

1. Look to God through Jesus Christ, from whence must come all your strength. Let your resolutions be taken up under a sense of weakness, and a persuasion of the supply to be had from the Lord himself.

2. Be much in prayer and meditation. These are suited to keep the impressions of God fresh upon your souls.

3. Make conscience of self-examination, that ye may the better know how it is with you, whether you be going backward or forward.

4. Beware of looking back, much more turning back, to your old sin, especially the sin which has been the great make-bate betwixt God and your soul. Keep special watch against it.

5. Beware of evil company, and follow only such as are following the Lord.

6. Live above the world while ye live in it. It will not be possible to follow on, if we come not to an holy indifference about the world.

Lastly, Keep the prize in your eye, and remember how short a time it will be before you arrive at your journey's end. This consideration will animate you to follow vigorously, because the time will not last, and the work must be done. It will dispose you to recollect, that ere long you will be at the end of every difficulty, that the days of your sorrow and mourning shall be ended. Amen.

THE ACCEPTABLE MANNER OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD.*

SERMON XXXVII.

HEB. x. 22,

Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

I HAVE been, in our last discourses, urging and directing you to evidences for heaven; and we are shortly to celebrate that ordinance which is a special evidence of the Lord's love to his people, and appointed to evidence it to them. That it may be so in effect to us, let us hearken to the advice in the text; which is an improvement of the doctrine as to the great privileges of Christians. They

* Delivered May, 1715.

have freedom of access to God through Christ. They have Christ as an High Priest set over the house of God; therefore, "Let us draw near," &c.—Here we have,

1. An exhortation and excitement to a duty corresponding to the privileges which are through Jesus Christ: "Let us draw near," that is, to God. Though he is great, and infinitely glorious, dwells in the highest heavens; yet, seeing he is upon a throne of grace, let us not stand at a distance from him, but draw near to him in the whole of our conversation, and particularly in acts of worship waiting on him. Let *us* do it, the weak together with the strong; let us press in at the door of grace together.—We have,

2. The right way of managing this duty for God's honour and our own comfort. This is laid down in four particulars.

(1.) We should draw near to God with a "true heart," that is, a sincere heart; with the heart, and not with the lips only; not with a false hypocritical heart, but a heart true to God, true to our own real interest.—We are to draw near,

(2.) "In full assurance of faith." Let us come believingly, come in faith, leaning upon his Son, trusting in his blood. Let us not come doubtingly, doubting whether we will be welcome or not, whether there be access for us or not; but with full assurance, like a ship that is carried towards the port with full sail before the wind.—We are to draw near,

(3.) "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." An evil conscience is a guilty, accusing, and condemning conscience. This vexes, disquiets, and torments the heart. Guilt is the mother and nurse of fears. The sting of guilt in the conscience is like a thorn in a man's foot; when he is called to meet a friend, alas! he cannot go, he dare not set a foot to the ground, or every step goes to his heart. The way to cure this is, by sprinkling with the blood of sprinkling, that is, by faith applying the blood of Christ for remission of sin. This makes the soul meet to draw near to God, and that with full assurance, even as the unclean under the law were cleansed by the sprinkling of blood.—We are to draw near,

(4.) Having "our bodies washed with pure water;" that is, our outward man also purged; that so, having clean hands, and a pure heart, we may ascend to the hill of God, and stand in his holy place, Psalm xxiv. A blameless outward conversation. Sin so curbed and borne down within, that it do not scandalously break out into the life; and this must be done with the pure water of the spirit of sanctification, not with the muddy water of Christless endeavours, as in painted hypocrites.—From this subject, I would take the following

DOCTRINE, That Christians may, and ought to draw near to God.

“Let us draw near.” This is the voice of the gospel sounding in the ears of the visible church through our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is sounding in our ears more particularly this day, while he gives us the hope of his coming so near to us in the sacrament of the supper next Lord’s day.

In this discourse, I shall attend shortly to the following things:—

I. Shew what is implied in this, “Let us draw near.”

II. Shew that we *may* draw near.

III. Shew that we *ought* to draw near.

IV. Add the practical improvement of the subject.—We are then,

I. To shew what is implied in this, “Let us draw near.” There are two things in it.

1. Sin has set us at a distance from God: Isa. 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.” Sin indeed could not remove us out of the place where God is, for he is every where: but it has set us out of his favour, out of his friendship, and that is a sad out-cast. In Adam, while he stood, we lived in the land of light, the light of God’s countenance; but he sinned, and was banished from the presence of the Lord, after he had run away from him with us in his loins; and so we come into the world estranged from God: Psalm lviii. 3, “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”

2. Sinners stand at a distance from God till they be called, and that powerfully: John vi. 44, “No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him.” They keep their ground where their first father left them. The breach began on our side, we left our Father’s house, and ran away from it without all just ground, but we never come back again till worthless *we* be sent for and fetched; like the Levite’s concubine, Jude xix. 2, 3.—And here lies the case:

Insensible sinners will not: John v. 40, “And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” They are away, and they will not come back. They have no eye upon the privileges of them that are near; they can do well enough without it. They love the devil’s common, where they can ramble up and down at their own liberty, better than God’s inclosure, where they think a man cannot get elbow-room. Hence they are running away farther and farther from him, till, I believe, not a few are so far from him, that they hardly ever hear from him; nor is there one left with them to disturb them in their wandering.

Sensible sinners dare not: Luke v. 8, “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, Depart from me, for I am a

sinful man, O Lord." They see his glory and his seat, they admire the happiness of those that stand before him, as the queen of Sheba did the attendants of Solomon, 1 Kings x. 8. But they dare not draw near, but stand afar off, under a deep sense of unworthiness. Like the publican, they cannot lift up their eyes to heaven, but smite upon their breasts, saying, God be merciful to us sinners, Luke xviii. 13. They cannot conceive how such vile malefactors can face the Judge, how such prodigals can set their foot again in their Father's house, how such filthy, loathsome, beggarly creatures, can presume to come forward to the throne. If at any time they break forward, it is like offering violence to themselves. They take their life in their hand, and, like Esther, go in to the king, chap. iv. 16. And then the legs of their confidence tremble, the hands of faith shake, and they are ready to start back: but "let us draw near."—This brings us,

II. To shew, that we *may* draw near to God. Glad news this to poor sensible sinners! Come in, ye blessed of the Lord; why do you stand back? you may draw near to God.—For,

1. God is on a throne of grace in Jesus Christ: 2 Cor. v. 19, "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." God has in Christ laid aside his red garments, being to pursue the war no longer against those that come to him through Christ. He wears the white garment of peace, and breathes nothing from hence, but peace, love, and good-will. To look on an absolute God out of Christ, is enough to make a devil tremble. You are not called to draw near to him as such. Indeed, some presumptuous sinners will, like beasts, touch the mountain; but darts of wrath will strike through their consciences, and drive them back at length. But you are to draw near to God, as on his throne of grace, in Christ.

2. There is a way to the throne never trode, nor designed to be trode, by any but sinners such as you, and the like of you. This is no back entry, but the most glorious way to the throne. Adam had a way to it, but that is blocked up; there is a new and living way consecrated for us, Heb. x. 20. And may we not draw near by it? It lies through the vail of Christ's flesh, and leads into the holiest, the seat of God! It is a way paved with glory to God, peace on earth, and good-will to men. It will vail all your weaknesses, wants and blemishes; yea, it vails the fiery law, wraps it up out of sight; it vails the sword of justice. The smiles of a reconciled God shine through it, to revive and refresh the hearts of the guilty.

3. He is a friend of ours who is set over the house of God: Heb.

x. 21, "And having an High-Priest over the house of God," that is Jesus Christ. He was taken out from among us, being "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Psalm lxxxix. 19, "Thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He is for us, in things pertaining to God, to employ his power and interest for us in the court of heaven. He bears the keys of the house, and admits whom he will, gives them what he will, brings as far forward as he will: John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." And he is a Priest, a High-Priest, who will take all our services, wash away all their pollution, and offer them for us with the much incense of his merits and intercession.—We now proceed,

III. To shew that we *ought* to draw near: "Let us draw near."—For,

1. It is the command of God: James iv. 8, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." God commands runaways to return, and draw near to him. He commands returning sinners to come forward, and come near him. He gives them no thanks for standing afar off. Though he can bear with them long, yet he is not pleased when a sense of sin makes poor sensible sinners stand off from him as affrighted at him. His fatherly bowels yearn toward them: Luke xv. 20, "And he arose, and came to his father; but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

2. If we do not draw near to God, we dishonour his Son, and so dishonour himself, in so far as we frustrate the great design of the mystery of Christ: John v. 23, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which sent him." Eph. ii. 13, 14, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle-wall of partition between us." So far as we stand afar off from God, we dishonour the friendship of God, the blood of the Son of God in its efficacy and virtue, while we dare not trust ourselves in the new and living way and under the covert of the Redeemer's blood.—We now proceed,

IV. To a practical improvement of the subject, in an use of exhortation.

Let us, then, draw near to God. Return, sinners, and come back to God, ye who have gone away from him: and having come back, come forward to him in Christ, come forward even to his seat; the nearer you come the better, and always the nearer the more welcome.

1. Come back, sinners, draw near towards God and duty. What have you gained by going from him? Satan, the world, and lusts, made you fair promises to get you away from God. But what have you made of your rambling, wandering life through the mountains of vanity? You have got a restlessness in your hearts, a blindness in your minds, a deadness in your affections to what is good. You have got your lusts strengthened, and a conscience full of guilt and stings, when you seriously reflect. Our Lord is ready to take run-aways home again; Jer. iii. 1, "Return again to me, saith the Lord." Ver. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." He is again casting open the doors of his house to receive backsliders; nay, his arms of love and mercy are ready to receive you. Come back, then, smiting on your breast, as grieved for that backsliding heart of yours; smiting on your thigh, as grieved at those wandering feet of yours, which have not continued in the paths of righteousness.

