possess the house alone: it dwells by the side of an ill neighbour, namely, remaining corruption, the relics of depraved nature. They struggle together for the mastery: “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,” Gal. v. 17. And sometimes corruption prevails, bringing the child of God into captivity to the law of sin, Rom. vii. 23. Let not therefore the prevailing of corruption make thee, in this case, conclude thou art none of God’s children: but let it humble thee, to be the more watchful, and to thirst the more intensely after Jesus Christ, his blood and Spirit; and that very disposition will evidence a principle of grace in thee, which seeks the destruction of sin that prevails so often against thee.

Case 3. “I find the motions of sin in my heart more violent since the Lord began his work on my soul, than they were before that time. Can this consist with a change of my nature?” Answer. Dreadful is the case of many, who, after God has had a remarkable dealing with their souls, tending to their reformation, have thrown off all bonds, and have become grossly and openly immoral and
profane; as if the devil had returned into their hearts with seven spirits worse than himself. All I shall say to such persons is, that their state is exceedingly dangerous; they are in danger of sinning against the Holy Ghost, therefore let them repent, before it be too late. But if it be not thus with you; though corruption is stirring itself more violently than formerly, as if all the forces of hell were raised, to hold fast, or bring back, a fugitive; yet these stirrings may consist with a change of your nature. When the restraint of grace is newly laid upon corruption, it is no wonder if it acts more vigorously than before, "warring against the law of the mind," Rom. vii. 23. The motions of sin may really be most violent, when the new principle is brought in to cast it out. The sun sending its beams through the window, discovers the motes in the house, and their motions, which were not seen before; so the light of grace may discover the risings and actings of corruption, in another manner than ever the man saw them before, though they really do not rise nor act more vigorously. Sin is not quite dead in the regenerate soul; it is but dying, and dying a lingering death, being crucified; no wonder there are great fightings, when it is sick at the heart, and death is at the door. Besides, temptations may be more in number, and stronger, while Satan is striving to bring you back, who are escaped, than while he only endeavoured to retain you: "After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of affliction," says the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 32. But "cast not away your confidence," ver. 35. Remember his "grace is sufficient for you, and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Pharaoh and his Egyptians never made such a formidable appearance against the Israelites, as at the Red Sea, after they were brought out of Egypt: but then were the pursuers nearest to a total overthrow, Exod. chap. xiv. Let not this case, therefore, make you raze the foundations of your trust; but be ye emptied of self, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and you shall come off victorious.

Case 4. "But when I compare my love to God with my love to some created enjoyments, I find the pulse of my affections beat stronger to the creature than to the Creator. How then can I call him Father? Nay, alas! those turnings of heart within me, and glowings of affection to him, which I had, are gone; so that I fear all the love which I ever had to the Lord has been but a fit and flash of affection, such as hypocrites often have. Answer. It cannot be denied, that the predominant love of the world is a certain mark of an unregenerate state, 1 John ii. 15, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Nevertheless, those
are not always the strongest affections which are most violent. A man's affections may be more moved, on some occasions, by an object that is little regarded, than by another that is exceedingly beloved; even as a little brook sometimes makes more noise than a great river. The strength of our affections is to be measured by the firmness and fixedness of the root, not by the violence of their actions. Suppose a person meeting with a friend, who has been long abroad, finds his affections more vehemently acting towards his friend on that occasion, than towards his own wife and children; will he therefore say, that he loves his friend more than them? Surely not. Even so, although the Christian may find himself more moved in his love to the creature, than in his love to God; yet it is not therefore to be said, that he loves the creature more than God, seeing love to God is always more firmly rooted in a gracious heart, than love to any created enjoyment whatever; as appears when competition arises in such a manner, that the one or other is to be foregone. Would you then know your case? Retire into your own hearts, and there lay the two in the balance, and try which of them weighs down the other. Ask thyself, as in the sight of God, whether thou wouldst part with Christ for the creature, or part with the creature for Christ, if thou wert left to thy choice in the matter? If you find your heart disposed to part with what is dearest to you in the world for Christ at his call, you have no reason to conclude you love the creature more than God; but, on the contrary, that you love God more than the creature, although you do not feel such violent motions in the love of God, as in the love of some created thing, Matt. x. 37, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother—he cannot be my disciple." From which texts compared we may infer, that he who hates, that is, is ready to part with, father and mother for Christ, is, in our Lord's account, one that loves them less than him, and not one who loves father and mother more than him. Moreover, you are to consider that there is a twofold love to Christ. 1. There is a sensible love to him, which is felt as a dart in the heart, and makes a holy love-sickness in the soul, arising from want of enjoyment, as in that case of the spouse, Cant. v. 8, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love:"

