



INFALLIBLE ANTIDOTES AGAINST UNBELIEVING FEARS.*

SERMON I.

REV. i. 17, 18,

Fear not: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

TO-DAY is the feast of the Christian passover. A communion table is about to be covered. The great end of persons sitting down at that table is, that they may suck the breasts of consolation, and drink abundantly of that blood which flows from the pierced side of a crucified Saviour. Some feed at this table without fear. Others fear so much that they cannot feed. To such poor trembling souls our text speaks good and comfortable words: "Fear not," &c.

As the Lord shewed to Daniel, a man greatly beloved, the state of his church till his first coming; so to John, another beloved disciple, he discloses the state of his church till his second coming. Both of them were dignified with a vision of Christ, the Son of God; and on each of them it had almost the same effect. In Daniel there remained no strength, Dan. x. Here we see the vision had a similar effect on John. He is represented, ver. 17, as a dead man. He was confounded with the glory of the person whom he saw. His eyes were dazzled with the brightness, his strength failed, he could act no more than if he had been dead. But our Lord revives him. He lays his right hand on him, and strengthens him, that he might be able to stand, hear, and receive his orders. Jesus comforts him. He rebukes his fears: Fear not. There is a fear with which God is well pleased, and a fear of which he does not approve. This last is excessive fear, which greatly mars us in our duty, makes our hearts faint, and our hands hang down, so as that we have neither heart nor hand for our work. This is incident to the people of God;

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but Christ does not allow them in it, though he is tender of them under it.

We have next, the grounds of consolation, to dispel this fear, viz. (1.) The Godhead of Christ. He is the first and the last. The first principle of all things, from whom they had their beginning, and the last end of all things: an irrefragable testimony this of the divinity of Christ. And it shews us that the comfort of believers depends upon this article. (2.) The union of the Godhead and manhood in one person:—where Christ is held forth as God, the living God; who had life from eternity of himself, and gave life to all the creatures:—As man; in that it is said he died. It is spoken of the same person. It was the living God that died, though not the divine nature. Here we see proposed, for John's comfort, the death of Christ, God-man. He was made man, and died. (3.) His resurrection: I am alive. He overcame death, and arose the third day. (4.) The eternity of that life to which he was raised up: he lives for evermore. To all this is prefixed a Behold! to stir up believers to notice it as the grand fountain of their comfort; and it is followed with an asservation, Amen, or verily, to put them out of doubt of it.

Next, we have his Mediatorial sovereignty: He hath the keys of hell and death. The keys are an ensign of government. The key of the house of David is laid upon his shoulder. He opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open, Isa. xxii. 22. None go to death or hell but when he sends them; and none are kept out of hell, and taken to glory but by him.

From this subject we may observe the following

Doct. That the death and resurrection of Christ, that eternal life to which he was raised, and his Mediatorial sovereignty, are the great grounds of the saints' consolation, and sufficient to dispel all their unbelieving fears.

In discoursing upon this subject, I shall, by divine aid,

I. Speak a little, and but a little, to each of these things, to unfold them, so as that the ground of comfort in them may appear.

II. Point out the consolation of the saint to be found in these.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. To speak a little to each of the things in the text, to unfold them, so as that the ground of comfort in them may appear.

1. As to his death. On this I offer these few remarks: (1.) His death supposeth—his incarnation, and living as a man in the world, John i. 14, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." This has a respect to the Shechinah, or the divine presence: that was a fire, encompassed with a cloud, which was above the ark in the first

