

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

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upon them.—He was now in a ship, with many others, sailing for Rome; but a storm rises, continues many days, and all hope of being saved was taken away. Paul, notwithstanding, is easy and cheerful: he brings good news to them, that there should not one life be lost in the cause. And, in the text, he shews them on what grounds he went, namely, that of divine revelation, by the ministry of an angel.—You may here observe, that God's word of promise is sufficient security and encouragement in the darkest hour. The storm still continued, and was to continue, they were to make a narrow escape, the ship was to be lost: but amidst all this, the word of promise kept up his heart; and he had good reason for maintaining his confidence.

God is unchangeably true to his word. He cannot alter it, it shall not fail: Numb. xxiii. 19, "God is not a man that he should lie: neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? There is an impossibility of his word failing: Tit. i. 12, "He is God that cannot lie." So that faith has the surest bottom on which to stand, when standing on the promise, namely, the unchangeable truth of God.—There is nothing so difficult and hopeless, but God can bring it to pass: Luke i. 37, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Therefore he is able to make good his promise, though all creatures should conspire to render his working ineffectual, and whatever difficulties may be in his way.—In one word, the experience of the saints in all ages confirms this confidence: Psalm xii. 6, "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified." Many and various have been the trials of the saints, but they all held by the promise, and have at length set to their seal that God is true.—From this we may learn,

That their salvation is secured, who have been graciously brought within the compass of the covenant and the promise of salvation, "This," David said, "is all my salvation and all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Though they be in this world as on a boisterous sea, where the waves of indwelling corruption, temptation, affliction, desertion, are threatening to swallow them up; yet they shall get safe ashore; and though the body fall in pieces by death, the soul shall arrive safe in Immanuel's land.—If it should be inquired, How may a person know that he is brought within the compass of the covenant and promise? I answer, If you have truly and honestly come to Christ, and laid hold of him in the covenant, taken him as he offers himself in the gospel, if you have given up with all other lovers, and have taken up with him in all his offices, with a view to free you from the guilt, from the power and pollution of sin, all is well;

for he has said, John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Possessing him as the chief benefit of the covenant, you have all: 2 Cor. i. 20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."—We may further learn,

That it is true wisdom to live by faith in the promise of God, whatever storm be blowing: 2 Cor. v. 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." You must lay your account with storms. Never was there one in a ship, except the man Christ, whom the devil would more anxiously have drowned, than he would have done Paul at this time. But Paul is easy, even when on the boisterous sea, on the promise of God, while the rest were in a terrible alarm; Satan was not so much set against them. Unbelief and discouragement can in no case be useful. It is good to believe, whether we be tossed with a storm of raging corruption, as in Psalm lxxv. 3;—strong temptations, as in Luke xxii. 31, 32;—heavy affliction, as in Psalm xxvii. 13;—or desertion, as in Psalm xxii. 1. Thus much for the connection.

In the text, Paul declares to the ship's crew, who for the most part were pagans, two things:—

(1.) His intercourse with heaven: "There stood by me this night the angel of the Lord." (2.) His special relation to the God of heaven: whose I am, and whom I serve." The design of this declaration was, not only to comfort them, but to commend his God unto them, that they might also choose him for their God and master. No doubt, in these days, ver. 20, there had been many prayers in the ship. They had called to their gods, but in vain; Paul had cried to his, and had got a comfortable answer. He thence takes occasion to represent him as the God of salvation, who was able to make them all safe, notwithstanding the storm; as the Lord of angels; as one whose servant himself was, who was now so cheerful, when they were so dejected. Proper methods these to commend his God to them.—I would accordingly take occasion to observe, that it is the duty of those who are the Lord's, to commend their God to others, that they in consequence may be prevailed on also to be his. There are two strong bonds to bind this on those who are the Lord's—There is,

1. The love and duty they owe to God, who has done so much for them, and who would have all men to be saved. It is the more for the honour of God in the world, the more there are who join themselves to his service. This is an acceptable thing which we can do for God, to express our thankfulness, namely, to make conscience of

discharging our duty, to lay out ourselves in advancing the interest of Chrst and of religion in the world: that since he has brought us into his family, we exert our endeavours to bring others also into it.—Another bond is,

2. The love and duty we owe to mankind: Rom. xiii. 9, “If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Those who are yet strangers to God, are our fellow-creatures, lying in the ditch of sin, swimming to the ocean of wrath, in which condition we also were before we were the Lord’s; which requires from us a very serious concern to help them out of that state, Tit. iii. 1, 2, 3. And this is as natural as it is for one that has narrowly escaped drowning, to bestir himself to help his fellow who is in hazard of perishing.

The use and improvement I would make of this is, to call upon you, O Christians and communicants! whosoever of you are the Lord’s, to put your hand to this work, to recommend Christ and religion to others. You that are come out from among the devil’s family, make it your work to prevail on others to come away also. Remember the Samaritan woman, who told her neighbours of Christ, and invited them to come to him: John iv. 29, “Go thou and do likewise.”—To stir you up to this work, I shall lay before you the following motives.

MOT. 1. What use are you for in this world, if you be not useful for God, and your generation, in this work to which you are called? If you will do nothing for God, you but take up room on God’s earth, and cumber his ground. The children of God are not so situated. They say, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

MOT. 2. It is a dangerous thing to be an unprofitable servant in God’s house; Matth. xxv. 30, “And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” An unprofitable tree may stand safer in a wood than in an orchard; and what is quite unfit for the master’s use, is fuel for the fire.

MOT. 3. It is the nature of true grace, and has been the practice of the saints, thus to lay themselves out for God and the good of others. Grace is communicative; it is a well of water, from which many may be refreshed; it is a holy fire to warm others. Accordingly, we find Abraham’s grace working thus, Gen. xviii. 19, “For I know him,” said God, “that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do jus-

tice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Thus also, we find David's grace, Psalm xxxiv. 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Thus also the spouse's grace, Song v.; the woman of Samaria, John iv. 29.

MOT. 4. You would thrive better yourselves, if you were more employed in this work: Prov. xi. 25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered himself." The spring runs, and the fire burns, the more freely that they get a vent; and they that use their talents thus for God, are in the high way to increase them: Matth. xxv. 28, 29, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." A cold heart, without zeal for God's interest, and a sealed mouth, which cannot open for God, produces a back-going withered condition.

MOT. 5. It is well laid out work. For either sinners are gained by it, as it often falls out: Song vi. 1, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." In this case the work is an abundant reward for itself: James i. 27, "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction." But it shall not go so; for every soul thou doest good to, shall be as a jewel in thy crown: "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Thou wilt gain the blessing of those ready to perish; and if thou shouldst not gain thy point, yet thy work shall not be in vain; Isa. xlix. 4, "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."—But here some who are under difficulties may propose this

QUESTION, How shall a person manage this duty? I answer, Follow after the copy we have in the text, in these three particulars:—

1. Speak to the commendation of him and his service. The world have mean and low thoughts of God; speak to his greatness, that the souls of others may be awed by it; to his goodness and loving-kindness, that their souls may be stirred up to love him, hope in him, trust him. Speak to the advantage of his service, how comfortable, pleasant, and beneficial it is, Psalm xxxiv. 6, 7, 8.

2. Prudently communicate your experiences of his goodness to you. Tell what you have seen, heard, tasted, and felt of him, that others may be excited to wait on him. Tell it to those who are absolute strangers to God, when there is any hope of thus doing them

good, as in the case of the text; but otherwise we must beware of casting these pearls before swine. Tell it to fellow-Christians who need to be strengthened: Psalm lxvi. 16, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." And tell it even to those who see no beauty in ordinances: Zech. viii. 23, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

3. Confidently avow your choice of God and his service before the world. Let them see that you have made your choice, and do not repent it. Say, with Joshua, chap. xxiv. 15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The being ashamed of confessing the Lord and his way before an evil generation, does much hurt to religion; but a confident profession is a practical testimony to it.—To these three may be added,

4. A conversation becoming the gospel, and those principles which you possess.—In the text,

The *first* thing we have is Paul's intercourse with heaven, his communion with God: "There stood by me," &c.

The *second* thing is, Paul's special relation to the God of heaven: "Whose I am, and whom I serve."—We begin with the

First thing in the text, Paul's intercourse with heaven, his communion with God. "There stood by me this night, the angel of the Lord."—In this several things offer themselves to our notice, which we shall shortly explain.—There is,

I. The party employed to bring him the comfortable message from God: "The angel of the Lord."

II. The peculiarity of this manifestation and intercourse with heaven.

III. The posture of the angel: "He stood."

IV. The time of this manifestation: "This night."

Let us then attend,

I. To the party employed to bring him the comfortable message from God: an holy angel, who appeared to him in the ship. This was often the privilege of the saints in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New, in the first times of it. We are not, however, now to expect such appearances. The sacred volume is completed, and we are not to expect new revelations. Angels are employed to serve for the good and benefit of those that are the Lord's. We know little of the ministry of angels, but the scriptures are plain, that this is the privilege of all who are his: Psalm xxxiv. 7, "The

angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Heb. i. 14, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." And the angels being invisible, we know not how much we are indebted to them for their ministry; we will know it better afterwards, when we will be in no hazard of abusing it.