2. Not only draw towards God, but come forward, and draw near to him as a God in Christ. You may get near him ere you come to heaven; in his ordinances in the lower house, there you may have access to him. Particularly, let us draw near to him,

In prayer, Heb. iv. 16, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This should be a praying time with us, a time of wrestling for the blessing. It may be you have not neglected the form of prayer, but though God was near you in your mouth, yet perhaps he was far from your reins. But pray now, and draw near in prayer, press forward even unto his seat, with the arms of faith and love. Many have got very near him in that exercise; they have broke the shell on which many gnaw all their days, while they are never the better, and they have got into the kernel; like Jacob, they have succeeded: "He had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us."

Draw near in the holy sacrament of the supper. God is again coming to us in that ordinance; an ordinance appointed for the most special nearness out of heaven: 1 Cor. x. 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Here we may sacramentally touch his precious body and blood, and feed upon it. Oh! let us be sure to meet him there; he will not break the appointment. Let us draw near, draw by the vail with the hand of faith: whatever be betwixt him and us, let us closely unite with

God in his Son, and come even to his seat, come forward, for we will be welcome. But if we abide in the outward court, contenting ourselves with the bare elements, better we sit not down at this table.— Let us draw near in these ordinances,

1. As rebels accepting the King's peace, indemnity in the blood of his Son; draw near, and welcome: Isa. xxvii. 5, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." He holds forth the golden sceptre to thee, though thou deservest the iron rod. Start not back by unbelief. If it be too much for thee to expect when thou lookest to thyself, it is not too much for him to give; for he is infinite in goodness, and the blood of Christ purchased it for the undeserving; and the price of blood will not be kept back. Then, let us draw yet nearer,

2. As petitioners to the King. While God sits on the throne of his grace, he says to all who have accepted his peace, as Ahasuerus did to Esther, "What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee?" Let us not, then, slight the season of petitioning. Be sensible of your soul-wants: labour to get desires of supply wrought in your hearts by the Spirit of Christ. And draw near with your petitions as particular as you can make them. Come, and welcome; though there be blots in them, they will be accepted out of the Mediator's hand. Nay more,

3. Draw near as servants of the house, to serve our Lord, to wait upon him, and behold his glory: Psalm cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds;" Rev. xxii. 3, "And his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." Though our ragged garments are very unlike our Master's honour, yet he allows us a livery in which to appear, of which we need not be ashamed, and which will cover all our filthy rags. He gives us white raiment, that we may be clothed, that the shame of our nakedness do not appear, Rev. iii. 18. Lay this over thy soul, wrap thyself in it, come thus forward, and welcome.— Draw near,

4. As friends; friends of God, to have fellowship with him, who may freely converse with him: to unbosom ourselves to him, and to be let into the secrets of the covenant: John xv. 15, "Henceforth," says he, "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." He treats you as such, setting you down at his table; and the less reserved you are, and the more you improve the privileges through Christ, the more welcome you are. Does he approve the kneelers at the

sacrament, when he has ordered them to sit? as little will he approve the Christian's carrying forward-like, and standing afar off from him at that table which he has covered for his friends. Nay, draw near,

5. As children to a Father in Christ, to receive the portion of children. Is not the soul which hath closed with Christ a son by adoption? "To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." A child of the house by marriage with the King's son. Is not the children's bread given them at the table? Believe, then, and say to God in Christ, "Abba, Father." If he did not love the compellation from those that are his, his spirit would not put it into their mouths, Rom. viii. 15.—Draw near,

Lastly, As a spouse to an husband, for our Maker is our Husband. Let us embrace him in the arms of faith, give the love of the heart to him a full vent: Song viii. 6, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Rejoice in him, delight in him, and bless ourselves in our choice of him. The sacrament of the supper is appointed for that very end, that we may unite more closely with him, have more intimate fellowship with our Lord, and may joy in the blessed Husband, while at the feast of espousals. Think not strange of drawing near at this rate; for, if ever we come to heaven to be happy, we will be nearer than all this, nearer God than we can now conceive. The blood of God will be close cement betwixt God and his own creatures: and this is the only way of our nearness.

But how must the business of our drawing near to God be managed? The apostle here lays down four directions:—

(1.) Draw near to God sincerely. Hypocrisy is a disease in the vitals of religion; it pretends one thing, and intends another. The tongue and external behaviour in gospel-ordinances are no true interpreters of the hypocrite's mind. Beware of this: Matth. xv. 8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." If you be to take Christ, let those go away. If you join hands with him in this ordinance, join heart with him also. Seek out your sins impartially, and see if you be willing to part with them without exception: Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Consider and deliberate on the cost of the covenant, and see if there be nothing at which your heart stands. Consider if you be for Christ and his salvation, for his sanctifying Spirit, as well as his justifying blood. If it be thus, you may warrantably come

forward, even to his seat; but if otherwise, you will never get near to him.

(2.) Draw near in the "full assurance of faith." Faith's special object is the blood of Christ. Come leaning and depending on the merit and efficacy of this blood. Would you be wafted over to the presence of God, come swimming through that river which makes glad the city of our God. Cast all your weight upon it. It bears the weight of the Father's glory, and will bear the weight of your salvation. If your assurance of welcome depends on any thing in yourselves, God will cast the door of access in your face, as presumptuous insensible creatures. Labour to get your souls wrought up to a full assurance of faith, not doubting of your welcome to, and acceptance with him through Christ. Fix on the promise, he is faithful who made it. Though a trembling hand may reach a pardon, and God will not quench a smoking flax, yet it is more to the honour of God, the honour of the precious blood of Christ, and more to the sanctification, as well as comfort of the soul, confidently, without hesitation, to lay hold upon the promise, and apply it, with all that is in it: Matth. xxi. 22, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

(3.) Get your hearts beforehand "sprinkled from an evil conscience." Are you to come to his table? pray that all controversies be done away between you and him. If you are to appear before the Lord, go, dip, wash, bathe in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1, that you may be clean. Take a backlook of your ways, and be not superficial in it, lest some unremoved guilt stare you in the face when you are coming forward, and drive you back. Do not think your repentance, reformation, vows, tears, (though of blood), will purge the conscience: only Christ's blood will do it; for this only can satisfy the demands of justice and of the law. Now, lay the weight of your remission on this blood, apply it to yourselves by faith, and this will purge your conscience. The sea of Christ's blood stands between us and the throne for that effect, Rev. iv. 6.

Lastly, Let your outward conversation be blameless, free from scandalous sins: Psalm xxiv. 4, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," is the person who shall ascend into the hill of God. Wash your hands in innocence, if you would encompass God's altar. Repent and mourn over the sins of the outward man, and apply to the same blood for pardon. Forsake and give up with those sins, whether against the first or second table; resolve, and endeavour sincerely to perform. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXXVIII.

HEB. x. 22,

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

It will afford a beam of surprising and heart-reviving light upon this text, to sensible sinners, if we compare it with that in Gen. iii. 22—24. Behold in these verses the fruits of the first Adam's sinning. Adam sinned, and we in his loins, as well as himself, were driven out from the presence of the Lord. Christ suffered, and we are drawn in again, and farther in than ever Adam was. Hear the sentence from Heaven casting us out: "Behold the man!" see what he has brought himself to, "he is become as one of us, to know good and evil." A holy taunt! "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever." There is a deficiency in this speech, which is easily supplied from what follows: "Let us drive him out." But hear the voice from heaven calling in again the wretched outcasts. The apostle here, as one of the outcasts, manages the voice in effect thus, "Behold God, the second Person! he is become as one of us, has taken upon him our nature, to know by his own feeling, in some sort, the good we lost, the evil in which we are involved; and now, "let us draw near," let us come back, come in, come forward, nay, come near; let us not only put forth, but freely stretch forth our hand, grasp, and take of the tree of life; eat freely, abundantly, and live for ever."

O that the reverse may be carried yet farther! God sent forth the man, bade him go, but he would not: "So God drove him out." Now, God bids us draw near, but we will not come. May the Lord put forth his hand, and draw us in!

But here an inquiry occurs, How near may sinners come to Jesus Christ?

I. They may come into the house of God, ver. 21, "Having an High-Priest over the house of God." When Adam sinned, he was driven out of the house, as a divorced woman. The first covenant was broken; but now, that the new covenant is made, the divorced sinner, who is new-married to his Maker in Christ, may come in

* Delivered immediately before the dispensation of the sacrament.

again to the house. They may come to the lower house in ordinances; it is their own house; by that title, they may sit down at the table as in their own house: Isa. lvii. 13, "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain." They may come to the higher house, even heaven, this is the house in the context. They will come there at death, but the text aims at a coming to it before death; and therefore, this drawing near is a spiritual motion upon the wings of faith, carrying the soul out of the body to heaven as its own house, because it is Christ's house.

2. They come far forward in the house: ver. 19, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The temple stood east and west, the porch, or entry, being in the east. Without the house were the courts of the temple, in one of which stood the altar, before the porch of the house, in the open air. In the temple was a veil, which divided the east end, called "the holy place," (into which ordinary priests might go), from the west end, called "the holiest of all," into which only the High-Priest might enter once a-year. There was the ark, with the mercy-seat and cloud of glory on it: and it was a special type of the highest heavens, the high and holy place which is the glorious dwelling of God.