temple. Christ's divinity was clouded with his humanity; the form of God, with the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 6—8, "He took upon him our nature." He was a partaker of flesh and blood, Heb. ii. 14. Thus he became a substantial Mediator between God and man, that so he might be a Mediator of reconciliation; how he was conceived, born, and lived in the world, the Evangelists fully relate. (2.) His death was vicarious; he died in the room and stead of sinners, not indeed of all, but of his own sheep. The Socinians allow that he died for our good, though not in our room; but this places the death of the martyrs and of Christ on the same footing. But the scripture is plain, Matth. xx. 28, "He came to give his life a ransom for many." Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He was made sin for us, and died, the just for the unjust." There was a real imputation of the sins of the elect unto Christ, and a real translation of the punishment due to us upon him, Isa. liii. 4—6, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—This was typified by the sacrifices under the law, on the head of which the offerer laid his hand, typically transferring the sin upon the beast: which was really accomplished in that true sacrifice of Christ, who gave himself for us, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour," Eph. v. 2. (3.) His sufferings and death were most exquisite: "God spared not his own Son." In the death of Christ there was a complication of deaths; they murdered his reputation, execrating him as a blasphemer against God, and a traitor against the government; placing him between two malefactors, as if he had been the greatest of the three. They murdered his body, and that in a most cruel manner. The wrath of God fell upon his soul, the first drops of which made him cry out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." His enemies shewed no pity, but gave him vinegar to drink: he got judgment without mercy from God; even the sun was darkened, that he might not have the light of it, because it is pleasant to the eyes. (4.) His sufferings and death were satisfactory, and that fully. By his one sacrifice, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. He was Lord of his own life: he voluntarily laid it down, and that upon a compact betwixt the Father and him. Being God, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, the fulness of merit cannot be doubted; for so his

sufferings were of infinite value, to which nothing can be added. He was God, and purchased the church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. There was a proportion between the sins of the elect, and the sufferings of Christ. Sin is an infinite evil, his sufferings were of infinite value. His deity stamped an infinite value on his sufferings; and in this respect they do more than equal all the possible sufferings of all creatures together; for what would they all be to God dying?

2. As to his resurrection, and the life to which he was restored. The text says, "Behold I am alive." Had he lain still in the grave as dead, all the hopes of believers had died with him; but behold, we have David's comfort: his soul was not left in hell, neither did he see corruption, Psalm xvi. 10. Here consider, (1.) That God raised up Christ; Acts ii. 24, "Him God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." There was the weight of all the elect's sins lying on him as a grave-stone. This was rolled away, and he was raised up by the exceeding greatness of God's power, Eph. i. 19. By this power, also, the Father declared him to be his Son indeed, Rom. i. 4; and that he was fully satisfied for the debt Christ undertook to pay. Therefore, though Christ himself could have rolled away the stone, yet an angel, God's officer, is sent to do it, to open the prison door; thereby declaring, that the Judge had no more to exact of him, that the debt was completely paid. (2.) Where he now lives. It is in heaven, the better country, which we had forfeited by sin, but where we still would fain be. Forty days after his resurrection, he ascended into heaven. As a public person he died, and as such he ascended. There the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. He is set down on the Father's throne, and is at his right hand. Having offered his bloody sacrifice, he is now gone into the holiest of all, and there will continue till the restitution of all things. (3.) For what he lives. The apostle tells us, that it is to make intercession for us; and he himself says, it is to prepare a place for us in his Father's house, where there are many mansions. He went there to take infetment of heaven for us, and he lives to keep possession. He lives there as the advocate of the saints, who have continual business at the court of heaven, yet have no skill to manage it; "but," says Paul, "Christ is entered there to appear in the presence of God for us." This is said in allusion to a custom among confederated states and princes, who have their agents, who, upon all occasions, appear in the presence of the prince in behalf of those they represent, and for whom they negotiate, to take up any emergent

differences, or manage whatever business may be put into their hands. We now go on,

3. To the eternity of this life. The man Christ lives for evermore. Amen. Says Paul, "He ever liveth" and that as God-man. The saints cannot outlive their advocate? nay, through eternity they shall behold his glorious face. He will never lay aside our nature. He is now for ever out of the reach of death. He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. Joseph's brethren, when they saw their father was dead, were in a great fear, lest Joseph should avenge the wrong they had done him. No such fear needs the believer have. Jesus lives for ever, to be the eternal bond of the saints' eternal communion with God. For, seeing we can neither come to God by ourselves, nor by ourselves abide in communion with him, it is necessary, that as we come to God by Christ, so by him also must we abide with God for ever. The members must receive influences and glory from their head, to whom they shall remain for ever united. He lives for ever, to be their prophet, for the Lamb is the light of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 23; and he will be their priest for ever; he continueth for ever, having an unchangeable priesthood, Heb. vii. 24. He will eternally represent his own sacrifice as the foundation of our eternal glory: and as for his kingdom, it is an everlasting kingdom, that shall not be destroyed, Dan. vii. 14. Let us,