The improvement I would make of this is, to point out the dignity and advantage of the children of God. King's children have honourable attendants; these, however, are only men. But if thou be a child of the family of God, angels attend thee. They have a concern for thy welfare, to promote it, as devils are trying to hinder it. And these angels will attend thee,—during thy life in this world. The scripture is plain, that God gives his angels charge concerning those who are his, to keep them while in the way. It is a promise of the covenant that has been sealed to us: Psalm xci. 11, 12, "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." As a father of a family charges the elder children with the care of the younger ones; so does God the angels, with the saints on earth, the young heirs of glory; and they diligently execute their charge, however little we know about it. This appears from the scriptures already quoted.—The angels will attend thee at thy death, they will wait on thy soul removing from the body, and convey it away home to your Father's house in glory: Luke xvi. 22, "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." When the child comes out of its mother's belly into this world, some inhabitants here receive it, and take care of it; and when the soul of a believer comes out of the body, and is born into another world, the angels, inhabitants there, take it, and convey it away to their country. This honour have all the saints.—Let us attend,

II. To the peculiarity of this manifestation and intercourse with heaven.—"The angel stood by me." They were all in the same ship, but none knew what passed between the Lord and Paul; none saw nor heard the angel but Paul himself. And two things are here remarkable,

1. There were many strangers to God in the ship; but Paul was his own, and with him God keeps communion; but with none of them, though in the same ship with him.—Whence observe, that there is a secret conveyance of intercourse with heaven to those who are the Lord's, in the midst of a crowd of persons who know nothing of the matter. Many a time matters go on betwixt God and a gracious soul, as betwixt Jonathan and David, when they only knew

the matter, 1 Sam. xx. 39. The Lord knoweth who are his, and who are not, however mixed the multitude may be, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Whatever fair appearances a hypocrite puts on, he can see through the disguise; and however iniquity prevail in his own, he can discern the pearl of faith and love in a dunghill of corruption. The arrow is shot at a venture, but the Spirit of the Lord directs it. Communion with God and intercourse with heaven, lies in inward, not in external things: 1 Tim. iv. 8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Every person might see who went to the table, what visible thing was done there, who received the bread and wine. But what passed in the retirements of the heart there, whose spikenard sent forth the smell, who received Christ into their hearts, whose faith and love were exercised, with whom the idol of jealousy was preserved, or who put the knife to the throat of it: the whole is a secret betwixt God and the soul itself.—The improvement of this is, to learn, that it is a sad thing to have been where that intercourse with heaven was, and to have had no share of it; to be persons whom God goes by, and comes by, manifests his grace on the right hand, and on the left hand, while they have no share of it. We have no ground to doubt but communion with God was enjoyed by some in that church-yard, and at the Lord's table. O! what was your share of it? If you have had none, it is a token, either that you were dead in your sins, and in a state of alienation from God, and not come out of the devil's family, though you were by profession among God's children: Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together, unless they be agreed?" Dead folk cannot converse with the living, nor dead souls have communion with the living God. Habitual estrangement from communion with God, is a black mark of a graceless state, 2 Cor. vi. 16. Let that stir you up yet to come out from among them, and leave the congregation of the dead, while yet there is hope.—Or it is a token, that ye were asleep, and all out of case for communion with God. And if that was the case, O but it was ill-timed! Song v. 1, 2. Ye have slept a precious season, ye know not if ever it may return. Review, therefore, your carriage and way at this occasion; awaken timeously, and repent, else you may come to get an awakening stroke from the Lord, which may go very deep: 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause many were weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."—Learn to bless God, be thankful, and walk worthy of your privilege, you who have had the distinguishing mercy of communion with God. To whom much is given much also shall be required. Did he bring you into his banqueting-house? Then follow on in the way of holiness, as strengthened by what you have

experienced. Let not his grace bestowed on you be in vain. Here a question may be proposed, How may a person know whether he had communion with God or not? **ANSW.** Communion with God consists in the Lord's vouchsafing the influences of his grace to the soul, and the soul's returning them again in the exercise of grace. There are many marks of grace. I offer you two distinguishing ones from the text.

MARK 1. The soul's giving itself wholly to the Lord, without exception of any thing, and standing to it: "Whose I am." People may give their hand, tongue, many things of theirs to the Lord, but none but these who have communion with him, will honestly give themselves wholly, without exception of one lust, or one cross, to him; and being deliberate, they stand to it. This is an evidence that the Lord has given himself to them, and they have received him by faith; for man's heart will never give their all to the Lord till it receive better.

MARK 2. Has religion now become your business? "Whom I serve." Have ye truly renounced the service of the devil, and of lusts, taken on the yoke of Christ in all its parts, making religion no more a by-hand work, to serve yourselves of it, but your chief work, your continued work, to serve the Lord in it? If you have had these, you have had communion with God; if not, you have not had it.—To this some may reply, But, alas! I have not had what I would wish to have been at. In answer to this, consider what is remarkable here: there were others who were the Lord's, besides Paul, in this ship; Luke, at least, whom, though the Lord left not without communion with himself in that dark hour, yet Paul only had the vision of the angel. You will accordingly observe, that every saint is not admitted to the same degree of communion with God, some enjoy more than others. All the disciples were not taken up to the mount of transfiguration, but only three of them. John was the beloved disciple, though Jesus loved them all, except the son of perdition. Some may be brought farther forward at one time, others at another time. Some may be full to the brim, when the enjoyments of others are very scanty. There is no reason to complain here; for,

(1.) Ordinarily God proportions his people's present lifting up to their former down-casting: Isa. xl. 4, "Every valley shall be exalted." Some need more communion with God in the way of conviction and humiliation, others in the way of comfort; but the heaviest heart, and the most humbled spirit, needs the greatest outletting of comfortable manifestations. And if God speak most comfortably to those who most need it, it is unjust to complain.

(2.) The greatest privilege is ordinarily followed with the greatest piece of work, 1 Kings xix. 7. God has hard pieces of service to

put into some people's hands beyond others. Paul must appear before Cæsar for the defence of the gospel, and therefore stood in most need of this manifestation to comfort and fortify him.

(3.) The backs of God's people are ordinarily strengthened in proportion to their burdens: and therefore the more liberal feast that a saint gets, he may expect the greater trial. If we compare the life of Isaac and Jacob, you will observe, that the latter had the greatest enjoyments of God; but so also had he the greatest trials of the two.

As a suitable improvement of what has now been observed, let us, who have had communion with God in any measure, however small, not overlook the mercy, but thankfully entertain it. There is real communion with God in these two things. (1.) In longing desires after Christ: Psalm xxvi. 9, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." When the soul is touched with a desire of him above all persons and things, longing for the enjoyment of him as their portion, longing for his blood to sprinkle them, and his Spirit to sanctify them, it is an evidence of the Lord's discovering himself in some measure to that soul.—There is real communion with God, (2.) In real love to him, well-pleaseness with his covenant; Matth. xi. 6, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." There can be no true love to Christ, which is not produced by his love to the soul: 1 John iv. 19, "We love him, because he first loved us." And no heart will be truly satisfied with the covenant, with the tenor, benefits, and duties of it, but that which, by the influences of the Spirit, is framed in conformity to it: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Psalm cx. 3. If this has been your attainment, then cherish the spark. Quench not the Spirit. Satan will endeavour to rob you of it; but if it be tenderly watched and preserved, the Spirit will break out into a flame: Hos. vi. 3, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—Let those who have had a more than ordinary meeting with God, and have been filled with consolation, admire God's mercy towards them, and prepare themselves for trials and temptations which will try their strength. God's children are suffered to eat no idle bread. Watch, therefore, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Carefully cherish and preserve what God has done for you, and improve it to your progress in sanctification. This is the true way to keep your candle shining.—Let us attend,

III. To the posture of the angel. He *stood*, he did not sit down, because he was not to stay. This was an extraordinary visit to Paul, he was not to look for this as his ordinary entertainment from heaven. Extraordinary manifestations are what we cannot expect to be continued, without interruption, while we are here. God will

have a difference betwixt heaven and earth. And as two summers are not to be looked for in one year, so a lasting heaven of comfort upon earth will not be found. Though the Lord may sometimes feed his people with strong sensible manifestations in this world, this is not their ordinary. They must for the most part live by faith, without extraordinary manifestations: 2 Cor. v. 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Let Christians then lay their account with a struggling and wrestling life, with the clouds returning after the rain. For we are as those who travel by night, with the light of the moon, which sometimes shines clear, at other times hides her head under a cloud: Psalm xxx. 7, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."—We are,

IV. To consider the time of this manifestation: "This night." It was a sad night in that ship, all hopes of being saved were lost, and then the Lord appeared to help.—This may lead us to observe, that when things are brought to an extremity, this is a special opportunity which the Lord takes to appear for those that are his. This is the promise: Deut. xxxii. 36, "For the Lord will judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." And agreeable to this has been the experience of the saints in many cases. Thus, as to the church of God in Egypt, their bondage was most hard, before the Lord delivered them. The reasons why the Lord does this are many.—Among others,

1. By this the hand of God appears most eminent in the deliverance. The more desperate that the case be, the love of God in thinking upon his people, his wisdom in contriving their deliverance, his power in bringing it to pass, appear the more conspicuous: Isa. xxxiii. 10, "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself." He has the greater revenue of glory, by curing the disease when past all hope.—Another reason is,

2. That it brings the greater advantage to the saints: John xi. 15, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe." For hereby their eyes are opened to see their own weakness more, their patience is tried, their faith in God confirmed and strengthened, and their high thoughts of God and his perfections raised to a higher pitch.—As an improvement of this, I observe, that this affords ground of hope and comfort to the Lord's people, when matters are come to the lowest ebb with them, Zech. xiv. 7. Faith has ground to stand upon, when all things fail to sense. It is God's special time of beginning to work, when men can do no more. Thus Hagar at the well. Many a time the Lord makes the wheel of providence drive downward and downward, till we are almost at its extrimity; and then is the turning point.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLI.