or else from the fulness of it, as in Cant. ii. 5, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." These glowings of affection are usually wrought in young converts, who are ordinarily made "to sing in the days of their youth," Hos. ii. 15. While the fire-edge is upon the young convert, he looks upon others, reputed
to be godly, and not finding them in such a temper or disposition as himself, he is ready to censure them; and to think there is far less religion in the world than indeed there is. But when his own cup comes to settle below the brim, and he finds that in himself which made him question the state of others, he is more humbled, and feels more and more the necessity of daily recourse to the blood of Christ for pardon, and to the Spirit of Christ for sanctification; and thus grows downwards in humiliation, self-loathing, and self-denial. 2. There is a rational love to Christ, which, without these sensible emotions felt in the former case, evidences itself by a dutiful regard to the divine authority and command. When one bears such a love to Christ, though the vehement strings of affection be wanting, yet he is truly tender of offending a gracious God; endeavours to walk before him unto all well pleasing; and is grieved at the heart for what is displeasing unto him, 1 John v. 3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Now, although that sensible love does not always continue with you, you have no reason to deem it a hypocritical fit, while the rational love remains with you; any more than a loving and faithful wife needs question her love to her husband, when her fondness is abated.

Case 5. "The attainments of hypocrites and apostates are a terror to me, and come like a shaking storm on me, when I am about to conclude, from the marks of grace, which I seem to find in myself, that I am in the state of grace." Answer. These things should indeed stir us up to a most serious and impartial examination of ourselves; but ought not to keep us in a continued suspense as to our state. Sirs, you see the outside of hypocrites, their duties, their gifts, their tears, and so on, but you see not their inside; you do not discern their hearts, the bias of their spirits. Upon what you see of them, you found a judgment of charity as to their state; and you do well to judge charitably in such a case, because you cannot know the secret springs of their actions: but you are seeking, and ought to have, a judgment of certainty as to your own state; and therefore are to look into that part of religion; which none in the world but yourselves can discern in you; and which you can as little see in others. A hypocrite's region may appear far greater than that of a sincere soul; but that which makes the greatest figure in the eyes of men, is often of least worth before God. I would rather utter one of those groans which the apostle speaks of, Rom. viii. 26, than shed Esau's tears, have Balaam's prophetic spirit, or the joy of the stony-ground hearer. "The fire that shall try every man's work," will try, not of what
bulk it is, but "of what sort it is," 1 Cor. iii. 13.—Though you may know what bulk of religion another has, and that it be more bulky than your own, yet God doth not regard that; why then do you make such a matter of it? It is impossible for you, without divine revelation, certainly to know of what sort another man's religion is: but you may certainly know what sort your own is of, without extraordinary revelation; otherwise the apostle would not exhort the saints to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure," 2 Peter i. 10. Therefore the attainments of hypocrites and apostates should not disturb you, in your serious inquiry into your own state. I will tell you two things, wherein the meanest saints go beyond the most refined hypocrites: 1. In denying themselves; renouncing all confidence in themselves, and their own works; acquiescing in, being well pleased with, and venturing their souls upon, God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, Matt. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And chap. xi. 6, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh." 2. In a real hatred of all sin; being willing to part with every lust, without exception, and to comply with every duty which the Lord makes, or shall make known to them, Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Try yourselves by these.

Case 6. "I see myself fall so far short of the saints mentioned in the Scriptures, and of several excellent persons of my own acquaintance, that, when I look on them, I can hardly look on myself as one of the same family with them." Answer. It is indeed matter of humiliation, that we do not get forward to that measure of grace and holiness which we see is attainable in this life. This should make us more vigorously press towards the mark: but surely it is from the devil, that weak Christians make a rack for themselves, of the attainments of the strong. To yield to the temptation, is as unreasonable as for a child to dispute away his relation to his father, because he is not of the same stature with his elder brethren. There are saints of several sizes in Christ's family; some fathers, some young men, and some little children, 1 John ii. 13, 14.