4. Attend to his mediatorial sovereignty. He hath the keys of hell and death. He hath all power over the present and future worlds. Hell and death are terrible to the believer; but Christ holds the keys of both. He went down to the grave, opened the door, and brought the keys away with him. None go to hell but whom he sends there, and consequently the keys of heaven are in his hand; which is here also understood. He has "all power in heaven and earth," Matth. xxviii. 18. Of this, Joseph's exaltation in Egypt was a type, Gen. xli. 40. And these keys are the purchase of his blood, Phil. ii. 8, 9, "Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," &c.

Now, these things, the death, resurrection, life, and power of Jesus, may be considered three ways, in order to improve them for consolation to the saints. (1.) As patterns and examples. It is the ordinary way of distressed persons, to conclude there is no sorrow like their sorrow; and if ye can satisfyingly answer that ordinary question of theirs, Was there ever any in my case that got safely out of it? you will do much to allay their grief, and raise

their hopes. Thus we find the apostle improving the sufferings and glory of Christ, Heb. xii. 3, "For, consider him," says he, "that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds." Yea, Jesus Christ himself says, Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." (2.) As pledges, assuring the saints of what they wish for. Thus the apostle improves the resurrection of Christ, to assure believers they shall not lie ever consuming in a grave, but shall be raised up to glory. Christ says he is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those that slept, 1 Cor. xv. 20; and Jesus tells us, that his life is a pledge of ours: "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. (3.) As containing in them sufficient salves for all their sores. Thus are these the magazine of the saints' consolation, his wounds are the clefts of the rock, wherein the poor creature may safely hide itself. Only bruise the spices, pour out the ointment, consider them in their nature and effects, and assuredly they will send forth a pleasant smell, sufficient to revive and comfort a fainting soul. We are now,

II. To point out the nature of that consolation which saints may derive from these. For this purpose, let us take a view of the fountains of their fears and distrust.

1. There is the super-eminent glory and infinite majesty of the great God. This, when seen and considered by poor wormy man, whose habitation is in the dust, is a great source of fear. This made John fall down at his feet as dead. Who can behold the glorious majesty upon this earth, and not be ready to dwindle into nothing? How do some tremble at the view of their fellow-creatures exalted above them in power and dignity! But O what a vast disproportion betwixt God and the greatest monarch! This challenges our fear indeed, but the saints ought not to let it degenerate into slavish fear. God has veiled his throne in the heavens, he spreads his cloud upon it, Job xxvi. 9. This is the common benefit of mankind upon this earth. But the saints have another ground of consolation in the text: and that is the death of Christ, wherein we behold God incarnate, God made flesh, God in our nature. Can ye not look straight forward to divine majesty, then fetch a compass, and look through the vail of the flesh of Christ, and so ye may see God, and not die. "Often and willingly," said Luther, "would I thus look at God."

2. Sin is another fountain of fear; sinfulness considered with the nature of God. Here the sinner first sees guilt in himself, and justice in God, which two together make a very frightful spectacle.

It is the nature of guilt to bind over to punishment, and of justice to inflict it; so that guilt is a great source of fears. But fear not, O Christian; Christ was dead, and is alive for ever more; therefore the guilt that exposes to hell-fire is done away. Thou mayest indeed be guilty, so as to bring upon thee fatherly chastisements for your amendment, but thou art not liable to eternal plagues. You may plead not guilty to the charges of the law as a covenant of works: "For if God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Upon the cross there were two crucified, the Son of God, and the law of God. But the Son of God, by his becoming dead, bruised to death the law as a covenant of works, in respect of believers. He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross, Coloss. ii. 14. Therefore the law, our first husband, being dead, our relation to it is dissolved, and we are legally married to Christ, who was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Justice is satisfied. No flaming sword stands any more to guard the tree of life. The storm hath exhausted itself upon Christ; fear not, but come forward. He died in our room. Justice exacted, and he answered. Fear not old accounts, for God spared not his own Son. A thousand may fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, by the stroke of justice, but it shall not come nigh thee. Do ye doubt the completeness of the satisfaction? Behold Christ in heaven, with the complete discharge in his hand. He is out of prison. He brought the keys with him, and is now on the throne. Everlasting righteousness is brought in, and it is put on thee by him. He is made of God unto you righteousness. Your own is only filthy rags; but that which is imputed unto you will abide the judgment of God, and endure for ever. But,