ACTS xxviii. 23,

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

HAVING explained and improved the first branch of the text, I now come to the

Second branch, namely, Paul's special relation to the God of heaven: "Whose I am, and whom I serve." And this is the chief thing I would insist upon. And here Paul declares two things. 1. To whom he belonged: "I am God's, I own no other Father, Lord, Master, or Proprietor." The centurion might say, "I am Cæsar's;" but Paul avows a more honourable Proprietor. 2. What was his business: "Whom I serve." He was on the service of that God to whom he belonged.

This word, "the Lord, whose I am," is very important. There were four things implied in it.

1. A comfortable view of God's special interest in him. He was convinced, that whoever others belonged to, he belonged to God, that there was a saving relation betwixt God and him.—There is,

2. A recognizing God's special interest in him. He had said it before at his first accepting of the covenant, "I am the Lord's;" and he did not repent the bargain, but repeated it over again, "I am his."—There is,

3. An open profession of his special relation to God. He was not ashamed of his proprietor, his Lord and Master; but he gloried in it, accounting himself happy in the relation.—There is,

4. A rejoicing in it, particularly with respect to this season of distress. As if he had said, The sea rages, the waves threaten us with death; but this is my happiness, I am the Lord's, in whose hands all these are.—From this subject I would take the following Doctrines:—

DOCT. I. That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his.

DOCT. II. That those who are the Lord's ought to make, and will make, God's service their business.—We begin with

DOCT. I. That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his.

In treating this point, I shall,

I. Confirm this doctrine.

II. Shew in what respects those who have given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant are to look upon themselves as his.

III. Assign reasons why it is the duty of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, thus to look on themselves as his.

IV Shew how it is their interest to look on themselves as the Lord's.

V. Conclude with some practical improvement.—We are, then,

I. To confirm the doctrine, That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his. This is evident, if you consider,

1. The laudable practice of the saints, who had given themselves away to the Lord. They go over the bargain again, hold by it, and look upon themselves as the Lord's: Psalm cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds." And Psalm cxix. 94, "I am thine, save me." The spouse, Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

2. The Spirit of God instructs them so to do. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." There is great weight in it, whose we look on ourselves to be. It is the sin of many, that they say, Psalm xii. 4, "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" This proceeds from Satan, and the corrupt heart. The Spirit of the Lord teaches his own to look on themselves as his.

3. The Lord looks on such to be his, by a special relation: John xvii. 9, 10, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou has given me; for they are *thine*. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." Yea, he takes a pleasure to assert his interest in them; he calls them, and pleads with them, to own the mutual relation betwixt him and them: Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Lastly, The nature of the thing requires it, for they are his indeed. Honest covenanters with God, give themselves to the Lord: 2 Cor. viii. 5, "But first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." They yield themselves to him, so that they are his, and therefore should look upon themselves as such.—Let us now,

II. Shew in what respects those who have given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, are to look upon themselves as his.

1. They are to look upon themselves as his, in opposition to all his competitors. The Lord will not divide share in his covenant-people with any whatsoever: Isa. xxvi. 13, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee, have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." He will admit no rival with him, but if ye take me, let these go. The soul, till it comes within the covenant, is in a restless case, like a bee going from flower to flower, or a bird from bush to bush. The man has many masters and lords. But when come into the covenant, he breaks his league with them all, and is married to Christ, to live in undivided society with him: Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

Believers, ye are not your own, and you must no more look on yourselves to be your own, 1 Cor. vi. 19, (quoted above). Have you given yourselves away to him? Then you are no more at your own disposal. Faith is the soul's coming out of itself to the Lord, that he may be all to us, and we as nothing. Away, then, with self-wisdom, it is but folly: self-righteousness, nothing other than rags; and self-strength is pitiful weakness.

You must no more look on yourselves as the children of your natural father the devil. You have been too long at his beck, his captives, slaves, and drudges. You must now change masters, you must renounce the prince of darkness, having enlisted with the Prince of peace. They are contrary masters, and ye cannot serve both, Matth. vi. 24. Answer all temptations to sin with this, that ye have come out from among them, and therefore have nothing to do with the work or entertainment of the house of hell.

Believers, you are to look on yourselves as no more belonging to the world lying in wickedness: John xv. 19, "Because ye are not of the world; but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Have you come away to Christ in the covenant? Then you have turned your back on the world, on its courses and ways, you must no more conform yourselves thereto, but to the heavenly Jerusalem: Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You have put your hand to the plough, do not adventure to look back. You have left the society of the wicked, do not mix with them again: Psalm xxii. 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Ye are no more for your lusts and idols, but for the Lord: Rom. vi. 16, "His servants ye are, to whom ye obey." Have

you given Christ the throne? Then your lusts must be mortified: "For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. The offending right hand and eye must be parted with. These will return back to seek entertainment from you as formerly; but remember, you must be as obedient children, "not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance," 1 Pet. i. 14.—Finally, consider yourselves as no more belonging to the law, or covenant of works, as a husband: Rom. vii. 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." They who have laid hold on Christ, in the covenant of grace, are divorced from the law. So that, though you are to perform all incumbent duties, you are not to perform them under the influence of the first covenant, as seeking and procuring life and salvation by them; but to express your thankfulness to him, whose you are, as being under Christ's law of love.

2. They are to look on themselves as his universally, without exception or reserve of any thing. Whatever you are, whatever you have, whatever you can do, or suffer, all is the Lord's; for in that day in which the soul closes honestly with Christ, all is made over to him together. To be more particular.—Look, then, on your bodies as his, to be temples for his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 19. with which to serve him. Even all the members of the body, are to be consecrated to the Lord, as instruments of righteousness unto God, Rom. vi. 13. You are to use your tongues in speaking for him, your hands in acting for him, your feet in going his errands. To abuse the body by intemperance, uncleanness, and the like, is to defile the temple of God. To exhaust the body in worldly labour, so as to unfit it for bearing its part in the service of God, is sacrilege, a devouring that which is holy; for your bodily strength is the Lord's.—Look upon your souls also as his. The soul is the best part of the man, and it is given away to God when one enters into his covenant. It is purchased by Christ, as a precious thing; and ye are to have a peculiar care of it, and must not presume to lay it at stake, as many do, for the satisfying of a lust, who often forget to loose the precious pledge by repentance.—All the faculties of your souls are his.—Your hearts are the Lord's: Prov. xxii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart." The world and our lusts have long divided our hearts betwixt them. They have been as a common inn, so throng with strangers, that the Master of the house had to lodge without. But, O remember! they are now the Lord's; that he must be the object of your choice, your love, your desire, and delight; and that all

your affections must centre in him whose your heart is.—Your will is also the Lord's: Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" You must learn to say, Thy will be done. Put away your self-will. The will of his commandments must determine your practice; the will of his providence, your lot. The long quarrel betwixt the Lord and you must now be at an end, namely, whether your will or his shall be done. His will must ever govern your will, and yours stoop to his.—Your conscience is his. It ought to be subject to him in all things, and to him only. Receive nothing in religion, in point of faith or practice, but upon the authority of God, speaking in his word; otherwise, you prostitute conscience to your lusts and the opinions of men: Matth. xxiii. 9, "And call no man your father upon earth: for one is your father which is in heaven." With whatever pretences these things be supported, such as antiquity, strictness, &c., they are to be rejected, Col. ii. 20, 21, 22. Receive every thing held out in the word, however opposite it may be to your carnal reasoning, interests, &c. Your every thought should be brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5.—Again, you must consider also, your worldly comforts and enjoyments as his. If you have given yourselves to the Lord, you have laid them all down at his feet, to be disposed of at his pleasure: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." You will look on them now as the Lord's loan, which he may call back from you when he will. Look on them as what you are to improve for God. Your life, your liberty, honour, wealth, reputation, all is the Lord's, to be used for his honour, and willingly parted with at his call.—Your gifts and opportunities for serving God, are also his. The Lord has put them under your care, for the use of them, while the property remains in himself. You are but the stewards, and must use these talents for his honour; he has given you them with this charge, Luke xix. 13, "Occupy till I come." Have you a gift of knowledge? Do good by it, use all your gifts and comforts, for your salvation-work, and for the good of those with whom you are connected.—Finally, your time is his, Eph. v. 16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Do not think you may fill up your time as you please in pursuit of vanities, or in following your lusts. No, you must make conscience of spending to good purpose every inch of your time; you must be careful that you trifle it not away, doing nothing, or worse than nothing.