Now, I say, sinners may through Christ come far forward in the house, they may have Job's wish to come to God, even to his seat, Job xxiii. 3. Sinners, we have an altar, a crucified Saviour; if you desire to come into the house of God, come by that altar, and welcome, there is no other way; come into the holy place; nay, come forward into the holiest of all. Stand by no means only gazing on the veil, the veil of Christ's flesh, but come through the veil unto God, God in Christ; come even to his seat. God is in Christ as the cloud of glory on the mercy-seat in the holiest of all; come forward through the veil of Christ's flesh, sufficiently rent and torn in his sufferings; to afford you access through it to God, sitting on his mercy-seat in Christ, that you may be refreshed and comforted, your souls satisfied and sanctified with breathings of his love, with peace, and good-will from thence even through the wounds of our Redeemer. If this do not kindle in you a desire to draw near, what can we say to kindle it?

I told you last Sabbath that you *may* draw near to God in Christ, and that you *ought* to draw near, &c. Are there any here who so love their outcast condition, that they will not come back, nor draw near to God, though they are invited? Then I must leave you, to speak to others. But, before we part, consider,

1. What a miserable state you are in while far from God. As God said to Adam, Gen. iii. 9, we may say to you, "Where art thou?" Like the prodigal, Luke xv. 13, thou art in a far country, far from God, his covenant, his grace, his Christ, Eph. ii. 12. And while you will not come back, you are far out of your senses. Tell me, sinner, in sober earnest, (if you be capable of a sober thought,) Are you not in want? Is there not a principle of restlessness in that soul of thine, which thou canst find no way to quiet, but sometimes by the fulsome breasts of lusts which may surfeit, but at no time can satisfy? The dry breasts of the world, squeeze them as you will, can never give full content, still there is some thorn of uneasiness in your bed, make it where you will. Thou dost hunger after happiness, but shalt never find it till thou come near to God in Christ.—Consider,

2. If thou art able to hold on to the end without coming near to God. Though thou canst live this way, wilt thou be able to die in this state, and continue so for ever? Art thou still able to make thy part good without him, yea, against him, so that thou art resolved never to knock at his door? If not, thou art wretchedly foolish, to slight a kind invitation from him to whom at length thou must bow. Therefore, Isa. lv. 6, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."—Consider,

3. If thou wilt not draw near now, the time will come, when God will drive thee from him with a vengeance, and will give thee thy heart's fill of distance from him for ever: Matth. xxv. 41, "Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now he bids thee draw near, and thou wilt not; this voice will draw to an end with thee, and thou wilt hear that other voice, Depart from me; and thou must go, though thou wouldst gladly stay. As, then, you would not be forced to depart for ever, draw near to God now, while he is drawing near to you.—Consider,

Lastly, That the access to God, now in your offer, will make your departure from him to hell the more dreadful: Matth. xi. 24, "It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." Ye are guilty of a sin of which heathens are not capable, nay, which devils cannot commit. They departed, but they never got a call to come back again. It was never said to them, "Let us draw near." There is a way opened, at the expense of the blood of Christ, for you to come back to God, and therefore your neglecting to improve it must be inexcusable.

But now, as for you who desire to draw near to God, ye have a fair occasion at all times for it, there is a ready way from earth to

heaven, through Christ, wherever you are. You have a special occasion at this time in the holy sacrament, an ordinance in which the Lord comes very near to his people, in which the greatest nearness may be enjoyed. The sacraments and death resemble one another. In the former, the Lord comes to us, in death we may go to him. We should labour so to manage the former, as that a sure foundation may be laid for safety and comfort in the latter. Here God appears on a throne of grace in Christ, the veil of Christ's flesh appears sacramentally rent, that you through it may draw near to God. And you must by faith pass through the veil this day, that you may get forward even to his seat, drawing near him as rebels accepting the King's peace, the offered indemnity through the blood of his Son, drawing near as supplicants, as servants of the house, to serve our Lord, to wait upon him, and behold his glory.

In these circumstances, your question, I presume, will now be, How shall we so manage this approach, as that it may be successful for the honour of God, our soul's good for time and eternity? If you manage right, you are made up for ever, and therefore your mismanagement will be an unspeakable loss. I shall farther explain unto you the apostle's directions in the text. I fear the hints already given to you as to the nature of drawing near to God, may not be sufficient to clear you in this matter; therefore, that ye may not walk in the dark, know plainly, in a word, that we draw near to God by faith, and our believing in God is our drawing near to him. Hence the apostle's advice in the text is not, Come in by faith, for this is the very coming itself, but, says he, "in full assurance of faith." So the scripture explains it, while it shews that that coming to the Lord, which is so much pressed on sinners in the Old and New Testament, is believing: John vi. 35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, he that believeth on me shall never thirst." How does the sinner depart from God, but by unbelief? Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Therefore it is by believing we draw near (*Greek*, come) to God. This is the great uniting grace which joins a sinner to the Lord while in this world. How can we come to God, but by believing? for this drawing near is a spiritual motion of the soul. Our souls indeed move towards God in spiritual desires; but if these be not completed by faith, which is the comprehensive motion, the soul still stands off from God. So also in love, this is set a-going by faith, and its motion is towards God, when the soul is brought near to God by faith: 1 John iv. 16, "And we have known and believed the love that God

hath to us. God is love; he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Now, the object of faith is Jesus Christ held forth in the word of the gospel, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, that is to say, God in Christ. See the sum of the gospel, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the mystery of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Faith does not stand still in the veil, that is, his flesh, but goes through the veil, Heb. x. 20, to the Godhead, that is, within it, and there, only there, it rests, or can rest. Now, the persons of the Trinity being one, he who believeth in Christ the Son, believeth in the Father and the Holy Ghost: John xiv. 9, "He that hath seen me," said Jesus, "hath seen the Father." More particularly, that you may take your aim right in this matter, I think drawing near by faith lies in three things, namely,

1. It lies in accepting God for our God in Christ. I say in Christ, for no other way have we him offered to us, nor can a soul in any other way accept him; out of Christ he is a consuming fire. Thus, from the mercy-seat in Christ he offers the covenant, which faith accepts: Heb. viii. 10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." And there, even in Christ, the soul takes him for its God, and gives itself away to him: Isa. xlv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Thus the sinner is joined to God in Christ by a marriage-union: Isa. liv. 2, "For thy Maker is thy Husband." (*Heb.* thy Makers is thy husband). 2 Cor. vi. 16, "For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" and then we are near indeed.—Drawing near by faith lies,

2. In claiming God for our God in Christ. This is the very proper work of faith: Psalm xvi. 2, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord," at all times, but especially at a communion-table. What says the Lord to the soul then, but as he did to Thomas? John xx. 27, "Be not faithless, but believing." Let us draw near, then, by faith, and answer, ver. 28, "My Lord, and my God." Faith has the word of the everlasting covenant to bear

it out in its claim; it has the Redeemer's blood, which is the blessed cement to knit a believer to a holy God. In the sacrament, the body of Christ, in which dwells the fulness of the Godhead, is really and truly presented to their faith, by and with the sacred symbols. Is any thing more natural than that faith should claim as its own the gift which is thus put into its hand?—Drawing near by faith lies,

3. In improving according to our necessities, for time and eternity, the interest in God thus claimed, is in Psalm exix. 94, "I am thine, save me," and throughout that psalm. Thus the soul feeds by faith, when persons suck in the sap of the fruits growing on the tree of life, when by faith they sit under his shadow; and this plainly lies in confidence and trust in our God for all, according to his word. It lies in believing the promises of the everlasting covenant, founded and ratified in the blood of Christ; not as devils may believe them, namely, that they shall be made out to some person, but believing them with application, namely, that they shall be made out to me, believing over the belly of devils, and all the mass of vileness, filthiness, and unworthiness, which hangs about me. Believers should say, as in Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," &c.

It is the two last of these, I think, that the apostle here chiefly aims at, supposing the first as the attainment of his Christian Hebrews.

In discoursing farther on this subject, I intend—to offer some directions—to propose some cases and questions, and to offer suitable answers.

As to the directions, I begin with this:—

1. "Draw near with a true heart" to God. If we come not with the heart, we do not come to God in a suitable manner. To draw near to God, is soul-work, heart-work; if, therefore, we come not with a true heart, we come not at all to him. A false heart in the matter of covenanting to God, is no heart, is at best but a half-heart to it; and this is no heart in God's account: Prov. xvii. 16, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart in it?" If you have not a heart for God in Christ, you will not get near him. Before Julius Cæsar was murdered, having slain a fat ox for a sacrifice, the heart was not to be found among the entrails. That communicant in whom a heart for the Lord is wanting, will doubtless be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord this day. Heartless sacrifices involve murder. A true heart is not a sinless heart, but a sincere heart. Let us draw near, then, with a sincere heart. Sincerity is not a single grace, but it is the sum and soul of all the graces. Take it away from faith

itself, and it is but a dead grace, as in Simon Magus, and those in John ii. 23, 24, "Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men." Sincerity is like the string in the beads about a person's neck; when this is broke, then they fall all to the ground. We need not, however, seek this truth of heart through all the graces, for it is principally the truth of faith which is here meant; it is believing, which is in its nature our drawing near to God; and so it may be explained by what you have in Rom. x. 9, 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Poor soul! if thou be coming back to thy great Master, though even laden with the stolen goods you ran away with from him, though you dare not say you are an honest servant, yet if you dare say before the Lord you are honestly returning back again, then we may say to you, Draw near, and welcome.—But here, perhaps, some will propose this

QUESTION. In what does the truth of our drawing near to God, or the sincerity of faith, consist? For answer, I would observe a few things.