3. The sinner sees pollution in himself, and holiness in God. When they behold the spotless purity of God, and themselves as an unclean thing, they are ready to say, O will God look on vile me? will these pure eyes cast a favourable glance on such a dunghill-worm? Fear not, Christ was dead, and is alive. He is made of God unto you sanctification. Thou hast some grace amidst a heap of corruptions. Though thou seest not what a lustre this casts within thee, yet God sees it: "The king's daughter is all glorious within," Psalm xlv. 13. But look to your outer garments, which are of wrought gold, they will hide all your deformities. Though you are, in respect of inherent grace, but fair as the moon, yet your imputed righteousness is clear as the sun. To this some may object, "I am guilty of gross sins, and that even since the Lord began to deal with me." Fear not, Christ died; and if so, God died for your sins. If he was God who died, when he was pouring out his blood, he

knew all the sins you would be guilty of, even after your conversion. He did not shed his blood in vain, and therefore in his death he had even these in his view; and will not the blood of God be able to expiate the grossest sins? It cleanseth from all sin. Remember also he is alive evermore to intercede for you: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," 1 John ii. 1. If his blood was sufficient for expiation, his intercession cannot but be prevalent. —"But I may say, I sin evermore, and that breaks my soul." Fear not, Christ lives evermore; and, if ye believe the apostle, it is to make intercession for you. If Christ lives evermore, ye shall not sin evermore: for he will not thus live alone without you; where he is, there you shall be also, John xvii. 24. "But the sin of my nature lies nearest my heart: I am just a lump of hell, and a mass of sin. Acts of sin are transient, but this is permanent, and I cannot be freed of it." Fear not: Christ died, and therefore, though it may make your way to heaven difficult, yet ye shall never be condemned for it. Nay, good news, O believer! with the death of Christ sin got a fatal wound. Your old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, Rom. vi. 6. You wonder it is so troublesome; but why do ye do so? The old man is mortally wounded; and can you think he will groan out his life in silence, and not move a tongue against Christ? But as surely as Christ came not down from the cross till he breathed out his last, so surely shall the body of death in you be destroyed.

3. Desertions are a cause of fears. The deserted soul is an affrighted soul. Say some, "Christ is withdrawn from me: my sun has gone down: nothing now but darkness and confusion: I can see no evidences of the Lord's love to me: I may say as Job, chap. xxiii. 8, 9, "I go forward and backward, but I cannot perceive him." But fear not, Christian; it has been, and it will be, better with you. Good news to you in your low state, Christ died, and in his death he was forsaken of God; and yet he now enjoys the bosom of the Father, and the light of his countenance. Who would not be content to follow Christ, even through the valley of the shadow of death? Ye pray, and it seems ye are not heard; so it was with Christ: "O my God," said he, "thou hearest not," Psalm xxii. 2. But though your husband be far off, though you cannot see him, yet he is not dead, he is alive; and if alive, he will come again, for he hateth putting away. Though ye seem to be out of sight, yet ye are not out of mind; he liveth evermore. Zion's account of Christ under a fit of desertion, is not canonical, it is not orthodox, Isa. xlix. 14—16, "But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she

should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me."

To this the objection may be proposed, "But how can I endure to want the joys I have sometimes had, and these blessed consolations?" Answer, Trust in God, and have respect to the recompense of the reward of grace. Will you disquiet yourselves because there is not a second summer in one year? Bless God that helps you to the fight in any measure; wait patiently for his comforts, and be constantly at your work. Again, say others, "Were there no more in my case, I might keep heart; but I am under dreadful apprehensions of wrath, and there are positive outgoings of God's anger against my soul, as Job vi. 4, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me." Here, I confess, it is hard to stand, and not to fall down at his feet as dead. Yet we must say, Fear not; for Christ was dead, and the wrath of God was poured out into his soul, which melted his heart like wax in the midst of his bowels: Yet he swam through this ocean. Now, that he is alive, is a pledge that ye shall not drown: For, says he, "because I live ye shall live also."