3. They must look on themselves as his for evermore; not merely for a time, but for all times, all cases, and all conditions: Psalm

lxxii. 23, 26, "I am," says the Psalmist, "continually with thee.—My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Remember, that your ears are bored to the Lord's door-posts, you have lifted up your hand to the Lord, and cannot go back.—You must, then, be his, without interruption: Deut. v. 29, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments *always*, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" You must not be one day for God, another for the devil, nor take your religion by fits and starts, you must not suit your religion to times and companies.—You must be his, without apostacy and defection: Psalm cxix. 12, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end." You must make no term-day with Christ, but having loved your Master, you must resolve to abide with him for ever, to live with him, and to die with him, that thus you may be with him through the endless ages of eternity. And therefore your heart must rest in him, as an object which is completely satisfying: Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee." Have you not come into the covenant, because, having traversed the whole creation, you could not find rest to your souls there, and therefore had taken Christ as a covering to the eyes, and a complete portion to the soul?—Resolve, then, that nothing shall part betwixt the Lord and you; that you will neither be boasted nor bribed away from him by the words, the smiles, the frowns, the reproaches, nor threatenings of the world: Song viii. 6, 7, "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 vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." Whatever storms blow, you are the Lord's, you must not leave him, you must not be offended at his cross, but follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, through good report and bad report.—We now proceed,

III. To give some reasons, why it is the duty of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, thus to look on themselves as his.—They are to do so,

1. Because they are his, in a manner the rest of the world are not. Our Lord has a peculiar title and interest in all who have honestly entered into covenant with him, John xvii. 9, 10, (quoted above;) and why should not this be avowed?—They are his, by a new creation: Isa. xliii. 21, "This people have I formed for my-

self; they shall shew forth my praise." There is not one soul, which has, in the way of believing, given itself to Christ, but it is made new by the power of regenerating grace. Hence every believer, who receives power to become a son of God, is said to be "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 12, 13. So that the Lord has the same right to the new creature, which he has to all by their first creation. Those who are new creatures, are absolutely his property; what in consequence they are made to be, it is all intended to be for his glory.—Again, they are his by redemption, applied to them. They are bought with a price. Jesus "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." They were captives to Satan, debtors to the law, and criminals to justice: he has given his life a ransom for them: and thus has bought them to himself. They could contribute nothing to a making up the price, he paid it all; and thus they are, on the best grounds, his wholly.—Finally, they are his by 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 minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." He has offered this covenant to them, they have accepted it; in its nature, it is a marriage-covenant, they are his spouse. They have submitted to his royal sceptre, they are his subjects. They have dedicated themselves to the Lord; they have made a gift of themselves to the Lord. They have thus lifted up their hands to the Lord, and so cannot draw back, but must in duty consider themselves as his.—They are to do so; for,

2. The honour of God requires it. Those who are servants to persons of high rank, are usually subject to bear the badge of their master; and those who are the Lord's are in the same manner bound: Rev. xiv. 1, "And I looked, and lo! a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." It is to the dishonour of our Lord, when we look on ourselves as our own, or are ashamed of acknowledging ourselves to be his: this cannot but reflect a dishonour on him; even as the avouching ourselves to be his tends to his honour before the world.—We should do so; for,

3. Our standing to the covenant requires it: Psalm cxix. 94, "I am'thine, save me, for I have sought thy precepts." If we do not repent the bargain, but intend to hold by it, we must of necessity look on ourselves as his, having given away ourselves to him. If we refuse it, we do in effect retract our consent, recall the gift we

have made of ourselves to the Lord, and after vows, make inquiry. We give up with the covenant, and deny our indenting with Jesus Christ.—We now proceed,

IV. To shew how it is their interest to look on themselves as the Lord's—It is so, *First*, in respect of sanctification. *Second*, in respect of consolation.

First, In respect of sanctification. If you have given yourselves away to the Lord, you will henceforth look on yourselves as his only, his wholly, and his for ever; and this will be of excellent use to promote your sanctification, and so be a notable mean of real prosperity to your souls.—As,

1. It will be an antidote against backsliding. The consideration of your being the Lord's will make you say, with Jephthah, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." You will have many temptations to go back to former lusts; both hell's smiles and frowns will be used for that purpose. And there is a backsliding disposition in the best: "My people," says God, Hos, xi. 7, "are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." But O it is dangerous! "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. Remember Lot's wife; look on yourselves as the Lord's. This will be a mean to keep you with him, as the servant is kept with his master, whose ear was bored, and nailed to his master's door-post. This will let you see you may not, you must not go back.

2. It will afford an answer to every temptation. It will make you say with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. As long as you are in the world, you will not want temptations; and there is not a snare in the world but has some one friend or other to it in our hearts, some corruption which is nearly allied to it. And when they meet, it will be hard to keep the friends from close embraces, unless the soul will resolutely say, "I am the Lord's, I am not at my own disposal; whatever others may do, I cannot comply, for I have given myself away to the Lord, to fight under his banner, against the devil, the world, and the flesh. I am married to Christ, and therefore I cannot entertain other lovers."

3. It will be a spur to duty, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, (quoted already.) If we be the Lord's servants, we must serve him; if we be married to Christ, we must exert ourselves to please our Husband; if planted in the house of God, we must bring forth fruit: Mal. i. 6, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master." Our relation to the Lord will make us see that more is expected and looked for at

our hands, than from those who have not entered into his covenant : Matt. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

4. It will blow the coal of your zeal for God, and make you of a public spirit, to devote all you are or have to the promoting of God's honour in the world : Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Were the impression that we are the Lord's more strong on our spirits, it would excite us effectually to take the part of God more vigorously against an ungodly generation, to stand up for his honour, his truths, and for the cause of holiness. The sense of the obligation of the covenants, by which these lands became the Lord's wearing off the spirits of the generation, (though the matter of them, being moral duty, and nationally sworn to, leaves an inviolable obligation on all succeeding generations), is one great spring of the lukewarmness, the profanity, and backslidings of all ranks of persons in church and state at this day. And if unto this be added, the weakening of the impressions of our sacramental engagements to be the Lord's, which too evidently appears to take place, we may well say, What will the generation turn to? Shall men take bonds on them to be the Lord's, and afterwards look on themselves in effect as loosened from them? To this is owing the uselessness of persons for God, their insignificancy in the world as to any service for God. Some have a tongue which can speak well enough for themselves, but they will not move it in the cause of holiness. Some have authority, credit, and wealth, something or other by which they might be useful for God in their families, in their neighbourhood, in their congregation, to suppress sin, to encourage piety, to advance Christ's kingdom, the credit of his word and ordinances; but none of these things are their business. If they had the deep impression of themselves, and all which is theirs, being the Lord's, they would see themselves obliged to employ for God whatever they are or have.

5. It will be a preparative for the hardest piece of service God may put into your hand. He puts into the hands of all, the cutting off of right-hand lusts, and plucking out of right-eye sins. If this impression wear off men's spirits, they will then stand and dispute the divine orders; they will debate with God, as if they had not already made the bargain; they will preserve these, as if in their covenant they had been expressly excepted. But, "I am the Lord's," would put an end to the dispute, and learn us to obey without quarreling, knowing we are in nothing masters of ourselves. Thus it did with Abraham, Gen. xxii.: Heb. xi. 17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that received

the promises offered up his only-begotten Son." You know not what hard piece of work for God may be put into your hand; but O think ye are the Lord's wholly, and therefore are to obey without reserve. You have put a blank into the Lord's hand, saying, with Paul, Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Whatever, then, he fills up must be welcome: and will be so, if you look on yourselves as no more your own, but as the Lord's.

6. It will reconcile you to your lot in private trials: Psalm xlvii. 4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." It may be, God takes from you the comfort you expected in your relations, he takes away your health, your substance, in a greater or less degree, your credit and reputation, in regard they are laid under reproach. But the man who can solidly say, "I am the Lord's," sits down resigned under all these, reasoning thus with himself, "My comforts, my health, my wealth, and reputation, are all the Lord's, he may do with them as he will. I have put them all in his hands, to give or withhold as he sees good. I am the Lord's, let him do with me as to him seems good."

7. It will determine you to the right side in public or private trials. When the Lord says, "Who is on my side?" while many are drawn away to side with sin and Satan, this will determine you to take part with Christ, his people, and cause. When a generation is associating together against God, it is good for a person to think with himself that he is already disposed of to the Lord, while those who are not looking on themselves as the Lord's, are ready to fall in with the multitude going the wrong way.

Lastly, It will help you to suffer for Christ. This was what bore up Paul's heart, when he was a prisoner in that ship which was ready to be swallowed up in the waves. If you be the Lord's, your substance, your liberty, your life, are all the Lord's, and at his disposal. And the consideration of God's interest in them will help you to lay them down at his feet.—We shall now consider,

Secondly, This in respect of consolation. Your looking on yourselves as the Lord's will be of notable use for your consolation. He who can, on solid ground, say, "I am the Lord's," has thus a storehouse of comfort, more than if all the world was his. He who can say this, can express a great deal more than he who can say, A kingdom, a crown, an empire, are mine. Three marks of persons who can avow thus much shall be offered.

1. He who can say, "My heart is the Lord's; he has the chief room in my affections above all persons and all things," may say, "I am the Lord's:" Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

1 Pet. ii. 7, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." Hast thou seen a glory in him, which has so darkened all created excellency, that he reigns in thy affections? Thy heart is his captive, so that he is dearer to thee than what is dearest in the world. Say then, I am his, for he has thine heart.

2. He who can say, "My life is his," so that thou makest it thy habitual endeavours to live to him, not to thyself, not to thy lusts, Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live is Christ;" is it the great design thou hast in the world, to please him, to walk before him, unto all well pleasing in heart, lip, and life? and what is displeasing to him, is displeasing and a burden to thee, whether it be in thyself or others: say, "I am his," for thy life is his.

3. He who can say, "My all is his," art thou content rather to part with the whole of what is dear to thee, than to part with him and his way? and art thou resolved honestly to lay thy all down at his feet, to be disposed of in what way he orders? Say, then, "I am his," for thy all is his, Luke xiv. 26.