1. The soul draws near to God with a true heart, when it comes to God only in the true way, through the rent veil of Christ's flesh; that is, when the soul has no confidence in believing, but in the blood of Christ; Phil. iii. 3, "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The person will stop eyes and ears, and say, I cannot look on God but as in Christ, I desire to hear none other, I have nothing whatever of my own to recommend me to Christ. Though perhaps the beggar-raiment of their reformation of life, what they have done and suffered for the cause of Christ; their earnest prayers, deep exercise, bitter tears for sin, and the like, look as well, and probably better than those of many of their neighbours; yet they dare not for their souls bring a rag of them with them, to cover or commend them before the Lord; but they leave them, yea, flee out of them, and from them, as absolutely naked, to the Lord Jesus himself, to get a covering under his righteousness.

2. The soul draws near to God with a true heart, when, upon a discovery of the glory of the Lord, it is thus subdued to this obedience of faith: Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing

in the day of thy power;" when the practical understanding casts the balance on the Lord's side, so the heart says, "He is better to me than thousands of gold;" or as in Phil. iii. 8, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord;" in a word, when the soul draws near to God, to take up its everlasting rest in him, as its portion, to take him for all, and instead of all. With the heart man believes, when the person takes God for his God in Christ, not only for a rest to the conscience, that it thus may be quieted in him, but also for a rest to the heart, that thus it may be satisfied in him; and the person can accordingly say, Farewell, vain world; farewell, sinful lusts; farewell, empty creation; welcome, welcome, God in Christ, for a covering to mine eyes, and a rest to mine heart: Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." The gospel holds out Christ as the only satisfying portion; faith first believes this testimony, then embraces him as such. They who are only acquainted with terror as dealing with them, may be driven to God, but do not draw near to him with a true heart.—To illustrate this, I would propose the two following cases:—

CASE 1. What will become of those, then, who are driven to the Lord by terror? ANSW. What becomes of a ship which is drove into an undesirable harbour by stress of weather? When the storm is calmed, she even leaves it, and puts to sea again, as you see in Psalm cvii. 24—30. Terror may begin the work, which a willing choice may crown. The poor soul may be like Noah's dove, drove away to the ark by a restless conscience; but when it comes there, the Lord may open a window, by which it may get such a view as to be drawn into it, though it was before only drove. Though the storm at first drove thee to the harbour, yet if thou be now captivated by the beauty of the place, so as that you are heartily resolved to make it the place of thy abode for ever, in fair weather or foul, and would, with a thousand good-wills, that the vessel was burnt, that so you might never be in hazard of going again to the sea of this world; all is well, you are welcome to the shore of Immanuel's land: Hos. ii. 14, "Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."

CASE 2. But, alas! I cannot purge myself of backwardness in coming to the Lord. ANSW. Is that backwardness truly the burden of your spirit? do ye loathe yourself on account of it? Our Lord allows you to draw near with your burden on your back. The great Physician knows his patient comes to him with heart and

good will, though his sickliness makes him come very slowly, drawing, as it were, his legs after him : Matth. xxvi. 41, " Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation : the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Psalm lxxv. 3, " Iniquities prevail against us : as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away."—I now go on to observe,

3. That the soul draws near to God with a true heart, when it comes to him for sanctification, as well as justification, to be freed from the reigning and indwelling power, as well as from the guilt of sin : 1 Cor. i. 30, " But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This is the sign of that heart which is a true heart, a heart truly divorced and alienated from sin, though the poor soul cannot be wholly freed from it ; an heart true to the great end of the mystery of Christ, his death, and his sufferings, which was " to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii. 14 ;—true to the great end of all gospel-institutions, Acts xxvi. 18, " To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus ;"—true to the great end of faith, which is " to purify the heart," Acts xv. 9 ; true to its own best interest, and the honour of God, which commences in time, and terminates in heaven in likeness to God : 1 John iii. 2, " But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." When this is obtained, the mystery of Christ is finished. Whosoever come in any other way, come with a false heart. They who have only use for the blood, and not for the water, which came out of Christ's side ; who do not heartily desire universal holiness, but wish to conceal some secret morsel under their tongue ; who come to God to bind themselves to holiness, if he will but save their souls, and pardon their sins, as if they could make themselves holy, if he would but make them happy ; the faith of such persons is but a dream.

Thus the truth of faith is made out, the soul draws near with a true heart ; for thus it comes away from self, the world, and sin, and draws near to God in Christ, and thus obeys the gospel-call.—As another direction, I would mention,

2. " Draw near to God in full assurance of faith." Are you put upon the right road, having a true heart ? then advance forward, without doubting or wavering. Is your heart true ? let it next be wrought up to full assurance, for in this lies all the importance of this second advice. It is a metaphor taken from a ship, carried with

full sail before the wind. And thus, sinner, if, after you and I have been tossed up and down in the sea of this world, (a world lying in wickedness), by violent lusts, unsatisfied desires, and wearied out with disappointed expectations, yet after all could never find in it where to rest our foot, nay, not so much as sure anchor-ground for our hearts, but still an unfathomable depth of emptiness presenting itself to us, and now have at length discovered the port and harbour suited to give rest to a weary soul, even God in Christ, have our eye on it, and are steering our course straight towards it, let us spread out our sails, let us draw near with the full sail of faith, as our text might be read. This I would consider as more particularly directing us to these three important points.

1. To a taking God for our God in Christ freely.
2. To a claiming him for our own God boldly.
3. To an improving our claim of interest in him confidently, and without hesitation.

These I shall in their order a little enlarge upon. I say, then, that to draw near to God in full assurance of faith, is,

1. To take God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome. Stretch forth the hand of faith, that ye may join hands with an incarnate God: the more vigorous that your aim be, you will take the better hold. Do not stand at the door, disputing and doubting whether to go forward or not? if you cannot loose doubts, cut them with the sword of faith, and leap over them, *Matth. xv. 24—28*. It is none other than Satan, and an unbelieving heart, which entertains the sinner before the vail, with disputes and doubts whether to go through or not. And if these can hold them up with that discourse till the door be shut, as it will soon be, they have their design. There are, without question, good grounds for this full assurance of faith;—such as,

(1.) God, in his infinite love and mercy, has suited himself for an approach by such as you. Had he intended to keep you off, he had only to have kept himself in his unvailed glory, and the rays of it from afar would have struck the guilty soul through with a thousand arrows, and kept him off for ever. But he has veiled himself with our nature, and that for us: *Heb. x. 19, 20*, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh.” Has he put on the vail, then, that guilty wretches may draw near him? Has he rent the vail of the flesh of his own Son in his crucifixion, that a door might be opened through his wounds to come to God? Has he done all this in vain? If not, why will you doubt your welcome through this new and living way?

(2.) God's justice is satisfied, his honour is provided for, so that justice has nothing to object against your putting your hand to this claim. It is absolutely consistent with the honour of God to be thy God in Christ, for the man that is the Father's fellow has done all this by his blood; and therefore the angel's song begins with glory to God in the highest; after that follows peace on earth, and goodwill to men, Luke ii. 14. Hear the sacramental words, 1 Cor. xi. 25, "This is the New Testament in my blood. Is not the blood of the everlasting covenant sufficient to assure you? Is not the covenant in which God offers himself to you as your God, drawn with the blood of God? Behold, then, the blood of the covenant, and no more doubt your welcome.

(3.) You have his word for it. Kind invitations are breathed out to you from the throne of grace in Christ. Hear the tenor of the covenant, Heb. viii. 10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." See how it is offered unto all to whom the gospel comes, Isa. lxxv. 1, 2. John vi. 37; Rev. xxii. 17. Nay, you are commanded to accept it: Luke xiv. 23, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Many are in other cases disputing, and doubting themselves out of their duty, but here salvation lies at stake. Will you, then, doubt your welcome to obey the command of God?

(4.) You must take God in Christ for your God, or you are eternally ruined. Debate the matter as long as you will, this is the course you must take, or the wrath of God will lie on you for ever. Miss this hold, and you sink assuredly into the bottomless pit: John iii. 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Now, if you must do it, it is weakness and folly not to do it with full assurance of faith. If a drowning man must seize a rope to draw himself to land, does not common sense say, the firmer he seizes it, he is the more safe? If the hand tremble, and be like to let go the hold, will he not wrestle against death? So, in like manner, should we, with full assurance of faith, keep our hold of Christ, and thus draw near to God.—But here some may propose a

QUESTION, How may we be helped to this full assurance of faith in taking God for our God in Christ? As to this I answer, Steadfastly believe the doctrine of the gospel, which is the mean which

the Spirit makes use of to beget and increase faith: Rom. x. 17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And therefore still hold by the word. I apprehend, if we would search to the root of the doubts, fears, and uncertainty in the matter of believing in Christ, we would find the root of most, if not all of them, is an error in the first concoction, an uncertainty as to the doctrine of the gospel. Therefore labour to be fully and feelingly assured of the doctrine of your lost state by nature, on the testimony of the word. Begin there, and ply your faith as to this doctrine. It is easiest, because an unenlightened conscience even goes along with it; but if I believe my lost state upon the testimony of that word, I am helped the rather to believe the way of my recovery on the testimony of the same word.