It was one of the ends of Christ's death, to deliver you and the like of you, Heb. ii. 15, "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. You are mistaken, if you think the arrows are dipped in deadly poison; for Christ was dead, and is alive, and the poison of these arrows entered into his soul in full measure, and he drank it up; Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." They will wound very sore, though there be no poison, no curse in them. Your cloud has a white side, if ye could discern it; only believe, and ye shall be established. This is the heat of the battle with you. Keep hold of the death of Christ as your shield that will defend you. Look not on God, but through the veil of the flesh of Jesus. Dry stubble may be safe, if there be a strong crystal wall between it and the fire. Does God appear as a consuming fire? Christ is the crystal wall: set him betwixt you and an angry God. The light of that fire will shine through him to refresh you, but it will not burn through him. It has been often tried; he is still alive, and ye shall live also.

4. Temptations are a source of fears. Sometimes Satan gets leave to dog saints at their heels. With what horrid temptations poor souls may be harassed, some know by sad experience: fiery darts that they tremble to think of, and that they dare not name! This fills them with fear: but to such I say, Fear not. Christ died,

and is alive evermore. He that thus lives evermore gave a deadly wound to the tempter. When Jesus was in the world, Satan set on him with the most severe temptations; but Jesus overcame him, and at his death triumphed over him. He spoiled principalities and powers, Col. ii. 15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." You see, then, that the enemy with whom you fight is already vanquished, and the victory of Jesus over him is a sure pledge of yours. Yea, as in the first Adam we were all tempted and fell, so in the second Adam we were tempted and stood; and so have overcome already in our Head. We have no more to do but cry to our Lord, who, from his own temptations, well knows how to succour his tempted people. We must give the alarm, and handle our weapons. Though the fight may last a while, yet it will come to an end, and we shall be more than conquerors. Jesus is in heaven, waiting till his enemies be made his footstool; and he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly.

5. Death is the cause of much fear. O how hard is it to look on it with a stayed countenance! Death is terrible, in that it is a dissolution of nature, parts soul and body; and therefore we are so apt to shudder at the thoughts of it. But fear not; for Christ died. His precious soul and body were parted; so he orders us to travel no path but such as he hath trode before us. By his death he has destroyed death; he has unstinged it to the believer. Then, fear it not, it can do you no harm, "But death is terrible, in that it takes us out of this world from all our enjoyments, from our dearest relations and friends, and sends us into another world, where we know not a foot of ground, where we never saw a face. Were a child born with that judgment that men have, the first sight of this world might be terrible to him; so must the unseen world be to us. But fear not: he that was dead is alive; and when ye are carried off, you shall be with him who is infinitely better than all earthly relations. Here is your comfort. Jesus hath the keys of hell and death. He is Lord supreme of that other world to which you are travelling. He sends you such word as Joseph sent his father, Gen. xlv. 9, saying, "God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not." O to believe it firmly!

6, And *Lastly*, Hell is a fountain of fears. Sometimes the godly are above, sometimes under the fears of hell. It is terrible, the thought of being excluded for ever the presence of God! "Who can abide with everlasting burnings?" When we look down to the pit, it seems hard to escape it; when we look up to heaven, our souls faint, lest we never get there. But fear not: for Christ died; and if so,

he suffered the torments thou shouldst have suffered in hell, as to the essentials of them. He was under the punishment of loss; God forsook him, Psalm xxii. 1. He endured the punishment of sense, even to drops of blood, and the wrath of God poured into his soul. Then God will not require two payments for one debt. Christ lives, he rose, and entered heaven as a public person; and therefore, believer, thou shalt as surely go to heaven as if thou wert there already, yea, the apostle says we are there already. Eph. ii. 6, "We are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," as our Head. Jesus lives for evermore; and therefore thou shalt be for ever with the Lord. He has the keys of hell and death. Suppose your father or best friend on earth had these keys, would you be afraid? But we may have more confidence in Jesus than in ten thousand fathers, or even the mothers that bare us. They may forsake us, and a mother may be found that will not have compassion on the son of her womb; but, O believer, Jesus hath said, "I will not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15, 16, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand, thy walls are continually before me." Though Satan be the jailor of hell, yet he keeps not the keys; they hang, believer, at the girdle of your best friend.