Thus, you see who they are who may say, as Paul did, "God, whose I am." And he who can say this, he may, in consequence of it, speak these six comfortable words:—

1. He may say, "God is mine:" Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" for the covenant-relation is mutual: "The Father is my Father, the Son is my Saviour, the Holy Ghost is my Sanctifier." Nay, thou mayest run over all the attributes of God, and call them thine; thou mayest say, "His power is mine to defend me, his wisdom to guide me, his mercy, grace, and love, all are mine, Even as a wife, in her right to her husband, may call every thing which is his, her own.—He may say,

2. "All the promises and benefits of the covenant are mine:" 2 Pet. i. 14, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust." In that day in which the soul gives itself to Christ, Christ gives himself to that soul; and with him they have all the promises and benefits of the covenant, as of the marriage-contract; so that the soul may say, "Peace with God is mine; pardon, and every blessing, are mine." They may read Christ's Testament, and of all the precious promises in it, may say, "They are mine:" 2 Cor. i. 20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."—They may say,

3. "I shall get safe through the world to the other side:" John xvii. 12, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is

lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled." Satan and the world may get back their own, though they have been pretending to leave them: but they never can get back so much as one of those who are truly the Lord's. The bond of the covenant, savingly entered into, is a sure bond, it will keep them who cannot keep it.—They may say,

4. "I shall be cared and provided for in all cases and conditions." Surely God will care for his own, come of others what will. He will provide for those of his own house. He who feeds his birds, will not starve his babes. "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waves thereof roar, and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," Psalm xlvi.—They may say,

5. "All I meet with in the world shall turn to my good:" Rom. viii. 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Art thou his? Then every thing shall be for thy advantage in the end. The stones of affliction thrown at thee shall be as precious stones, and all the paths of God shall drop down fatness.—They may say,

Lastly, "All is mine:" 1 Cor. iii. 21—23, "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." For, having a right to Christ, they have a right to all things with and through him.

IV. I am now to make some improvement.—From what has been observed, we may may learn,

1. How foolish those are who cannot be persuaded to give themselves away to the Lord in his covenant. They neglect their great duty, they are blind to their great interest. Think on this, you who will be your own, and say, "Who is Lord over us?" You will have your own will to be your law, and will not be the Lord's. It is but a poor affair, even though thou could say, "All the world is mine," for God will say of you, "I never knew you." He will disown you at death, at judgment, and through eternity.—Learn,

2. That it is the duty of those who lay hold on the covenant, to receive also the seals of it: for thus we publicly acknowledge ourselves to be the Lord's. It is strange how those who plead their accepting of the covenant should live in the neglect of improving its seals. Among men, they who are in earnest for a bargain or contract, certainly will not refuse to ratify it. How is it, then, that

persons are for the covenant of grace, and yet will not ratify it, by receiving the seals of that covenant?—Learn,

3. That such as have given themselves honestly away to the Lord, should look on themselves as his. Impress it on your spirits, ye are not your own, but the Lord's. Have you given your consent to Christ in the covenant? Then henceforth reckon yourselves to be his.—Look on yourselves,

(1.) As his habitation: Eph. ii. 22, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Christ has called to you to open to him, promising to dwell in you. You have given consent to him, now look on yourselves as his habitation, and exert yourselves to drive out the old inhabitants. Consider yourselves as no more at liberty to harbour his enemies. Our Lord has made a purchase of two houses, and has made two journeys, to take infetment and possession of them; (1.) Having purchased heaven for his people, he went thither in his ascension, to take possession of it for them: Heb. vi. 20, "Whither the forerunner hath for us entered, even Jesus, made an High-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (2.) Having purchased the sinner for himself by his blood, he comes to the sinner's heart, to take possession of it for himself: Rev. iii. 20, "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." To the former house he has ready access, having to do with a holy and just God: but not so to the latter; often his enemies are admitted in, and he is made to stand at the door, as if the house were not his own, because here he has to do with fickle creatures: Song v. 2, "I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."—Look on yourselves,

(2.) As his temple, 1 Cor. vi. 19, (quoted above); a temple consecrated and set apart for the Lord, which, therefore, it is most dangerous to defile. Before the soul comes into the covenant, the man is Satan's work-house: Eph. ii. 2, "He is the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." His heart is a forge of evil imaginations, a den of thieves. But entering into the covenant, he is consecrated for a holy temple unto the Lord. Be careful, then, that your hearts and lives be a continual sacrifice of praise, Christ the altar, and thou the priest. Feast on the sacrifice slain for you, feed daily on Jesus Christ, and guard against pollutions of heart and life.—Look on yourselves,

(3.) As his confederates, or covenant-people: Heb. viii. 10, "I

will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Remember, the covenant ye have entered into is an offensive and defensive league. You are to have common friends and common enemies with the Lord. Whoso are the friends of God, they must be your friends also, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people." Psalm cxix. 63, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." If you desire heaven, you must associate with those who are going thither, for a companion of fools shall be destroyed.—His enemies must also be yours: Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies." See also Psalm lxxix. 9, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me."—Look on yourselves,

(4.) As his followers: Eph. v. 1, "Be ye, therefore, followers of God as dear children." Our Lord is given for a Leader, Isa. lv. 4, to lead his people through the world to heaven. Now, you are going through the wilderness, where it is hard, in many cases, to discern the right way, and where there are many to lead us wrong. The multitude goes the way to destruction, but do you keep your eye on your guide: Prov. iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Observe his precepts, his example; mark his footsteps, and follow them: 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." Follow also the footsteps of his flock, and conform not to the world, to follow them: Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."—Look on yourselves,

(5.) As his subjects, for he is your King and Lord, yea, your God and King, to whom you owe absolute resignation and obedience: Psalm xlv. 11, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." Christ has a kingdom in the world, and whoso have entered into his covenant are the subjects of that kingdom. Observe, therefore, to live according to his laws, confederate not with his enemies, but be true to your King and Lord.—Look on yourselves,

(6.) As children of his family: 1 Pet. i. 14, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." Have you come out from among those of Satan's family, and entered into the family of God? then walk as the children of God. Do not again mix with Satan's family: Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shalt keep

them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Avoid them, their company, and their ways, as you would shun a society infected with the plague: Acts ii. 40, "And with many other words did he testify, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Strive to be like your heavenly Father; study to be obedient and dutiful children to him.—Look on yourselves,

Lastly, As his servants. So says the text. Our Lord has been amongst us, seeking servants to himself. Remember he is your Master, and you must apply yourselves to his work.

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THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLII.

ACTS xxviii. 23,

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

HAVING considered and improved the first doctrine taken from these words, I now go on to

DOCT. II. That those who are the Lord's ought to make, and will make, God's service their business.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is that service of God which is the business of those who are the Lord's.

II. I am to shew, what it is to make God's service our business, or when one may be said to do so.

III. I will confirm the doctrine. And then,

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

I. To shew what is that service of God which is the business of those who are the Lord's.

This is to be considered in respect, *First*, Of the matter; *Secondly*, Of the manner of this service.

*First*, We are to consider the service of God, as to the matter of it. This is as wide and broad, as is the broad law of God; therefore serving God, and keeping his commandments, are joined together. The servant's work is to do the Master's will: Luke xii. 47, "And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with

many stripes." I shall offer you some directions anent this service, that you may see what it is in respect of the matter of it.

1. There is salvation-work, and generation-work, which God puts in your hands, as the matter of your service.—There is salvation-work : Phil. ii. 12, "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling." You must begin this work, carry it on, and work it out. Sinner, thou art in hazard of perishing, God calls thee to see thyself, that thou perish not, and accounts it service to him that thou art concerned, and layest out thyself for thy own salvation. It is most necessary work, for the sinner's case is in this respect like theirs, whom some punish, and oblige to work, by putting them into a house where the water comes in on them, where they must either work at the pump, or be drowned.—There is generation-work : Acts xiii. 36, "For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." There is something which God has put into every one of our hands, to do for him and his honour in the world ; the duty of our stations and relations, and the duty arising from some special occasions we have of honouring God. It is our business to discern all this, to exert ourselves, and get it done before our time be done : Gal. vi. 10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." If we do not, we are unprofitable servants, cumberers of the ground, and useless for God in the world.

2. There is an external and internal service to God.—External service, a service with the outward man : 1 Cor. vi. 20, "For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's." The whole man is God's, and therefore though internal service be preferable to external, yet God must have the one as well as the other. Here are to be taken in all external duties, of piety towards God, of righteousness and mercy towards our neighbour. These are a great part of our business in this world, if we be the Lord's servants. Our ears must be employed to hear his word, our eyes to read it, our tongues to speak to him in prayer and praise ; to speak of him and for him to men ; our hands and all our members to act for him in the world. There is—Internal service, we are to glorify him with our spirit, which is his : John iv. 24, "God is a spirit ; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." This is the soul of religion, and the chief part in the service of God, without which the other is but a lifeless, unacceptable carcase ; and therefore the character of a true servant is taken from it : Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ

Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Art thou the Lord's? Then it must be your business to love him, to fear him, to believe and depend upon him, to obey and resign yourselves unto him. In a word, it is to keep the heart, and employ it in his service; it is to meditate on, rejoice and delight in him; suiting your will to his in all things, and consecrating the whole of your affections to him.