Believe ye, then, with full assurance, that you are in yourselves guilty creatures, bound over to the wrath of God for time and eternity, and that by no means ye are able to remove that guilt, by all that ye are capable to do or suffer? Believest thou this? It is gospel-doctrine, Eph. ii. 3, "And were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Again, Do you believe that you are altogether corrupt and unholy, and are utterly unable to make for yourselves either a holy heart or life, that you are no more able to subdue a lust, than to procure yourself a pardon, that the breaking of the power of sin is as far above thy reach, as the removing the guilt of it? Eph. ii. 1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Do you believe the doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ, held forth in the gospel? You cannot believe in the Lord to salvation, but as you give an assent to this doctrine by faith. This is the bottom on which faith proceeds, when laying hold of God in Christ.—Do you believe, with full assurance, that there is no way to make miserable man happy again, but by the enjoyment of God as his own God? O for the full assurance of this! it would effectually determine those who are hanging on this day about the world's door, and that of their lusts.—Do you believe that there is no other way to come to the enjoyment of God as our God, but through Jesus Christ, who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem? Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." If so, his name would be precious. Do you believe that there is no way to be saved from guilt, but by his righteousness, and from pollution, but by his Spirit?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he took upon him man's nature, and suffered in it to satisfy the justice of God, that he might thus by his blood bring sinners again to God?

to enjoy him as their God? Eph. ii. 13, "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Do you believe that the blood of Christ is the blood of God, and that therefore it is a cement truly sufficient to knit or join a holy, just God, and any guilty sinner whatsoever, who comes unto God through him? This is gospel-truth: 1 John i. 7, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Believest thou this? If thou believest it not, how can it be expected that thou shouldst draw near to God, seeing the only way of access to God is to thy unbelieving heart not sufficient to bear the weight of a guilty soul? If thou sayest thou dost believe, then, to try this, I would ask thee, Dost thou believe that this blood is a cement sufficient to join thy guilty soul, even thine, to God? to bear thy weight, who perhaps thinkest there was never one upon it with such a load of guilt? If not, then thou dost not believe the doctrine of the gospel, Heb. vii. 25, already quoted.—If thou dost believe all this, then,

Do you also believe, that whatsoever guilty sinner will come to God through him, may have the benefit of that sufficiency of his blood, that is, that God shall be his God, that he shall have the righteousness of God, even God-man, to cover all his sins, the Spirit of Christ to sanctify him, and make him like God? This is gospel-truth, Isa. lv. 1—3. Rev. iii. 18, and chap. xxii. 17. Do you believe this? If not, you cannot draw near to God indeed; it cannot be expected that you, who give no credit to his word, will venture on himself.—But if you say you do believe, then dost thou also believe, that if thou comest to God through him, thou, even thou, shalt have this benefit? If thou stoppest here, then I do not know but devils go farther in believing than thou dost, namely, to believe this general proposition, without excepting so much as thee. But thou, monstrous dishonourer of the blood of Christ, and the truth of God, read thy sin, tremble, and repent: 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." But if thou dost, with full assurance, believe this, then what remains, but that thou draw near with full assurance of faith? Take God in Christ for thy God, without in the least doubting of thy welcome.—This drawing near with full assurance of faith, is in its nature,

2. To claim God in Christ as your God, without doubting of your title. Having taken him as your God, do not stand debating whether or not he is yours; only believe, believe he is yours: Jer.

iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" What the better will you be of him, if he be not yours? John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." I must content myself at this time, only to offer two or three things on this exercise:—As,

(1.) When thou takest God for thy God in Christ with a true heart, canst thou doubt thy title, without dishonouring the blood of Christ and the truth of God? For these two do secure it. Dost thou not so far dishonour him, who is set over the house of God, when he has given thee the benefit of the covenant, even himself, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, if thou doubtest of thy title to them, for so thou dost in effect question his commission and right. Glorify the Son of God, then, and honour the infinite virtue and merit of his blood, by claiming God as your God upon this ground. I know we are apt to think, we do but doubt the truth of our taking God in Christ as our God. But do we doubt of the offer? Do we doubt of our soul's saying amen to it on any terms? Do we not? Take heed, then, that the doubt run not upon another ground, whatever our unbelieving heart may suggest.

(2.) When thou dost sit down at the table of the Lord, thy soul hungering for Christ, the bread and wine are given thee by his ministers in his name and with his own words, "This is my body," &c. dost thou believe these words? If thou dost believe them, thou dardest not, with many profane spectators and communicants, also look upon these sacred symbols as naked signs of Christ's body and blood, but must believe, that by, and with these signs, the body and blood of Christ, which were never separated from his Godhead since they were first united, are really and truly exhibited, and given to thee to thy faith, and thou receiving the same in faith, art as really made partaker of his body and blood, as thou art of that bread and wine: 1 Cor. x. 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" What, then, should hinder thee to claim God as thy God in Christ, without doubting of your title, when you have a sealed gift of him made you by his authority before the world, angels, and men?—This drawing near with full assurance of faith is in its nature,

3. To improve your interest claimed, without doubting of success. Feed with a fear of circumspection; but the less unbelieving fear, the better. This you are to do still in the way of believing, believing the promises, without doubting of their being accomplished to you for time and for eternity, for grace and glory: Matth. xxi. 22,

“And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Rely on the word of grace, the covenant in his blood, that for as poor and mean as you may appear this day, ye shall be pillars in the temple of God, seeing he hath said it; for as black and deformed as you are this day, ye shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. Is there a lust or lusts you would have subdued; believe, with full assurance of faith, the promise suited to that case, as in Mic. vii. 19, “He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” And so in other cases.

What way can one imagine we should suck the sap of these promises, but by believing them, and so relying and trusting on the Lord according to his word? The heavenly treasures contained in them are unseen things, they are known to us only by the testimony of the word, and the inward sensation which they experience upon believing them. How, then, can we think to get the benefit of them, but in the way of believing them? Suppose some rich prince beyond seas, who can, nevertheless, at any time convey his treasures hither, should find means to get proclaimed among a company of poor people here, that whosoever will take him, and him only, for their provider, shall be seasonably and suitably supplied out of his treasures. They never saw the prince, they know nothing of his treasures, but by the testimony of his word sent to them. The heralds commend the prince, they aver it is the surest way of supply to those who are poor. Some of these poor count these things idle tales, and go their way, one to his day-labour, to earn a penny, another to the begging through the country. When the supply comes to the country, have these any ground to expect a share? No; they did not believe his proclamation. But as for those who were so foolish in the eyes of their neighbours, but so truly wise, as to believe the proclamation, and venture their supply upon an unseen provider, and an unseen treasure, it lies on his truth and honour to see them abundantly supplied. I shall no further apply this, than to say, that God’s truth and honour is most undoubted security; Rom. ix. 33, “As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

To conclude, think not that I have been teaching you to presume, nay, but to “draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith;” not to lay aside humility, for the greatest humility is to deny ourselves, and obey the call of God, though it be an high calling. It is not humility, but unbelief, which is the spring of the true heart’s doubtings in drawing near to God. They are but warts and

moles in the face of Christ's bride, and so far mar her beauty; though he does not cast her off for them, if faith do but peep, as it were, out among the crowd of these deformities, as if she could see only with one eye: Song iv. 9, "Thou has ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." Matth. xiv. 31, "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?" The rule is, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." So, little faith, little comfort; but, what is worse, little faith, little sanctification. Amen.

 THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXXIX.

HEB. x. 22,

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

It is by no means only at a communion-table that we are to draw near to God, but also in all other parts of his worship; yea, in the whole of our conversation we must be drawing near, and keeping near to God, till we at length appear before him in heaven: I say *keeping* near: for certainly, the text points not merely to a drawing near, just for a start, and away again; but it is to draw near to the house over which Christ is set, as a house where we are to abide; and it is such a drawing near, so as not to draw back.

You may remember, I told you, drawing near to God is by faith, and that this lies principally in three things. 1. Accepting God as our God in Christ. 2. Claiming God for our God in Christ. 3. Improving, according to our necessities, for time and eternity, the interest in God thus claimed. Ye have had two directions offered for the right managing of this: 1. That you should draw near with a true heart; 2. With full assurance of faith; which I explain to consist in, (1.) Taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome; (2.) Claiming God in Christ as your God, without doubting of your title; (3.) Improving your interest claimed, without doubting of success. I spoke upon the first of these three largely,

* Delivered, June, 1715.

namely, the taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your title. Upon the other two, little was said. I shall now speak to a case which I shall propose, and so proceed.

CASE. How shall I know that I have drawn near to God in Christ with a true heart, and sincerely taken him for my God in Christ?

ANSW. The difference between the true and false heart in this point, may be discerned in the following particulars, viz:—

1. The false heart draws near to God, as a neighbour only, as it were, to pay a visit, stays a little, and then goes its way again: Isa. xxii. 16, “Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.” The hypocrite never takes up his everlasting rest in God. Though he leaves his own house to come to the house of God, yet he leaves his heart behind him; and so he cannot stay. With the mixed multitude who came out of Egypt, Num. xi. 5, “They remember the fish which they did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick;” and they found the retreat to go back from whence they came.

2. The true heart draws near to God in heaven, as the new-married wife comes home to her husband’s house to dwell there all her days, never to go back again to her father’s house: Psalm cxvi. 7, “Return to thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” It was a custom among the ancient Greeks, to burn, at the bridegroom’s door, the axle-tree of the coach in which the bride came home, to shew she was never again to go away; and if ye have drawn near to God with a true heart, taking him for your God in Christ, I will not say that the axle-tree of the chariot in which you came to God is as yet burnt to ashes, but sure I am, there is a fire set to it; and if it is once set in a flame at the door of the house of your new Husband, it is so because you had no mind to go again back. And whether this be so or not, you will know,

(1.) By the smoke which will be rising there. There will be a threefold smoke rising at the door of the house you have come to, if the axle-tree be on fire, and you have determined not to go back again to your former house.