III. We shall conclude with some improvement.

1. From this subject we may infer the comfortless state of them that are out of Christ. Are the truths in the text grounds of consolation to the saints? How, then, can they bear up who have no interest in Christ? Nay, we might turn the black side of this white cloud upon unbelievers, and tell them, that if Jesus died how can they escape? If he be alive, he will avenge their contempt of him and their neglect of his salvation. If he lives for evermore, then they will have an eternal enemy. If he has the keys of hell, then they cannot escape that prison; or be rescued out of it.

2. That it is the duty of Christians to improve these things for their actual comfort. Christian, sit down at his table, and suck the breasts of consolation. Build your comforts on these truths. Alas! our comforts are often short lived, because we do not found them sure enough. I will give you but a few notes concerning this. (1.) The grieving of the Spirit cuts the throats of our comforts. (2.) Good men sometimes build their comforts on outward blessings; hence, when these are gone, their comfort is gone. (3.) On grace within them; not on grace without them; the comfort of some streams from their obedience principally, therefore it is soon dried up; whereas

the death and life of Christ are liable to no change, as is our obedience. (4.) Upon the coming in of words to their minds. Hence, when a promise comes in, they are comforted; when a threatening, all is gone. I do believe that the Spirit comforts his people by the word, and that he makes words come in with an impression on the soul; John xiv. 26, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said." But then these words lead the soul direct to Christ, and to build our comfort on him; but it is not of God to build it on the bare impression of a comfortable word. The coming in of a word should guide us to Christ; and though the impression, the guide go, yet we may keep our hold of him.—Here we are presented with an objection, "But I fear I have nothing to do with these consolations." **ANSW.** Are you this day willing to take Christ? Then give your consent, and he is yours, and all is yours: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. **OBJECT.** "But I fear I am not sincere, in that I am actuated from fear of hell, and hope of reward." **ANSW.** If ye fear not God's wrath, so as to endeavour to escape it, ye are despisers of God; if ye desire not salvation, so as to labour for it, ye are monstrous murderers of your own souls. Let your self-love only be regular, and it is commendable; and then it is regular when your desires of happiness are carried towards it through Christ and the way of holiness; so that your soul longs for Christ as well as salvation, and ye desire to be holy as well as happy. It is regular, when it is subordinate to the will of God; and that is, when the man justifies God, though he should cast him off, and yet, come what will, is resolved to cleave to the Lord and his way.

A word to other two sources of the saint's fears.

1. Weakness and spiritual inability for the duties of religion. The soul taking a view of the great work it has to do, what strong lusts are to be mortified, temptations resisted, duties performed; and then, considering how weak and unable it is for any of these things, it is even ready to sink. But fear not: Christ died, &c. Heb. xii. 12, "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Christ died, and therefore strength for duty is purchased. In the first Adam, the influences of the Spirit were forfeited; in the second Adam, they are bought back again. The well-ordered covenant is sealed and confirmed. There is a fulness in the covenant for all your wants. There are promises in it that will answer all your needs. Now, the covenant is confirmed, for the testator is dead. Christ liveth; he arose from death, and lives evermore; therefore, he that has the believer's stock of strength is alive. Adam got our first stock, but he became insolvent; Christ

got the next, he liveth in the court of heaven as a public person and treasury of strength; "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16.