Case 7. "I never read in the word of God, nor did I ever know of a child of God, so tempted, and so left of God, as I am; and therefore, no saint's case being like mine, I cannot but conclude that I am none of their number." Answer. This objection arises to some from their ignorance of the Scriptures, and the experience of Christians. It is profitable, in this case, to impart the matter to
some experienced Christian friend, or to some godly minister. This has been a blessed means of peace to some persons; while their case, which appeared to them to be singular, has been proved to have been the case of other saints. The Scriptures give instances of very horrid temptations, wherewith the saints have been assaulted. Job was tempted to blaspheme; this was the great thing the devil aimed at in the case of that great saint, Job. i. 11, "He will curse thee to thy face." Chap. ii. 9, "Curse God and die." Asaph was tempted to think it was in vain to be religious, which was in effect to throw off all religion, Psalm lxxiii. 13, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain." Yea, Christ himself was tempted to "cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple," and to "worship the devil," Matt. iv. 6—9. And many of the children of God have not only been attacked with, but have actually yielded to very gross temptation for a time. Peter denied Christ, and cursed and swore that he knew him not, Mark xiv. 71. Paul, when a persecutor compelled even saints to blaspheme, Acts xxvi. 10, 11. Many of the saints can, from their sad experience, bear witness to very gross temptations, which have astonished their spirits, made their very flesh to tremble, and sickened their bodies. Satan's fiery darts make terrible work; and will cost some pains to quench them, by a vigorous managing of the shield of faith, Eph. vi. 16. Sometimes he makes such desperate attacks, that never was one more put to it, in running to and fro, without intermission, to quench the fire-balls incessantly thrown into his house by an enemy, designing to burn the house about him, than the poor tempted saint is, to repel Satanic injections. But these injections, these horrid temptations though they are a dreadful affliction, they are not the sins of the tempted, unless they make them heirs by consenting to them. They will be charged upon the tempter alone, if they be not consented to; and will no more be laid to the charge of the tempted party, than a bastard's being laid down at a chaste man's door will fix guilt upon him.

But suppose neither minister nor private Christian, to whom you go, can tell you of any who has been in your case; yet you ought not thence to infer that your case is singular, far less to give up hope: for it is not to be thought, that every godly minister, or private Christian, has had experience of all the cases which a child of God may be in. We need not doubt that some have had distresses known only to God and their own consciences; and so to others these distresses are as if they had never been. Yea, and though the Scriptures contain suitable directions for every case which a child of God can be in, and these illustrated with a sufficient number of examples; yet it is not to be imagined that there are in the
Scriptures perfect instances of every particular case incident to the saints. Therefore, though you cannot find an instance of your case in the Scripture, yet bring your case to it, and you shall find suitable remedies prescribed there for it. Study rather to make use of Christ for your case, who has a remedy for all diseases, than to know if ever any was in your case. Though one should shew you an instance of your case, in an undoubted saint; yet none could promise that it would certainly give you case: for a scrupulous conscience would readily find out some difference. And if nothing but a perfect conformity of another's case to yours will satisfy it will be hard, if not impossible, to satisfy you; for it is with people's cases, as with their natural faces: though the faces of all men are of one make, and some are so very like others, that, at first view, we are ready to take them for the same; yet if you view them more accurately, you will see something in every face, distinguishing it from all others; though possibly you cannot tell what it is. Wherefore I conclude, that if you can find in yourselves the marks of regeneration, proposed to you from the word, you ought to conclude you are in the state of grace, though your case were singular, which is indeed unlikely.

Case 8. "The afflictions I meet with are strange and unusual. I doubt if ever a child of God was tried with such dispensations of providence as I am." "Answer. Much of what was said on the preceding case, may be helpful in this. Holy Job was assaulted with this temptation, Job v. 1, "To which of the saints wilt thou turn?" But he rejected it, and held fast his integrity. The apostle supposes that Christians may be tempted to "think it strange concerning the fiery trial," 1 Pet. iv. 12. But they have need of larger experience than Solomon's, who will venture to say, "See this is new," Eccl. i. 10. What though, in respect of the outward dispensations of providence, "it happen to you according to the work of the wicked?" yet you may be just notwithstanding; according to Solomon's observation, Eccl. viii. 14. Sometimes we travel in ways where we can neither perceive the prints of the foot of man or beast; yet we cannot from thence conclude that there was never any there before us: so though thou canst not perceive the footsteps of the flock, in the way of thine affliction, thou must not therefore conclude that thou art the first that ever travelled that road. But what if it were so? Some one saint or other must be first, in drinking of each bitter cup the rest have drunk of. What warrant have you or I to limit the Holy One of Israel to a trodden path, in his dispensations towards us? "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters; and thy footsteps are not known," Psalm lxxvii. 19. If the Lord should
carry you to heaven by some retired road, so to speak, you would have no ground of complaint. Learn to allow sovereignty a latitude; be at your duty; and let no affliction cast a veil over any evidences you otherwise have for your being in the state of grace: for "no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him," Eccl. ix. 1.