[1.] There will be the smoke of fear as to drawing back. I mean not a faithless fear, which seizes those who look to the duties to which they are bound, but not to the strong God, whose strength is engaged by covenant to his people, for the performance of them. This is the fear which takes heart and hand from people, making the heart quiver, like a candle burnt to the socket, till at last it expires with a stench. This is the smoke of a fire from hell, blown up with hard thoughts of God, and of the sweet yoke of Christ, Matth.

xxv. 24, 25; Rev. xxi. 28. It is the forerunner of apostasy; but there is a fear of circumspection in the true heart, in opposition to that self-confidence with which hypocrites are blown up: Prov. xxviii. 14, "Happy is the man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." He trembles to think of going back from God, has a horror at the thought. He walks softly and warily, as one afraid to be taken off his feet; and he holds the faster, the more he sees his hazard.—There is,

[2.] The smoke of self-loathing, for former sins and departures from God: 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 for your iniquities, and for your abominations." They that are near will remember with self-loathing what they were when they were far off: Psalm lxxiii. 22, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before him." They who have not seen their wretched case while at a distance from God, they go back again quickly; for the sore that is not sufficiently probed, though scurfed over, will break out again.—There is,

[3.] The smoke of dissatisfaction with the corrupt nature, in that there should be so much as a principle of back-drawing, the least inclination in them to go away: Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They will be looking with an evil eye on the corruption of nature, which makes them capable of departing, and will be longing to be beyond the reach of temptations to depart from the Lord.

(2.) You will know by the flame that will be rising there. There being a live coal from the altar, there will be a threefold flame.

[1.] A flame of love to the house they have come to for the Master's sake, Luke xxiv. 29, 32. The glory of that house cast open by the blood of Christ, darkens all created excellency with them, so that their hearts say, "This is my rest." Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth that I desire beside thee." They are like the servant, Exod. xxi. 5, who, from love to his master, would not go out free. They have made choice of God in Christ for their God; and when they reflect on the bargain, they do not repent their choice. If they had it to make a thousand times, they would not alter.—There is,

(2.) A flame of desires, desires to stay: Psalm cxix. 10, "With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments!" They see Satan and a corrupt heart standing ready to yoke, to carry them back to their father's house again; but they are persuaded in their hearts, while they are with God, they are where they are better, yea, where they are best; and they

desire not to go back, they desire to stay, and therefore are denying the suits of ungodliness and worldly lusts, which would carry them back, Tit. ii. 12.—There is,

(3.) A flame of hatred against the fashion of their father's house: Psalm ci. 3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me." They loathed them, they therefore left them, and came away from them. They do not love them, and therefore hate to go back to them. They have abandoned the sweet morsel, and abhor to take it up again: Psalm xcvi. 10, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hands of the wicked." Those fashions wounded their consciences, defiled their souls, grieved the Holy Spirit, contradicted the law of righteousness; therefore they hate them.

Thus, you see, those who have drawn near to God in heaven, have determined to abide there. They have taken God as their God, to abide by, and with him for ever. And hence we may conclude two things in regard to them.

1. That they are no more people of this world. Heaven was cast open to them by Jesus Christ, a way was made for them into the holiest of all, and they have drawn near by this way to God in Christ, to abide there. It is indeed true, they are yet in the world, but they are not any more of it, they are chosen out of the world, John xv. 19. Though their bodies be still in this world, their souls have by faith taken wing, have left this for that world, which is not seen, and have got in within the veil.—Thus it is, for the god of this world is not their God. They have renounced the devil, no more to serve and obey him to their ruin, but to resist him as their enemy, and the enemy of their God. They are to have an irreconcilable war with him, till he be bruised under their feet.—The world's portion is not their portion, 1 John ii. 15, 16. They look beyond things that are seen, which may fill the hand but can never fill the heart. They seek after profits more solid, pleasures more pure and sweet, than the world can afford. They will not, like the men of the world, cry, "Who will shew us any good?" Psalm iv. 6: but as answering Christ's call, Song iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse." What others take upon their back, yea, place in the chief room of the heart, they put under their feet, and are fighting with it, that they may overcome it. The way of the world is not their way: Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." To be only neighbour-like, is not their religion. They are pilgrims and strangers in the world,

who will be distinguished by their way from the natives. For they who take the way of the world must perish with it.

2. They are people of another world, they are of that world where life and immortality reign. They have had access into heaven while on earth, and they have drawn near to it by faith. Wonder not at this, for if there be a soul here who has drawn near to God with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, and taken God in Christ for their God, they may well be said to be in heaven, and to be creatures of another world. For,

(1.) Their Head is in heaven, even Jesus Christ, who is as really united to the believer, as the head of a living man is to his body. There is as real an union and communion betwixt Christ and them, as betwixt the head and the body: Col. ii. 19, "He is the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." This union the Spirit descending from Christ, and faith ascending from the true heart, constitutes; and this the sacrament seals.

(2.) Their heart is in heaven, for their treasure, their stock, and portion is there: Matth. vi. 21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Their heart is divorced from the world and their lusts, it is away before them, in some measure, to the place where they themselves are to be for ever. They have got a view of the glory and treasures of the upper house, and after these their souls are breathing.

(3.) Their life is there for Christ is there: Col. iii. 3, 4, "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Their principle of life is the Spirit of Christ, by whom they live. It is a hidden life indeed, hid from the world, often from themselves. They see not their dignity, it doth not yet appear what they are, but as really as they have taken God in Christ for their God, the Spirit of Christ dwells in them. And hence their life can never be extinguished, for it lies not in the grace of God within them, but in that without them in Christ.

(4.) Their hand is in heaven, even faith, that long arm of the soul, by which it can reach from earth to heaven, even to his seat; for by it, as was shewn, we draw near to God. Faith penetrates through the vail and rests not, till it rests in God himself, who draws near to us in his word, the word of the everlasting gospel.

(5.) Their conversation is in heaven, Phil. iii. 20. They are citizens there, their great trade is there. The King of heaven is their King, their Lord, Head, and Husband; and so they wait their orders from heaven, and do not take up with every thing which offers, accord-

ing to the inclinations of their own corrupt hearts. The laws of heaven are their rule, for they are put in their mind, and written in their inward parts, Heb. viii. 10. They are not disposed to do as others do but to hear what the Lord says to them. The word from heaven is their oracle, with which to consult in all their way. Their hope and expectation is from heaven. The work of heaven is their work, which is, to serve and to do the will of Christ's Father which is in heaven.—So much for the first thing, taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome.—The

2. Thing in drawing near with full assurance of faith was, That having taken God for your God in Christ, you claim him as such, without doubting of your title. I give two observations on this, but it is too weighty a point briefly to pass over. It is a pity that a believer should so long stand afar from God, with his wishes, O that he *were* mine! and that he should not draw near with full assurance, and say, He *is* mine in Christ.—To promote this exercise, I would have you to attend to the following considerations:—

(1.) God allows you to claim him as your God. Satan, and an unbelieving heart, may contradict the claim, but God will never do it. The covenant runs in these terms, "I will be your God," Heb. viii. 10; and will he ever resist you when you plead his covenant? Did he not allow Thomas, formerly an unbeliever, to claim this, and say, "My Lord, and my God?" John xx. 28. Seeing, therefore, you may do it, it is folly to slight such a glorious privilege.—Consider,

(2.) That God is well-pleased with you if you make this claim: Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Is not a father well pleased to hear his child call him so? God is more loving than any father or mother upon earth. Though they may forget, yet he will not forget us, Isa. xlix. 15, 16. The Son of his bosom, who best knows what pleases him, teaches us to pray, Our Father; his Spirit, who searcheth the deep things of God, teacheth the children to cry, Abba, Father. It is true, that he is not pleased when carnal professors claim him as their God, Hos. viii. 2, 3; Psalm l. 16, 17. But why should the children start back from their food, because the dogs are boasted away? If you are casting off the thing that is good, and are hating instruction, I am not advising you to call him Father; but you have taken him in Christ for a rest to thine heart, to make thee holy, as well as happy? then claim him as thy God: Hos. ii. 23, "And they shall say, Thou art my God."—Consider,

(3.) That the saints of God, in former ages, have claimed God as their God: Psalm xvi. 2, "O my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord."—Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and

I am his." And it is the usual way of scripture-saints, to plead their interest in God by faith. These things are written for our imitation. I observe the saints in scripture not only claiming God as their God in the sunshine days of their prosperity, but also in deep affliction; when the hand of God lay heavy on them, they expected good from him: Psalm xlii. 6, "O my God! my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." Was ever any more afflicted than Job, tempted even by his friends to quit his claim? yet he resolutely maintained it. The saints have done this also in deep desertion: thus, Psalm xxii. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The 88th Psalm begins with a believing claim. Why should it not be so, seeing afflictions and desertions are the trial of faith? nay, what is more, they claim God as their God in the time when sin, guilt, and backsliding, are staring them in the face, Ezra ix. 6—10; for this opens the heart to kindly sorrow for sin, while unbelief locks it up. When the claim is altogether given up with, the heart may be broken into a thousand hard pieces, but it will never melt into godly sorrow.—Consider,

(4.) That this claim honours God. Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God, Rom. iv. 20. Faith honours the blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant, when the soul, over the belly of felt unworthiness, claims God as its God upon the title given by this blood. It gives Christ the honour of the infinite virtue, value, and efficacy of his blood. Faith honours the truth of God in the promises of the gospel, when the soul, in view of the infinite disproportion betwixt God and his sinful creature, yet on the credit of the word, puts in its claim to God himself.—Consider,

(5.) That it is in the strength of faith by which persons draw near when taking God as their God, but they come still nearer when claiming them as such: Job xiii. 15, 16, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He also shall be my salvation." The stronger that the man is, he holds the harder, and the stronger that faith is, it comes the farther forward in the house of God. When Thomas got in his fingers, he cried, "My Lord, and my God," John xx. 28, for then his faith was as a giant refreshed with wine.—Consider,