The believer's Surety to the Father stands good; and what need they fear as long as their Cautioner holds foot? Christ is the believer's cautioner for sanctification and perseverance, John x. 28, and chap. xvii. 12, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Therefore he is called "the surety of a better testament," Heb. vii. 22. Now, he will not see his people in want of what is necessary for their through-bearing. He lives for that end, to dispense the benefits of the covenant. He holds the keys, therefore they shall not want. The Spirit is given by virtue of his ascension, John xvi. 7, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." For what purpose was Joseph sent to Egypt, and exalted there, but to provide for his father's family, being therein a notable type of Christ? Well, then, fear not; wiles help weak folk. Though ye want strength, yet you have wisdom afforded you, even in betaking yourselves to Christ. I may allude to that, Prov. xxx. 24—29, "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble flock, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces." Ye have the wisdom of the ants, to provide your meat in summer; of the conies, to build in the Rock Christ; of the locusts, not to set out alone; and of the spiders, to be in the palace of the great King, holding by the promises. 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

2. The danger of an evil time is another source of fear. Psalm xlix. 5, "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? Two things there look ghastly upon them. (1.) The hazard of sinning. An evil time is a time of many snares. The soul is afraid that he will never stand out, but one day will fall. Fear not:—Christ died, and it was an evil time, a time of many snares, yet he came safe off. This he did as a public person, and so it is a pledge that ye shall also be carried through; see Heb. iv. 14.—16. Christ lives evermore, therefore ye may say, as David, Psalm xviii. 46, 48, "The Lord liveth, and blessed

be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. He delivereth me from mine enemies," &c. He lives to intercede, which was Peter's security: "I have," says he, "prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He is busy for his people, when they have most need. (2.) There is hazard of suffering, and that is frightful to flesh and blood. Fear not:—Christ died, and therefore the bitter dregs of the cup are drunken off. He was forsaken in his sufferings, that you might be supported in your sufferings.—Your sufferings will but conform you to Christ your head. Christ liveth, and therefore ye shall be supported in suffering, that the world may know that he who was dead is alive. Remarkable is that word, 2 Cor. iv. 10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our body." A suffering time is a special season in which Christ uses to appear. We read thrice of Christ's hour, John xiii. 1, "Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Chap. xvii. 1, "These words spake Jesus,—Father, the hour is come," &c. That was an hour of darkness. John ii. 4, "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." That was an hour wherein the wine was done, and the pots were filled with water; you know what followed.

Here it may be objected, "But what if ordinances be taken away?"
 ANSW. If they be, the God of ordinances endures for ever. Christ liveth, "and he shall be for a sanctuary," Isa. viii. 14. And says God, by Ezekiel, concerning his scattered people, "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come," chap. xi. 16. When there was no ordinary food to be got in the wilderness, it was sent down from heaven. Though our kirk doors should be shut, heaven's door shall be open as long as Christ liveth.
 OBJECT. "But I think I am very unfruitful under ordinances."
 ANSW. It is the greater shame! But if this be thy trouble, know that Christ liveth; and therefore, if there be sap in the root, there is always hope of the branches. There is enough there, draw it out. But as Christ first died, then arose, so the believer grows downward as well as upward. If ye have a heart-memory, though ye want a head-memory, it is well.—OBJECT. "But what shall those do, when they are seized with fear and discouragement, and cannot tell wherefore?"
 ANSW. The Lord may sometimes exercise his people so, to shew them their own weakness and nothingness. But possibly it may be the majesty of God that so affects thee, and the reason why it is not discerned to be so, may be an intimation of the Lord's love just

going before it. See Dan. x. 10—12, “And behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees, and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent: and when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.” But however it be, the only cure is believing, Psalm xxvii. 13, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” The sooner you believe, the better; for in this case a man is like one that is going to ride a great water that is increasing; the longer he delays, the water grows still the greater.

Now, the way to make use of these things, so as to draw comfort from them, is to believe. There is, in the first place, a firm assent to the truths revealed, 1 John v. 5, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” then, an act of faith, realizing these things, Heb. xi. 1, “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” To which may be added, an act of assurance, Gal. ii. 20, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” If ye cannot reach to all this extent, yet you may reach an act of adherence. A trembling hand may draw the water of consolation out of the wells of salvation. Amen.

SIN THAT WHICH SEPARATES GOD AND MEN.*

SERMON II.

ISAIAH lix. 2,

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

WHEN we look abroad through the world, many sad sights may be seen; but amongst the most lamentable is man, who was by the Lord planted a noble vine, wholly a right seed, but now turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine. Some are lying mouldering in the grave of a graceless state, noisome to God and to good men; some are in a withered state, their former beauty gone, and death

* Delivered Nov. 3, 1706.