Use II. You that are strangers to this new birth, be convinced of the absolute necessity of it. Are all who are in the state of grace born again? then you have neither part nor lot in it, who are not born again. I must tell you in the words of our Lord and Saviour, and O that he would speak them to your hearts! "You must be born again," John iii. 7. For your conviction, consider these few things.

1. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you to do any thing really good and acceptable to God. While you are not born again, your best works are but glittering sins; for though the matter of them is good, they are quite marred in the performance. Consider, 1. That without regeneration there is no faith, and "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6. Faith is a vital act of the new-born soul. The evangelist, shewing the different entertainment which our Lord Jesus had from different persons, some receiving him, some rejecting him, points at regenerating grace as the true cause of that difference, without which never any one would have received him. He tells us, that "as many as received him," were those "which were born—of God," John i. 11—13. Unregenerate men may presume; but true faith they cannot have. Faith is a flower that grows not in the field of nature. As the tree cannot grow without a root, neither can a man believe without the new nature, whereof the principle of believing is a part. 2. Without regeneration a man's works are dead works. As is the principle, so must the effects be: if the lungs are rotten, the breath will be unsavoury; and he who at best is dead in sin, his works at best will he but dead works. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure—being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate," Tit. i. 15, 16. Could we say of a man, that he is more blameless in his life than any other in the world; that he reduces his body with fasting; and has made his knees as horns with continual praying; but he is not born again: that exception would mar all. As if one should say, There is a well proportioned body, but the soul is gone; it is but a dead lump. This is a melting consideration. Thou dost many things materially good; but God says, All these things avail not, as long as I see the old nature reigning in the man. Gal. vi. 15, "For in Jesus Christ
neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

If thou art not born again, (1.) All thy reformation is naught in the sight of God. Thou hast shut the door, but the thief is still in the house. It may be thou art not what once thou wast; yet thou art not what thou must be, if ever thou see heaven; for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. (2.) Thy prayers are an "abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 8. It may be, others admire thy seriousness; thou criest as for thy life; but God accounts of the opening of thy mouth, as one would account of the opening of a grave full of rottenness, Rom. iii. 13, "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Others are affected with thy prayers; which seem to them, as if they would rend the heavens; but God accounts them but as the howling of a dog: "They have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds," Hos. vii. 14. Others take thee for a wrestler and prevailer with God; but he can take no delight in thee nor thy prayers, Isa. lxvi. 3, "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck;—he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." Why, because thou art yet "in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity!" (3.) All thou hast done for God, and his cause in the world, though it may be followed with temporal rewards, yet it is lost as to divine acceptance. This is clear from the case of Jehu, who was indeed rewarded with a kingdom, for his executing due vengeance upon the house of Ahab; as being a work good for the matter of it, because it was commanded of God, as you may see, 2 Kings ix. 7; yet was he punished for it in his posterity, because he did it not in a right manner, Hos. i. 4, "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." God looks chiefly to the heart: and if so, truly, though the outward appearance be fairer than that of many others, yet the hidden man of thy heart is loathsome; you look well before men, but are not, as Moses was, fair to God, as the margin has it, Acts vii. 20. O what a difference is there between the characters of Asa and Amaziah! "The high places were not removed; nevertheless, Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days," 1 Kings xv. 14. "Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart," 2 Chron. xxv. 2. It may be thou art zealous against sin in others, and dost admonish them of their duty, and reprove them for their sin; and they hate thee, because thou dost thy duty; but I must tell thee, God hates thee too, because thou dost it not in a right manner; and that thou canst never do, whilst thou art not born again. (4.) All thy strug-
gles against sin in thine own heart and life, are naught. The proud Pharisee afflicted his body with fasting, and God struck his soul, in the mean time, with a sentence of condemnation, Luke xviii. Balaam struggled with his covetous temper, to that degree, that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness, yet he would not win them by cursing Israel: but he died the death of the wicked, Numb. xxxi. 8. All thou dost, while in an unregenerate state, is for thyself: therefore it will fare with thee as with a subject, who having reduced the rebels, puts the crown on his own head, and loses all his good service and his head too.