3. There is stated service and continual service.—Stated services are to be performed to God, at such and such times. Thus you are to serve him in secret in your closets, in private in your families, worshipping him morning and evening, *Matth. vi. 6*; *Jer. x. 25*. If you be the Lord's, it is the least you can do, to pay thy homage to him by thyself in the morning, when he gives thee a new day; and at evening, when thou are to enter into the darkness of the night. And if yourselves be the Lord's, you will also devote your houses to him, and pay him your homage in a family capacity: *Josh. xxiv. 15*, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Look on the morning sacrifice in your family as the Lord's due, as well as the evening one. Job had as great a family, as large a stock, and as much work in hand, as any can pretend to, yet he duly observed the morning sacrifice. Thus did Job continually, *chap. i. 5*. And then there is the Lord's weekly service in his own day, in the public duties and ordinances thereof. A piece of service this which those who are the Lord's will find themselves obliged to make conscience of, and not loiter away the day unnecessarily at home: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth," *Psalms xxvi. 8*. It was the godly Shunamite's practice, though she had a good way to go, *2 King iv. 23*. It was David's also, so that Saul knew, when he was absent, there was certainly some extraordinary thing kept him away, *1 Sam. xx. 26*.—There is continual service: *Acts xxvi. 71*, "Unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." A Christian must never be out of his Master's work, he serves God in the interval of duties, as well as in duties. Hence we are ordered to pray always, and not to faint; not that we are always to be on our knees, but are always to be in a praying frame. The Lord's servants will find no time in which to be idle, as long as the broad law is continually laying work to his hands, he desires to "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," *Luke i. 6*. Whatsoever we do, we are to have an eye to God in it, and so to manage our worldly employments, as to tincture them all with religion: *Col. iii. 17*, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." This is the walking with God recommended to us by the example of Enoch, *Gen. v. 24*.

4. There is doing-service and suffering-service.—There is doing-service. The Lord calls his people to act for him. As he said to Saul, Acts ix. 6, he says to every one, “It shall be told thee what thou must do.” He requires doing and working from all who call him Lord: Luke vi. 46, “And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” They have much to do that are the Lord’s. They have their hearts and lives to purify. And do what they will, they have always more to do as long as they are here: “Brethren,” says Paul, Phil. iii. 13, 14, “I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” They have a great deal, which hath been wrong done, to undo by repentance. And in all, they have much opposition, little strength, and the Master urgeth haste; so they have business enough.—There is suffering-service: Phil. ii. 17, “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.” The Lord calls his people to serve him in bearing of their burdens, taking up their cross and following him. And we will never want business of that nature, every day will have the evil thereof: Luke ix. 23, “And Jesus said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” The Mediator himself, who was the Father’s servant, his great service was suffering service; and those who are his must not think to miss it. As he suffered satisfying justice, they must suffer for their trial, and the exercise of their graces. Thus, when we are under the cross, we are on service, and serve the Lord in a Christian bearing of our trials.

*Lastly,* There is ordinary and extraordinary service, of all the kinds before named.—There is ordinary service. There are pieces of work, which are the ordinary or every day’s task of those who are the Lord’s, as the bearing of ordinary trials, Luke ix. 23, (above quoted), and doing of the ordinary duties of religion. It is ordinary service to fight the good fight of faith, every day grappling with temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh. To be running the Christian race, making progress in sanctification, mortifying lusts, and the like.—There is extraordinary service, which God only sometimes calls his people to in holy providence. Thus he called Abraham, Gen. xxii. to offer up his son. There are few servants but they are obliged sometimes to do something beyond ordinary, which will try their strength in a peculiar manner. Thus it is with God’s servants; sometimes they meet with extraordinary temptations, or sufferings, and are called to extraordinary duties, to do

for themselves, or to do for God. And truly there is the extraordinary duty of secret fasting and prayer, without which it is hard to live right: Zech. xii. 12, "And the land shall mourn, every family apart."—We shall now,

II. Consider the service of God, as to the manner of it. And unless it be performed in the right manner, God will not account it service to him, though ever so costly. If what we do, we would have the Lord to account it as service to him, we must perform it.

1. In obedience to, and under the sense of the commandment of God: Col. iii. 17, (quoted above). What a person is prompted to, without any respect to the commandment of God, cannot be accounted as service to him, since it has no respect to his authority in the commandment: Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect unto all thy commandments." We should learn to do good; and what we do, we should do it because God commands it to be done, if we would shew ourselves his servants. We should pray, because God commands it. We should eat, because he has said, Thou shalt not kill. We should work, because he hath said, Thou shalt not steal. Now, doing what we do in this way, it will be all counted God's service. In serving God, we are,

2. To aim at his honour and glory in it: 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." We should make God, and not ourselves the chief end of all our performances, if we would have them accounted service to God; for God will never be the rewarder of that work which has not himself for the end of it: "Ye did not at all," said God unto his ancient people, "fast unto me, even unto me; and when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" Zech. vii. 5, 6. If we seek ourselves, our own profit and peace, as our chief end in what we do, God will reject our services. For a servant, if he should work ever so diligently, if it be to himself, not to his master, it cannot be acceptable service; so also in this case.—In serving God, we are to do it,

3. Out of love to him: Heb. vi. 10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." This love is to be the predominant motive of our service, and should be stronger than the fear of punishment, and hope of reward. God sees the heart, and no service but that which comes from the heart will be accepted of him: Col. iii. 23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." He cares not for the service of slaves, who do not serve him, but through fear of his wrath; nor can he away with the hireling-service of those

who serve him only that they may make their own advantage by it. The heart must be in it and at it, or it is no service in his esteem.—We are to serve God,

*Lastly*, In faith: Rom. xiv. 23, "For whatever is not of faith, is sin." Faith is an ingredient absolutely necessary in all service to God: Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And there is a three-fold faith required here. (1.) The faith of God's command, requiring the duty, Rom. xiv. 23; for if persons do not believe that God requires such a duty of them, it is not service to him. (2.) The faith of the promise of strength for the duty, by which the soul is carried out of itself to the Lord, for strength to perform it. We are commanded to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Thus God's service is called walking in the name of the Lord: Zech. x. 12, "And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." (3.) The faith of acceptance through Christ, by which the soul is carried over the work itself to Christ, to look for its acceptance only for his sake.—I am now to shew,

II. What it is to make God's service our business, or when a person may be said to be thus employed. This will describe to you the person who may with confidence avow this claim, "God, whose I am, and whom I serve." In regard to such a person, I observe,

1. That God's service is his grand design in the world; he may have many works on the wheel; but this is the chief one: Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Whatever employment or trade a person betakes himself to, though he may at times put his hand to many other things; yet the work of his calling is still his chief business. Thus he who betakes himself to the service of God, will make this his chief business. There are many things to be done; but there is one thing more needful beyond all other things, and this is the person's great object in the world. Like Mary, he attends to this, and makes choice of that good part which shall not be taken from him, Luke x. 42.—Here, however, there may be proposed this

QUESTION, How may a person know whether he makes God's service his grand design in the world or not? As to this, I answer,

(1.) What is it that thou seekest to obtain with the greatest eagerness and concern? Psalm iv. 6, 7. This is thy grand design, be what it will; for what the heart is most set upon, this the per-

son will be most concerned about. Now, is it the service of God, in its various parts as above described, that your heart is set upon? then it is well, Psalm xxvii. 4, (quoted above). That person whose heart runs like a hare in pursuit of the things of the world, but moves like a snail in the things of the world to come, is not so. He swims like a feather in eternal concerns, never diving into them; but he sinks like lead in worldly ones, for these engross the whole of his attention.

(2.) What is that the miscarrying in which lies nearest the heart? The person whose business is God's service, the miscarrying in soul matters will lie most heavy upon him; but the miscarrying of other matters will be heaviest on others. What the heart makes its chief business in a greater or less measure, will be most grievous. Thus Job, when he lost all, chap. i. was distressed; afterwards, when the Lord withdrew from him, he was infinitely more affected.

(3.) When God's service and other things come in competition which of those must yield in thy practice? Luke xiv. 26, "If any come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." A person who has got a sore leg, will dispose of his body as may best suit it; but a person who has a tree leg, will cut and carve with it, as may best suit his body. If a person has the unmortified love of the world in him, so that it is to him like a living limb, all things else must yield to it: he will dispose of his religion, as may best suit his worldly interest, and will sacrifice his spiritual concerns to his temporal; and if God's service interfere with his worldly interest, he will jostle it by. But it is just the contrary with those who make God's service their business; in their practice, every thing else must yield to it.—I observe,

2. That the person who makes God's service his business, serves him with the whole man: 1 Cor. vi. 20, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." He not only lends his hand to the work, as a person would do who passes by accidentally; but sets his heart to it, as a person whose business it is. He looks on himself as wholly the Lord's, and therefore devotes himself wholly to him, in soul and in body, to be at his call.—It is the business of his mind to know the Lord, and what belongs to his eternal peace, Song i. 7. This is the grand inquiry with which he is taken up, What is the way I must take for another world? What is the duty God calls me to? What must I do to be saved?—It is the business of his will, to conform to the will of God in all things: Psalm cxix. 112, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes, always even unto the

end." In that day in which the soul gives itself to the Lord, the person's will is surrendered a captive to the obedience of faith; and the great business afterwards is, to have it to follow the will of God, as the shadow does the body.—It is the business of his affections, which do all centre in him: *Matth. vi. 21*, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The love of God is the comprehensive duty of the whole law: and where love is fixed on God, there all the other affections will draw after him. The soul will hate evil, will sorrow for what dishonours God, will rejoice in what is pleasing to him, and cheerfully obey what he commands.—Finally, even the body itself is for the Lord and his service: *1 Cor. vi. 13*, "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." They who have truly given themselves to the Lord, will look on their bodies as for his service in life, to act for him, yea, and even in death to suffer for him, if he call for it. "So now also," says Paul, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death," *Phil. i. 20*.—I observe,