(6.) If you dare not claim God as your God, how will you claim any benefit of the covenant? There is guilt lying on your soul, you come and claim a pardon; there is a lust too strong for you, you claim strength against it; in difficulties you seek light and direction. Now, how can you claim any of these, if you claim not God himself as your God? Can a man who has no claim to a woman, claim the benefit of a contract with her? "I will be their God," is the great pro-

mise of the covenant, on which all the rest depend; give up your claim to this, and you can lay claim to none of the rest. If God be not your God in Christ, you have no right to pardon, peace, strength, &c.—Consider,

Lastly, That faith greatly advances sanctification. Faith is the great promoter of holiness. Acts xv. 5, 9, “Purifying their hearts by faith.” So the more faith which a man has, he will be the more holy; and with the more full assurance that he can claim God, he has the more faith, and so will be the more sanctified. Thus it is certain, that that claim which does not advance holiness, is but a delusion; for the claim of faith is still of this nature, Psalm xvi. 2, 3; Exod. xv. 2, “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation: my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” This is a great gospel-truth; I shall not launch forth into it now, but only mention you three things upon it.—I observe,

(1.) That the way to attain true holiness is, by drawing it from its fountain, God in Christ, Heb. viii. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30, “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” There is a bastard sanctification, consisting of some acts of external obedience, wrought out of our own natural powers; but true sanctification is by improving those treasures of holiness which are in Christ, or God in Christ: John i. 16, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” Now, how can we improve or make use of those treasures which are in God, if we cannot claim him for our God? But if we cannot claim him as such, we can come boldly to his throne to find mercy and obtain grace to help us in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. If the soul can say, God is mine, then may the person say, Light, life, and strength, are mine, the promises are mine. They may suck freely at the breasts of all the gracious promises on record. In a word, when the soul can claim God by faith, it can come freely to him for sanctification, and improve him for that end.—I observe,

(2.) That love to God is the fulfilling of the law; and the more love, the more holiness. Now, to claim God in Christ as our God, is the true way to attain true love to God; for it is faith which sets love a-going. Faith worketh by love, and so it sets all the graces of the Spirit in motion. *Mine* is a kindly word; though you live in a cottage, if you can say, It is mine, it will be sweeter to you than the king’s palace, because it is not yours. See how the love of God is kindled in the breast of a guilty creature, 1 John iv. 19, “We love him, because he first loved us.” It is a hard work (to

say no more) to love a God not believed in, not embraced as our God; for the greater and more glorious he is, he is the more dreadful an enemy. It is the word of the gospel which brings the glad news of the love of God in Christ. Is it not plain, then, that the more this be believed with application, the more will that love to God be inflamed, and consequently the soul more satisfied.—I observe,

(3.) That our hearts must have something of their own to satisfy themselves with. The greater part of the world hang on about the door of the empty creation, and suck the breasts of their fulsome lusts. Why do they this? Because God is not theirs, and they cannot want altogether. But let the heart once take God in Christ, and claim him as its own God, then it has enough. And the more the soul is persuaded of this, the less it will care for other things, but says, in effect, "I have all, and abound." A man will keep in his candles, if he be not persuaded the sun is up; but if the windows be opened, and he sees the shining sun, he puts out his candles, he needs them no more.—Our heart has that piece of prudence, that it must fasten one foot before it loose another; and therefore, according as the claim to God is stronger or weaker, the claim to the world and lusts will in like manner be proportioned.—Here I would propose, and say a word or two to three cases.

CASE 1. I am afraid of presumption. ANSW. Draw near with a true heart, press only through the vail to make your claim. Claim for a rest to your soul, and for sanctification, as was said before, and there is no presumption. Have you taken him as your own God? Avow your claim to him as such: dishonour not God by casting a cloak of pretended humility over your unbelief.

CASE 2. But can such an unworthy creature as I make such a claim? ANSW. If you will not, then I hope you will not claim pardon, grace, or heaven: but you will, you must quit your claim to all these at once, for you must not think to claim these from a God that is not yours in Christ. Will you then, without reluctance, quit your claim to all these? If not, then claim him, though unworthy. Why talk of unworthiness? Will you ever be worthy of him? No, no; the claim of faith is over the belly of felt unworthiness, and founded on the blood of Christ alone.

CASE 3. I would have claimed God in Christ as my God, and I even did it; but Satan has got advantage already of me, and I had to quit the hold. Who ordered you to quit your hold even in that case? Not God, I am sure; for he saith, Heb. x. 35, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward;" therefore it has been Satan and your own unbelieving heart.

And are you not in a poor case for rising up again out of the mire now, when you have let go hold of God, as your God in Christ? This is not the way to rise, your best course is, to act faith again, and renew that claim which you have formerly made, for grace, in order both for justification and sanctification, Ezra ix. 6; Psalm lxy. 3; Jonah ii. 12.—I now come to the

3. Thing in drawing near to God with full assurance, which was, that you improve your claimed interest for all your necessities, without doubting of success. Christ has opened heaven to you; and if you have come in through the veil, taken God in Christ as your God, and claimed him as such, he would have you to be familiar in his Father's house, and want nothing which is there suitable to your condition; but to put out the hand of faith, with full assurance, that you are as welcome to the heavenly treasures as the blood that purchased them can make you: and that is, welcome to the full. I doubt not but this is the import of the text. Poor empty creature, thou canst not subsist without communion with heaven; but thou must drink of the fountain, before thou canst meddle with the streams; himself must be thine, before the least article of the furniture of the house can be thine; therefore thou must take God in Christ for your God, then you must claim him, and, having claimed him, be familiar with him, and all that is his, in the way of believing.—In explaining this, I shall shew,

I. How the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and thus draw near with full assurance.

II. Why he should be so familiar.

1. We are to shew, how the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and thus draw near with full assurance.—Upon this I observe, that he should,

1. Come and tell him all his wants freely, without concealing any thing from him, for this would argue distance and distrust: Song vii. 11, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages." Faith has a most enlarged desire, it is always in want of something, and its work is to beg, to take freely without money and without price; and for that reason it is pitched upon as the great mean of communion betwixt God and sinners; Rom. iv. 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." And the stronger faith is, it spreads out the more wants, and spreads them out the more freely before the Lord, as to a friend. Do you want any thing as to which you cannot tell the Lord? It argues either no real need, or else little faith. Strong faith is a free communer in heaven, and will conceal nothing, but tell all: Eph. iii. 12, "In

whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." (Boldness, *Gr.* telling all).—He should,

2. Come and seek all he needs, without blushing: Heb. iv. 16, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy, and obtain grace to help in time of need." Faith coming in within the veil, comes into a friend's house; and the more free and familiar it is there, and the less reserved, the more welcome. There are two seekers that do not blush before the Lord in their asking: 1. A proud unhumbled heart, whose sense of need is very small; and these, for their shamelessness, get the door cast on their face: 1 Pet. v. 5, "For God resisteth the proud." Luke i. 5, "And the rich he sendeth empty away." 2. A strong faith, whose sense of need is very great, which drives away the unbelieving blushes out of the face; and such shamefaced seekers never get a denial in heaven: Luke xi. 8, "Yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

There is a blessed shamelessness in faith with full assurance; it makes persons very familiar in God's house. It can come there at any time, it keeps no set hours, it can step forward at midnight, (Luke xi. 5,) when doors used to be shut, and knock at the gates, without fear of giving disturbance. It was a dark night to Job; God had drawn a sable covering over the face of his throne to him; yet faith goes forwards, and draws it by, Job xiii. 15, 16, (quoted above). See also Isa. lxiii. 15, 16. It can plead the relation of a friend to the master of the house. The believer stands in many relations to the Lord, and faith fixes on that relation which will serve its plea best. If the soul be under particular necessities, where it must have a friend's help, the soul will claim the help of God as its friend, notwithstanding the infinite disproportion between the relatives. And in this case, it can be very full in its demands: Luke xi. 5, "Lend me three loaves." Possibly less might serve a friend on a journey, who is to tarry only a night, but strong faith is not to be dealt with scruply. It must have what will be enough and to spare, for it desires to be more than a conqueror.—Faith thinks no shame to complain of an empty house at home, Luke xi. 6, and that it has nothing to set before this stranger. The report faith brings to heaven, is still of emptiness, for they that live by faith are always from hand to mouth, and never want an errand to the God of heaven for some supply or other.—Finally, It can confidently borrow, without one word of paying again. See the whole of our Saviour's parable, the design of which is to recommend importunity at the throne of grace, Luke xi. 5—10. This is the way of faith's trading with heaven, without money in hand, and without price to

be paid. For faith just involves the soul in the debt of free grace, and can trade at no other market, for no other is suited for the bankrupt family of Adam.