**Objection.** "If it be thus with us, then we need never perform any religious duty at all." **Answer.** The conclusion is not just. No inability of thine can excuse from the duty which God's law lays on thee: and there is less evil in doing thy duty, than there is in the omission of it. But there is a difference between omitting a duty, and doing it as thou dost it. A man orders the masons to build him a house. If they quite neglect the work, that will not be accepted; if they build on the old rotten foundation, neither will that please: but they must raze the foundation, and build on firm ground. "Go thou and do likewise." In the mean time, it is not in vain even for thee to seek the Lord: for though he regards thee not, yet he may have respect to his own ordinances, and do thee good thereby, as was said before.

2. Without regeneration there is no communion with God. There is a society on earth, whose "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. But out of that society, all the unregenerate are excluded; for they are all enemies to God, as you heard before at large. Now, "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos iii. 3. They are all unholy: and "what communion hath light with darkness—Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. They may have a shew and semblance of holiness; but they are strangers to true holiness, and therefore "without God in the world." How sad is it, to be employed in religious duties, yet to have no fellowship with God in them! You would not be content with your meat, unless it nourished you; nor with your clothes, unless they kept you warm: and how can you satisfy yourselves with your duties, while you have no communion with God in them?

3. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to qualify you for heaven. None go to heaven but those who are made meet for it, Col. i. 12. As it was with Solomon's temple, 1 Kings vi. 7, so is it with the temple above. It is "built of stone made ready before it is brought thither;" namely, of "lively stones," 1 Pet. ii. 5,—"wrought for the selfsame thing," 2 Cor. v. 5; for they cannot be
NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

173

laid in that glorious building just as they come out of the quarry of depraved nature. Jewels of gold are not meet for swine, and far less jewels of glory for unregenerated sinners. Beggars, in their rags, are not fit for kings' houses; nor sinners to enter into the King's palace, without the raiment of needlework, Psalm xlv. 14, 15. What wise man would bring fish out of the water to feed in his meadows? or send his oxen to feed in the sea? Even as little are the unregenerate fit for heaven, or heaven fit for them. It would never be relished by them.

The unregenerate would find fault with heaven on several accounts. As, (1.) That it is a strange country. Heaven is the renewed man's native country: his Father is in heaven; his mother is Jerusalem, which is above, Gal. iv. 26. He is born from above, John iii. 3. Heaven is his home, 2 Cor. v. 1; therefore he looks on himself as a stranger on this earth, and his heart is homeward, Heb. xi. 16, "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly country." But the unregenerate man is the man of the earth, Psalm x. 18; written in the earth, Jer. xvii. 13. Now, "Home is home, be it ever so homely:" therefore he minds earthly things, Phil. iii. 19. There is a peculiar sweetness in our native soil; and with difficulty are men drawn to leave it, and dwell in a strange country. In no case does that prevail more than in this; for unregenerated men would quit their pretensions to heaven, were it not that they see they cannot make a better bargain. (2.) There is nothing in heaven that they delight in, as agreeable to the carnal heart, Rev. xxi. 27, "For there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." When Mahomet gave out a paradise to be a place of sensual delights, his religion was greedily embraced; for that is the heaven men naturally choose. If the covetous man could get bags full of gold there, and the voluptuous man could promise himself his sensual delights they might be reconciled to heaven, and meetened for it too; but since it is not so, though they may utter fair words about it, truly it has little of their hearts. (3.) Every corner there is filled with that which of all things they have the least liking for; and that is holiness, true holiness, perfect holiness. Were one that abhors swine's flesh, bidden to a feast where all the dishes were of that sort of meat, but variously prepared, he would find fault with every dish at the table, notwithstanding all the art used to make them palatable. It is true, there is joy in heaven, but it is holy joy; there are pleasures in heaven, but they are holy pleasures; there are places in heaven, but it is holy ground,—that holiness which in every place, and in every thing there, would mar all to the unregenerate. (4.) Were they carried thither, they would not only change
their place, which would be a great heart-break, but they would change their company too. Truly, they would never like the company there, who care not for communion with God here; nor value the fellowship of his people, at least in the vitals of practical godliness. Many, indeed, mix themselves with the godly on earth, to procure a name to themselves, and to cover the sinfulness of their hearts; but that trade cannot be managed there. (5.) They would never like the employment of heaven, they care so little for it now. The business of the saints there would be an intolerable burden to them, seeing it is not agreeable to their nature. To be taken up in beholding, admiring, and praising him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb, would be work unsuitable, and therefore unsavoury to an unrenewed soul. (6.) They would find this fault with it, that the whole is of everlasting continuance. This would be a killing ingredient in it to them. How would such as now account the Sabbath day a burden, brook the celebration of an everlasting Sabbath in the heavens!

4. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to your being admitted into heaven, John iii. 3. No heaven without it. Though carnal men could digest all those things which make heaven so unsuitable for them, yet God will never bring them thither. Therefore born again you must be, else you shall never see heaven; you shall perish eternally. For, (1.) There is a bill of exclusion against you in the court of heaven, and against all of your sort; “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” John iii. 3. Here is a bar before you, that men and angels cannot remove. To hope for heaven, in the face of this peremptory sentence, is to hope that God will recall his word, and sacrifice his truth and faithfulness to your safety; which is infinitely more than to hope that “the earth shall be forsaken for you, and the rock removed out of its place.” (2.) There is no holiness without regeneration. It is “the new man which is created in true holiness,” Eph. iv. 24. And no heaven without holiness; for “without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” Heb. xii. 14. Will the gates of pearl be opened, to let in dogs and swine? No; their place is without, Rev. xxii. 15. God will not admit such into the holy place of communion with him here; and will he admit them into the holiest of all hereafter? Will he take the children of the devil, and permit them to sit with him in his throne? Or, will he bring the unclean into the city, whose street is pure gold? Be not deceived; grace and glory are but two links of one chain, which God has joined, and no man shall put asunder. None are transplanted into the paradise above, but out of the nursery of grace below. If you be unholy while in this world, you
NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

will be for ever miserable in the world to come. (3.) All the unregenerate are without Christ, and therefore have no hope while in that case, Eph. ii. 12. Will Christ prepare mansions of glory for those who refuse to receive him into their hearts? Nay, rather will he not “laugh at their calamity,” who now “set at nought all his counsel?” Prov. i. 25, 26. (4.) There is an infallible connexion between a finally unregenerate state and damnation, arising from the nature of the things themselves; and from the decree of heaven which is fixed and immovable, as mountains of brass, John iii. 3; Rom. viii. 6. “To be carnally minded is death.” An unregenerate state is hell in the bud. It is eternal destruction in embryo, growing daily, though thou dost not discern it. Death is painted on many a fair face, in this life. Depraved nature makes men meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the damned, in utter darkness. 1. The heart of stone within thee, is a sinking weight. As a stone naturally goes downward, so the hard stony heart tends downward to the bottomless pit. You are hardened against reproof; though you are told your danger, yet you will not see it, you will not believe it. But remember that the conscience being now seared with a hot iron, is a sad presage of everlasting burnings. 2. Your unfruitfulness under the means of grace, fits you for the axe of God’s judgments, Matt. iii. 10, “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” The withered branch is fuel for the fire, John xv. 6. Tremble at this, you despisers of the Gospel: if you be not thereby made meet for heaven, you will be like the barren ground, bearing briers and thorns, “nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned,” Heb. vi. 3. 3. The hellish dispositions of mind, which discover themselves in profanity of life, fit the guilty for the regions of horror. A profane life will have a miserable end. “They which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” Gal. v. 19—21. Think on this, you prayerless persons, ye mockers of religion, ye cursers and swearers, ye unclean and unjust persons, who have not so much as moral honesty to keep you from lying, cheating, and stealing. What sort of a tree do you think it is, upon which these fruits grow? Is it a tree of righteousness, which the Lord hath planted? Or is it not such a one as cumbres the ground, which God will pluck up for fuel to the fire of his wrath? 4. Your being dead in sin, makes you meet to be wrapped in flames of brimstone, as a winding-sheet; and to be buried in the bottomless pit, as in a grave. Great was the cry in Egypt, when the first-born in each family was dead; but are there not many families, where all are dead together? Nay, many there are who are twice dead, plucked up by the root. Sometimes in their life they
have been roused by apprehensions of death, and its consequences; but now they are so far on in their way to the land of darkness, that they hardly ever have the least glimmering of light from heaven. 5. The darkness of your minds presages eternal darkness. O the horrid ignorance with which some are plagued; while others, who have got some rays of the light of reason in their heads, are utterly void of spiritual light in their hearts! If you knew your case, you would cry out, Oh! darkness! darkness! darkness! making way for the blackness of darkness for ever! The face-covering is upon you already, as condemned persons; so near are you to everlasting darkness. It is only Jesus Christ who can stop the execution, pull the napkin off the face of the condemned malefactor, and put a pardon in his hand, Isa. xxv. 7. "He will destroy, in this mountain, the face of covering cast over all people," that is, the face-covering cast over the condemned, as in Haman’s case, Esth. vii. 8. "As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face." 6. The chains of darkness are bound with in the prison of your depraved state, Isa. lxii. 1, fits you to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Ah, miserable men! Sometimes their consciences stir within them, and they begin to think of amending their ways. But alas! they are in chains, they cannot do it. They are chained by the heart: their lusts cleave so fast to them, that they cannot, nay, they will not shake them off. Thus you see what affinity there is between an unregenerate state, and the state of the damned, the state of absolute and irretrievable misery. Be convinced, then, that you must be born again; put a high value on the new birth, and eagerly desire it.