3. The person who makes God's service his business, serves him in all things; that is, whatever be his business to which he is called to, he strives to act in it as serving the Lord. This is important in that phrase: *Psalm cxvi. 18*, "I have set the Lord always before me." And we are called to it by these scriptures: *Prov. iii. 6*, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." *Col. iii. 17*, "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father, by him." A person who makes religion his business, will season all his business with it, and thus cast it into a religious mould. He will carry his religion not only to his religious duties, but diffuse a strain of it even through his natural and civil business; and thus carry it with him to the field where he works, and to the market where he trades.—Here, again, may occur another

QUESTION, How may a person serve the Lord in managing, and being employed about his worldly affairs? ANSWER, (1.) Act from a sense of the command: *1 Cor. vii. 24*, "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God." (2.) Depend on him for direction: *Prov. iii. 6*, (quoted above). (3.) Depend on him for success: *Psalm cxxvii. 1*, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. (4.) Acquiesce in his disposing of you as may best suit your spiritual interest. (5.) Deal with men as if you were under God's eye. (6.) Be moderate in your pursuits, *1 Cor. vii. 29, 30*. *Lastly*, Be suitably affected with the dispensations of providence, as they fall out to you.—I observe,

4. That the person who makes God's service his business, scruples at no piece of service which God puts in his hand, but makes conscience of universal obedience: Psalm cxii. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." God's servants are not allowed to be choosers; and a true servant of God will not choose his work, but applies himself to whatever God carves out for him, even to fulfil all his will, Acts xiii. 22. Be it doing or suffering work, his Master's will being made known, he prepares himself to do it. The servant of God will not scruple at an internal service, but apply himself to it, as well as external: Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision, that worship God in spirit, that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Many will go about bodily exercise in religion, who are mere strangers to heart-work, and be serving God in their spirits. But this will never be acceptable, for these will always be accounted our masters who have our heart-service.—Such will not stop at painful and hard service. It is the mark of a slothful servant, to comply only with the easy pieces of religion: Prov. xx. 4, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold." God commands thee to pluck out the right eye lust; if religion be thy business, serve him in it. It was painful for Abraham to put the knife to the throat of Isaac; but it was his business to serve the Lord, therefore, when called, he was ready to obey.—Such will not stop at dangerous service, for whoso will come after Christ, must take up his cross, and will be contented to follow the Lord, whithersoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4. The Lord has so ordered it, that the way to heaven has many difficult steps in it, so that the fearful cannot walk therein, Rev. xxi. 8. But those who come there have courage for dangers in the way, and will follow him through the sea of this world, in a storm as well as in a calm.—Finally, such will not stop at costly service. The Lord calls his people sometimes in a special manner to this duty: Prov. iii. 9, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase;" And forasmuch as their all is the Lord's, it will be at his service. Sometimes they are called to suffer in these things, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, Heb. x. 34. Sometimes to act for God therewith, as David did, when he bought the threshing-floor of Araunah, to build an altar unto the Lord upon it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 21, 24.—I observe,

5. That the person who makes God's service his business, is constant and persevering in the service of God: Psalm cxix. 112, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes, always even unto the end." A true servant of God is for his service at all times, in prosperity and in adversity. They who make God's service their

business, will continue with it unto the end: and this is the character of a servant: John viii. 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is to such only that the reward of grace is promised: Rev. ii. 10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." They are constant in two respects.—They are so,

(1.) In that they do not give over his work, laying it down and taking it up when they please. They do not serve him by fits and starts, but labour to go on evenly in their way, Psalm cxvi. 8, (quoted above). The religion of many is like an ague, in which the patient has his hot and cold fits. Thus they go to and fro, one day for God, another for the devil. Whatever good mood they may be in at a time, they do not abide in it. Their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. The whole of what they have from heaven is as flashes, Psalm lxxviii. 34. The spirit of holiness rests not on them; the whole of what heaven has from them, is an over-leap into the holy ground, Job xxvii. 9, 10. But though there are great changes in the frame of the saint, yet the habitual bent of his heart is still towards God. They are constant in this; for,

(2.) They never change masters again: Heb. x. 39, "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." They never apostatise totally, nor finally. Those who do so will never see heaven: Luke ix. 62, "And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Lot's wife was an emblem of apostates; God turned her into a pillar of salt, for a terror to all apostates. Those who are the Lord's will not be flattered away from him by the allurements of the world and the flesh, which is one engine by which Satan makes many cast off God as a master, as did Judas and Demas. And there are many who have been blooming professors, who have by these means been led aside, till they cast off religion altogether. Nor will the true servants of the Lord be deterred from him by the severities which they may meet with in the service of the Lord, Song viii. 7, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." We read of some who, when they heard Christ's doctrine, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? John vi. 60. Ver. 66, "From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." But where men have truly given themselves away to the Lord, and make religion their business, their religion will last to the end,

whatever methods be used to extinguish it in any manner of way. We now come to the

III. General head, namely, To confirm the doctrine. Consider, there are two things here to be distinguished, namely, slight touches at the service of God, which the devil's servants may sometimes afford, who are far from God; and the making religion and the service of God our business and ordinary employment, which none will do but those who are truly and savingly the Lord's. When Paul gave this account of himself, "Whose I am, and whom I serve," did he mean that now and then he was employed in the service of the Lord, and that it was only his by-hand work? No, surely he aims at no less than that it was the great business of his life, and that he was as truly fixed to the service of God as his chief business, as ever servant was to his master's work. Now, that God's service is the business of those who are the Lord's, is what I am to confirm. And therefore consider,

1. That the master's service is the business of a servant as a servant, so that no person can be accounted a servant of a person who does not make his service their business: Rev. xxii. 3, "And his servants shall serve him." An hireling who works one day to one, another to another, and another to himself, is not accounted a servant of his to whom he works. But the chief business of a servant is his master's business, as long as he is in his service. Now, they who are truly the Lord's are really and properly his servants: not only of right, but actually so, sealed in their foreheads, Rev. vii. 3, abiding by his service as their proper business in the world; and those who turn aside from it were never properly his servants: 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not of us."—Consider,

2. That they who are his, are his servants in a most strict sense, as being wholly and absolutely his, and in no sense their own, or at their own disposal: "Whose I am, and whom I serve." They are not hired servants, who may go away at a term; but bought servants (by redemption), born servants (by regeneration.) Such Solomon had: Eccl. ii. 7, "I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house." These are they we call servants, who are wholly in their master's power. And this relation to God, David, though a king, powerfully pleads: 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." But even these, among men, may be ransomed and made free. So the Hebrew servants

were to be free in the seventh year, Exod. xxi. 2. Or if he would not be free, then, ver. 6, he was to serve for ever, that is, to the Jubilee, Lev. xxv. 40. But there is no term of service here, no ransoming. Since they are then his servants in this sense, how can it be otherwise, but that his service must be their business.—Consider,

3. That they cannot continue his servants, and yet have another master: Matth. vi. 24, “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” They have chosen God for their master, they have renounced and given up with their old master the devil, they are kept by the power of God, that they can never again revive their old relation; and it is impossible that they can serve two contrary masters at once; but having renounced the Devil, they cleave unto the Lord. And therefore, since every one makes either the service of their lusts, or the service of God, their business; and as they do not make the former their service, the latter must of necessity be it.—Consider,

4. That if it were so, then the Lord would fall short of the grand design of their redemption, of making them his own, which cannot be. He has redeemed them by price, yea, and also by power; and the end of both is, that they may serve God as his servants: Tit. ii. 14, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Luke i. 74, “That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before him all the days of our life.” When the Lord sent Moses to bring the children of Israel from the service of the Egyptians, it was not that they might live idly, and serve no more, but that they might change their master, and their work: Exod. iv. 23, “And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me.” Thus it is also in the spiritual delivery.—Consider,

*Lastly*, That this making of God’s service our business, is a distinguishing character of a person truly the Lord’s. Of worldly men it is said, Phil. iii. 19, “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” But of the saints it is said, ver. 20, “For our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” What is a person’s business, distinguishes him from many others; and religion, being our business, distinguishes us from the unconverted crowd, who are accounted workers of iniquity though they be persons not estranged from religious exercises; because, though they do these duties, it is another thing that is their

great business in the world, Matth. vii. 21—23.—I come now,  
IV. To make some improvement; and this,

1. In a use of information. Hence we may learn,

(1.) That whoever are the Lord's, must apply themselves to the Lord's work and service: Luke vi. 46, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" You were all baptised into his name and service, and some, of late, have been dedicating themselves to him in the sacrament of the supper. Think not that you are now at liberty, or that your work is over. No; you are to begin your work, and perform your vows, and make out your service; attend to it, then, with heart and hand, for he is a master who seeks and will have the heart.—We may learn,

(2.) That the hearts of God's honest servants, are reconciled to his work and service. It is not a force put on them; but their choice, as that which they like the best. They are ready to resolve with Joshua, that they and their houses will serve the Lord, chap. xxiv. 15. It is not only their duty, that they must do it; but their privilege and interest, that they have to do it. They will value themselves more on being God's servants, than they would on being governors of a kingdom.—We may learn,

(3.) That those who make not religion their business, are none of the Lord's. They may be his by an external covenant-relation, but they are not members of his family, by a saving relation. Many take on with the Lord as a master, but they slight the bargain, and never enter home, but continue with their old master, which appears is not making God's service their business, Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37. God will pursue all such at so dreadful a rate, that it had been better for them that they had never come under engagements to be his: 2 Pet. ii. 21, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." This writes death upon many as none of his.—Such as,

(1.) Those whose great business in the world is to serve themselves. When self-love is the predominant principle, self-seeking will be the great business: 2 Tim. iii. 2, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous," &c. Phil. ii. 21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." How unlike the service of God are they, who will drive over the honour of God, the good of their neighbour, and the duty they owe to him, to serve themselves. These are narrow souls, not enlarged by God's grace, who make themselves their chief end, and lay not out themselves for the honour of God, and the good of their neighbours, as they have opportunity.