3. He should even put out his hand, and draw to him, by believing the promises suited to his case, and this with a faith of application: Matth. xxi. 22, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive them." It is the business of faith, to read the person's particular name in the general promise, and to fill up his own name in these promises, which are, as it were, God's blank bills and bonds, and then come forward with them even to his seat, with David's plea: Psalm cxix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." And this without doubting. They can never be familiar with heaven, who stand afar off from the promises.—Thou shouldst believe that the promises shall be made out; they are the words of truth, which shall have a certain accomplishment. And though the unbelieving world take them but for fair words, thou takest them for sure words, which are full of mercy, and shall not miscarry, but shall surely be accomplished at the set time: Psalm xii. 6, "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."—Again, believe that they shall be made out to thee. What canst thou be the better of a salve not applied to thy sore, or of a promise which is not applied by faith to thy own soul. It is by the faith of application that these breasts of consolation are sucked, and that the water is drawn out of the wells of salvation. And what other way can we be partakers of the sap which flows from them, but by thus believing, as was before shewn. And for this cause it is necessary to be well acquainted with the Bible, and to mark the promises, that whatever be thy case, thou mayest have a word suited to it to plead with God, for the word is that by which influences are conveyed. And seeing much lies in believing and applying the promises, take these two notes to clear your way in this exercise.—I observe,

(1.) That whosoever receives Christ, and takes God for his God in him, has a right to all the promises of the covenant suited to his case, and has a right to apply them. They meet all in Christ, for "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." And so all of them may be claimed in him, even as he who marries a wife may plead all that is promised with her in the contract. It is with him that God freely gives us all things, Rom. viii. 32. Take Christ, then, and the promise is yours in him.—I observe,

(2.) That the promises are made primarily to Jesus Christ:

Gal. iii. 16, "Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." He is the second Adam, the great contractor with the Father in the covenant of grace, and through him to all who are his, even as the promise of the first covenant was to Adam, and his seed in him. And they were made to him on condition of his satisfying the demands of the law, which is now done; so that, with respect to us, they are all absolute and free; properly speaking, none of them are conditional. Some of them describe the qualification of these to whom they shall be accomplished, as Matth. v. 3—10, which qualification is, however, wrought in them, in accomplishment of the leading promises, the promises of grace, such as Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." But both the one and the other are pleadable only through Jesus Christ, being through him made absolute to those who are his; so that in Christ you have a right to all that is suited to your case. Hence it is that promises, made to some particular saints, may be confidently applied by others in their circumstances, as growing all upon one root, which is our common Lord. Thus, God said to Joshua, chap. i. 5, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." He says to every believer, Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Lastly, He should hang on about the Lord's hand till the supply come, and that confidently. This is that which in the scriptures is celebrated under the name of trusting, relying, staying on the Lord. The whole weight of all our wants is to be laid over on the Lord, and a confident expectation maintained, that he will supply them, according to his word. Trust reposed in a generous man is a strong tie on him to help and answer expectation. Lot, Gen. xix. 8, would have any ill done to himself rather than to his guests, because, says he, "for this cause they came under the shadow of my roof." And they that trust in the Lord according to his word, shall never be ashamed. Thus, the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and in this way draw near with full assurance.—Let us now,

II. Shew why the believer should be so familiar in this house, improving his claimed interest for his necessities, without doubting of the success.—He should be so,

1. Because heaven is made home to him by the blood of the Son

of God, and therefore no reason to doubt of welcome, Heb. x. 19, 20. That is a kindly word, which you have in John xx. 17, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." It is our Father's house because it is Christ's Father's house; and where may one be familiar, if not in their Father's house? It is the house prepared for them first by Christ's satisfaction, then by his intercession: John xiv. 2, "I go to prepare a place for you." It is the house their Lord and husband is set over; it is the house they came of, for they are born from above; and it is the house they are to dwell in for ever, nay, the Lord himself is their home: Psalm xc. 1, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." The Jewish doctors called him *place*, because the only resting-place of the soul is in God, and to believers he is unquestionably their rest.

2. It is a pleasure to have full breasts sucked. The breasts of grace and goodness in God to sinners through Christ, are full, there is nothing wanting, faith has only to suck, and to be satisfied. It is applied to the church, what you have in Isa. lxvi. 11, "That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." The breasts are, as it were, held forth in the word of the gospel, which is our great privilege. There is all fulness in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him, that so sinners might have access to God through the vail of his flesh, and be filled with all the fulness of God. The fulness in him is not the fulness of a vessel, to serve itself only, but the fulness of a fountain to be communicated, which still gives, and yet has enough. Well may we, then, draw near to God with full assurance of faith.—We should be thus familiar; for,

3. This is the great end for which sinners are at all brought to God through Christ, namely, that they may partake of his fulness. It is the great end of all the promises: 2 Pet. i. 4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The communication betwixt God and man was interrupted by Adam's fall; it is opened by Jesus Christ, that influences from heaven may run freely, and that in him they may get all their wants made up. They may be assured of a cordial welcome when taking for their necessities these things which are brought in for this very end, that they may be supplied.

4. The Lord offers himself in the gospel for all, and the sinner who takes him aright, takes him for all, and instead of all, Matth.

xiii. 45, 46. Now, if he offer himself for all, surely he intends that his people should improve their interest in him for all. He has taken them from all their former friends; surely, then, as an affectionate husband, he will allow his wife to be familiar in his house, and take it very ill if she hang on about others for a supply of her wants. This familiarity our Maker, our Husband, allows us, and approves of.

5. Our Lord (if I may so speak) makes very familiar with his people, and this is a sign that he would have them to be so with him. Lodge they ever so meanly, he will lodge with them: Isa. lvii. 15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." He not only gives them, but he takes from them; what provision from heaven is with them, he takes part of, though he needs nothing from them: Song v. 1, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" He sometimes even will take from them what they would not part with to any but himself, and they will make him welcome to it, as he did with Job, chap i. His sheep, asses, children, were taken from him, and little at all was left him. And if they act like themselves, they will rejoice that they have any thing, liberty, life, &c. to part with to him. But sure I am, the best of the saints can never so freely part with any thing to him, as he does to them.—They should be familiar; for,

Lastly, They who use most familiarity with the Lord, improving their claimed interest, with greatest confidence, come best speed at this throne: Matth. xv. 28, "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Little faith is a narrow vessel, which brings in little from the fountain; but great faith brings in much. Whatever the Lord's people may think of their doubtings of the promises, the word of God never speaks a good word of the believer's doubts: Matth. xiv. 31, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Doubts are not pleasing to God, for they shew the weakness of faith, and always in less or more contain some reflections on the blood of Christ, the truth and gracious nature of God. Augustus admitted the common people with their petitions so pleasantly, that it is reported he reproved a certain person, telling him that he presented his petition to him, as if he had been giving a halfpenny to an elephant. Humility may well consist with the confidence and full assurance of faith.

Now, to conclude all this, ye who have taken God in Christ as your God, learn this holy art of living by faith, claiming your interest and improving it for all your necessities. Alas! sirs, for what end have we taken God in Christ for our God, if we do not live upon him? John vi. 57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Why have we professed to enter into the house of God, by embracing the covenant, if we do not improve it for all we need? Improve, then, the claimed interest for all; and particularly,

1. For a rest to your consciences. Here David found a rest to his, when death and guilt together stared him in the face: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although," says he, "my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." If God be thy God, the righteousness of God is thine to cover thee, the righteousness of Christ God-man. Thou art within that veil where the fiery law is closed up in the ark, and cannot reach thee. Confessing, mourning, repenting, are blessed and holy exercises, well becoming the child of God, and the more faith, the more of these, and the deeper will they be; but they, after all, are wholly insufficient for a rest to the conscience.—Improve the claimed interest,

2. For a rest to your hearts: Psalm cxvi. 7, "Return to thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Have you come to God through Christ? then rest thy heart in enjoyment of him. Is the world smiling on thee? beware, rest not on it, thou wilt soon find thy rest broken, thou wilt never rest soundly in the embraces of a smiling world, for the bed is shorter than thou canst stretch thyself upon. Is the world frowning? Are the cisterns dried up? thy created pillars taken away? Yet despond not, faint not, while God remains, Hab. iii. 17, 18. You who have taken God for all, you have a poor bargain of it, if you have not as much as can make you live without those things which may be taken from you. Look to your stock in heaven, look to the glorious promises; he who overcometh shall inherit all things.

Lastly, Improve it for sanctification, to be holy, as God is holy, to get strength for duty, and against corruption. Draw in your furniture for a holy life, from the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Believe, that you may be holy. Take, by faith, the promise with you, when you use the means of holiness. They know little of the property of faith, who use it only for the pardon of sin; it is the instrument of sanctification, as well as of justification: Acts xv. 9, "Purifying their hearts by faith." If a lust is to be subdued, or a

temptation resisted, &c. faith must run thy errand to heaven. Believe the promise of sanctification with application to thyself, believe it with full assurance that it shall be made out to thee; and in that confidence use the means appointed of God for thy sanctification, and so thou shalt succeed.—If any of you have set about gathering evidences for heaven, and have got them, these things may help you to keep them, and to increase them. Amen.

THE SAINTS GOD'S SERVANTS AND HIS PROPERTY.*

SERMON XL.

ACTS xxvii. 23,

For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.

THERE are two questions which may be pertinently proposed to every one of you after this communion; and he who can satisfyingly answer them, as Paul here does, and every child of God may do, it will be a pass which will carry him safely and comfortably through the world, by sea or by land, at home or abroad, among friends or enemies, and even at length into heaven.—The first question is,

Whose are you? Man, woman, to whom do you belong? Are you Christ's or Satan's? Are you still your own, or are you the Lord's? Are you a child of God's family, or of the devil's? What countryman are you? Are you from above, and do you belong to the Lord of the better country? or are you from below, and do you belong to the god of this world? What say you to this question, Whose are you?—The second question is,

What is your business? Certainly you have some business or other, you are either well or ill employed. What is your occupation? What course of life do you follow? What is the great design upon which you are set? Are you serving the devil, yourselves, your lusts? or are you serving God? What say you to this question, What is your business?

Paul, in the text, and in a few words, answers these two questions. He told those whom he addressed, that he was God's and that God's service was his business; that his Lord and Master had sent him a very comfortable message in the dark hour which was now come

* Delivered June 15, 1715, the Sabbath after the dispensation of the Sacrament.