The text tells you, that the word is the seed, whereof the new creature is formed; therefore take heed to it, and entertain it, as it is your life. Apply yourself to the reading of the Scriptures. You that cannot read, get others to read it to you. Wait diligently on the preaching of the word, as by divine appointment the special mean of conversion; "for—it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," 1 Cor. i. 21. Wherefore cast not yourselves out of Christ’s way; reject not the means of grace, lest you be found to judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Attend carefully to the word preached. Hear every sermon, as if you were hearing for eternity; take heed that the fowls of the air pick not up this seed from you, as it is sown. "Give thyself wholly to it," 1 Tim. iv. 15. "Receive it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God," 1 Thess. ii. 13. Hear it with application, looking on it as a message sent from heaven, to you in particular; though not to you only, Rev. iii. 22. "He that
hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Lay it up in your hearts; meditate upon it; and be not as the unclean beasts, that chew not the cud. But by earnest prayer, beg that the dew of Heaven may fall on thy heart, that the seed may spring up there.

More particularly, 1 Receive the testimony of the word of God, concerning the misery of an unregenerate state, the sinfulness thereof, and the absolute necessity of regeneration. 2. Receive its testimony concerning God, what a holy and just One he is. 3. Examine thy ways by it; namely, the thoughts of thy heart, the expressions of thy lips, and the tenour of thy life. Look back through the several periods of thy life; and see thy sins from the precepts of the word, and learn, from its threatening, what thou art liable to on account of these sins. 4. By the help of the same word of God, view the corruption of thy nature, as in a glass which manifests our ugly face in a clear manner. Were these things deeply rooted in the heart, they might be the seed of that fear and sorrow, on account of thy soul's state, which are necessary to prepare and stir thee up to look after a Saviour. Fix your thoughts upon him offered to thee in the Gospel, as fully suited to thy case; having, by his obedience unto death, perfectly satisfied the justice of God, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This may prove the seed of humiliation, desire, hope and faith; and move thee to stretch out the withered hand unto him, at his own command.

Let these things sink deeply into your hearts, and improve them diligently. Remember, whatever you are, you must be born again; else it had been better for you, that you had never been born. Wherefore, if any of you shall live and die in an unregenerate state, you will be inexcusable, having been fairly warned of your danger.

PART II.

MYSTICAL UNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND BELIEVERS.

I am the vine ye are the branches.—John xv. 5.

Having spoken of the change made by regeneration, on all those who will inherit eternal life, in opposition to their natural real state, the state of degeneracy; I proceed to speak of the change made on them, in their union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in opposition to their natural relative state, the state of misery. The doctrine of