(2.) Those who are servants of men, instead of serving God: 1 Cor. vii. 23, "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men:" they subject themselves to men's lusts, subjecting their faith to other men's notions, and suiting their practice to other men's lusts. Thus they make idols of them, putting them in God's room: Matth. xxiii. 9, "Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." Thus persons are time-servers, turning with the wind, according as the times turn, who think it their wisdom not to follow truth too hard at the heels, lest it dash out their brains. And such are company-servers, who will change themselves into any complexion in which the company is.

(3.) Those who are servants of sin: Rom. vi. 20, "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." The saints indeed often sin; but they are not the servants of sin. Who-so are such are none of Christ's, but they serve the devil and their lusts. They sin against the gospel-remedy, going on in a state of unbelief and impenitency. They are not only infected with the plague of sin, but they slight the Physician with his remedies, namely, his blood and Spirit; they will not have this man to reign over them. Luke xix. 14, "Sin regins in them like a king; they readily obey it in the lusts thereof," Rom. vi. 16, and fairly yield themselves to it. They are in the snare of the devil, and are taken captive by him at his will. Do not think you can be servants to God, who are thus situated. No man can serve two masters.

*Lastly*, Those who make the Lord's service but their by-hand work, not their chief employ. These are religion's chance-customers, who will never enrich themselves with it. And such are these who never make religion their predominant concern. The chief stream of their care and anxiety runs in another channel than the grand inquiry, What shall I do to be saved? The things of time lie nearest their heart, not the matters of eternity.—Those who follow religion no farther than their other ends will allow of, who make it yield to their temporal interests, and embrace it only when those do not interfere with it, like the allowance Pharaoh made for religion, by calling idleness the spring of it, Exod. v. 17.—Those who confine their religion to their religious duties, and do not weave it into the whole of their conversation. Suppose one to be very exact in a due performance of secret and family duties; yet if he do not walk with God in the interval of duties, and carry his religion through his worldly business, God's service is not his business.—I would now improve this subject,

2. In an use of trial.

You may and should try yourselves, whether you be the Lord's or not. If you can say, "It is God whom I serve," ye may say, "It is God's whose I am." If religion be your business, you are God's servants, and he will own you to be so. A servant of God moves two steps, by which he advances beyond others.

(1.) He serves God, and so goes beyond the profane careless generation in the world, who mind nothing but the world, the profits and pleasures which are in it: Phil. iii. 19, "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things." As for the service of God, they are free of it, they are sons of Belial, and go without a yoke; they are the serpent's seed, on their belly they go, and dust is their only meat; the duties of religion they make no conscience of.

(2.) He makes God's service his business, and so goes beyond the formalist who serves God, but makes not God's service his chief work. The hypocrite has always one thing which goes above all other things with him; but that is the world, or some one lust or other, not the one thing needful, which is the chief thing the servant of God is ever in quest of.

We have heard already the marks of a person who makes religion his business. Try yourselves by these, whether God's service be your grand object in the world, and if you serve him with the whole man, &c., as described in the second head. I come now,

3. To an use of exhortation.—I exhort you to evidence yourselves to be the Lord's servants, by serving him.—And with this design I beseech you,

(1.) To enter to his service, and serve him. Serve him in your salvation and generation work, in external and internal service, in stated and continual service, in doing or suffering service, in ordinary and extraordinary service. Put your hand and heart to the several pieces of service to which he calls you. And I would recommend in this case to you,

[1.] Be attentive to your Master's orders, and labour to know his mind, as to what may be your duty; Psalm cxxiii. 2, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us." Consult his word, which contains his orders to his servants, and read the Bible as the book of your instructions. Take the providential hints of duty he gives you: for he has said, Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Be always willing to know his will, and make application to him by prayer, for the discovery of it in

particular cases, especially such as are difficult: do nothing with a doubting conscience.

[2.] Be willing servants, not refractory and wilful. Follow the example of Abraham, who obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. The Master's orders being known, do not dispute them, but readily obey them. Choose not the work you will do, whether it be suffering or doing work, whatever the burden be which he lays on you, bow your shoulders to bear it; the cross he lays down, do you be ready to take it up. For it becomes him to command, and us to obey.

[3.] Weary not of your work: James i. 4, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." However hard you apprehend your task to be, give not way to wearying of it: Gal. vi. 9, "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." We should think all light while we are out of hell. Impatience betrays us into the hands of the adversary, who is ready to offer his hellish help to those who are weary of the task God has laid on them; of which we have dreadful instances, which may make all of us tremble, and resolve through grace to bear till himself give deliverance.

[4.] When you are checked for your mismanagements, or corrected on account of them, learn this property of a good servant, not to answer again, Tit. ii. 9. Murmuring under the rebukes of providence is very unbecoming, and highly provoking in God's sight: Lam. iii. 39, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" They who enter into the family of God, must not think it strange that they have to submit to the discipline of the house.—I would exhort you,

(2.) To hold by his service, as the great business which you have to do in the world. Never give it over, but pursue it as the grand business of your life, for doing which you were sent into the world. You have many things to do: but this is the one thing above all other things; O give it the preference in your hearts and lives. Never reckon that your other business goes well, when this does not; nor ill, when this goes well. Hold on it, till death loose you, and you have accomplished, as an hireling, your days.—As to this I will recommend to you,

[1.] Serve him honestly and uprightly: Joshua xxiv. 14, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth." Let him be your only Lord and Master; and while you profess to serve God, give not a secret service to any idol; for there is no hiding the matter from your heavenly Master. You are in God's account, what you are inwardly in heart.

[2.] Serve him cheerfully with heart and good-will. He is the best of masters, and desires none to serve him for nought. To be heartless in his service, as if it were a drudgery, is very displeasing to him: Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, "Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."

[3.] Serve him fervently and zealously: Rom. xii. 11, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Our God is the living God, and he requires his servants to be lively, their hearts stirring within them in his service. The greatest love which ever appeared being shewed by our Lord, this doubtless requires such a return.

[4.] Serve him diligently and laboriously: Acts xxvi. 7, "Unto which hope, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." Why should we grudge pains for him who thought not his own life too much for us? The servants of sin and Satan are indefatigable, alas! that the servants of God should be so slothful.—To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I shall lay before you the following motives:—

Mot. 1. If you be not the servants of God, you are the servants of the devil: John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." There is never a spare servant in this case. If the sinner depart from God, whose he is, and whom he ought to serve, presently Satan picks him up as a stray, and sets him to his work; and his service is sad service.—To make this appear, you may consider,—(1.) His work is sin. Satan is the Egyptian task-master, who seduces poor mortals, who will not work out their own salvation. He puts another task in their hand, to work out their own ruin and destruction. And is not this the work about which most of the world are busy, who are twisting cords of guilt every day to bind their souls under God's wrath?—(2.) His wages is death, eternal death: "For the wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 22. Satan goes about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is the father of lies, has had a long trade of it, deceiving poor sinners, catching some with one bait, some with another; that first he may be a prevailing tempter, and then a cruel tormentor, who, because he is beyond hope himself, would wish to have all the world as miserable as himself.

Mot. 2. God is the best of Masters, and his service is the best of service. This have all the saints witnessed, and so shall all of you, upon a full trial of it.—To make this good, consider,

(1.) That it is the most honourable service. He who serves God, serves him who is the fountain of all honour: Psalm xxxvi. 9, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." Surely it is far more honourable to be a servant of the Lord, than to be a mighty king. What great work is there at times to get into the service of great men, especially of kings and princes! but O! why so little to get into the service of the King of kings?—Consider,

(2.) That it is the most rational service: Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Is he not our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our universal Benefactor, and our covenanted God? Is there any who has that right to our service which he has? Can it be our interest so much to be in the service of any other as it is to be in his service?—Consider,

(3.) That it is the most pleasant and comfortable service; Prov. iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." There is a joy in the service of God, even the hardest of it all, which, whoso tastes of, will not exchange Christ's cross for the world's crown. Hear the Psalmist's judgment of it: Psalm lxxxiv. 10, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." How did Hannah rejoice after a prayer! the eunuch after a sealing ordinance! If some find it not to be so pleasant, it is either because their nature is not renewed at all, or grace is low, and corruption strong.

(4.) Consider that it is the most advantageous service. Never was service so rewarded as God's service is. There is a reward in hand, which accompanies the work: Psalm xix. 11, "In keeping of thy commandments, there is a great reward." There is also a reward in hope,—the eternal weight of glory. They shall be courtiers of the King of heaven in glory for evermore: Rev. xxii. 3, "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads." Amen.