

A DISCOURSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.—1 COR. II. 2.

THE church of Corinth, to which the apostle directs this epistle, was a church as flourishing in gifts as any, yet as much crumbled into divisions as eminent in knowledge. A year and six months the apostle had been conversant among them, planting and watering with expectation of a plentiful harvest; but no sooner had he turned his back, but the devil steps in and sows his tares. It was a church still, but divided; it had the evangelical doctrine, but too much choked with schismatical weeds.

1. Observe, The best churches are like the moon, not without their spots. The purest times had their imperfections; a pure state is not allowed to this, but reserved for another world.

2. Church antiquity is a very unsafe rule. Other churches, at some distance from the apostles, were as subject to error as this. Pride and ambition were less like to keep out of them than out of Christ's family. Had the history of this church's practices and tenets, without this corrective epistle of the apostle, been transmitted to after ages, they would have been used as a pattern; not the church, but Scripture authority is to be followed. Fathers must not be preferred before apostles; church practices are no patterns, but as they are parallel to the grand and unerring rule.

The apostle, laying to heart the rents, draws up the whole doctrine he had before preached unto them into a short *epitome*, but first declares the manner of his first carriage among them, ver. 1. He came not to them 'with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto them the testimony of God.'

To come with man's wisdom,

1. Would detract from the strength and excellency of the word, which, as the sun, shines best with its own beams. The Spirit's eloquence is most piercing and demonstrative, and quickly convinceth a man by its own evidence. Carnal wisdom charms the ear, but this strikes the heart.

2. It detracts from the glory of God, who is more honoured by the simplicity of the gospel than luxuriances of wit. It was his honour, by the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, to nonplus the wisdom of the world; and the glory of his wisdom, as well as strength, to confound, by impotent and weak

men, the power of Satan, which so long had possessed the hearts of the Corinthians.

3. It would be an argument of hypocrisy to use any other arguments than divine. Men in this would but seek themselves, not God's glory. It would be pride to think that their fancies could be more prevalent than evangelical reason; and therefore the apostle would do nothing but endeavour to set out Christ in his own colours, as he hung upon the cross, that their souls might be captivated to the obedience of a crucified Lord.

I determined, Οὐ γὰρ ἐξέλινα. I judged it most convenient for me, most profitable for you. It was a resolution taken up deliberately. It was not for want of the knowledge of those principles which are cried up in the world for true wisdom. I understand them as well as others; but what things I counted gain before, I now count loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and think it not worth the while and pains to make much inquiry about them.

To know nothing, to believe nothing, to approve of nothing, to make known nothing.

(1.) Not your traditions, which have for themselves the plea of a venerable antiquity, and have been handed to you from your ancestors. What I chiefly determine to know is as ancient as the oldest of those mysteries you so much admire, even 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'

(2.) Not your philosophical wisdom, so much admired by you and the rest of the world. I come not to teach you a doctrine from Athens, but from Jerusalem, and not so much from Jerusalem, as from heaven. I come to declare him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(3.) Not your poets, wherein the chief mysteries of your religion are couched. I come to teach him to you which your sybils and their prophetic writings pointed at long ago.

(4.) Not your mysterious oracles, which had so long deluded the world; but I come to declare him by whose death they were silenced.

But Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Christ in the deity and glory of his person; but also as crucified, in the ignominy of his passion, and the advantages of his office.

This is the sum of the gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his lips and pen. It is observed, that he hath the word *Jesus* five hundred times in his epistles.

Others understand it thus: I will know nothing but Jesus Christ, though he were crucified; I will boast of him whom others despise.

Among you. You Corinthians, though learned, though rich, I would not know anything else among you than Christ, who is the wisdom of God and the treasures of God.

Observe,

1. All human wisdom must be denied when it comes in competition with the doctrine of Christ.

2. Christ and his death is the choicest subject for the wisest ear.

3. As all Christ, so especially his death is the object of faith.

4. As all of Christ, so more especially his death, in all the mysteries of it, ought to be the main subject of a Christian's study and knowledge.

Doct. For the last, as all of Christ, so more especially his death, in all the mysteries of it, ought to be the principal subject of a Christian's study and knowledge. This is the honour of the gospel, and therefore the preaching of the gospel is called the 'preaching of the cross,' 1 Cor. i. 18. Which should be considered by us,

I. In the first spring.

II. In the person suffering.

III. In the fruits of it.

I. In the first spring. His death was ordered by God.

Peter, as the president of the apostles, delivers it as the sense of the whole college of apostles then present : Acts ii. 23, 'He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.' It was decreed and enacted in heaven, resolved before time, though done in the fulness of time. Therefore Christ is called 'the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world,' *determinately*, in the counsel and decree of God ; *promissorially*, in the promise and word of God passed to Adam after the fall ; *typically*, in sacrifices which were settled immediately upon that promise of redemption ; *efficaciously*, in regard of the merit of it, applied by God to believers before the actual suffering. He was made sin, not by us, not only by himself, and his own will, but by God's ordination : 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He hath made him to be sin for us,' by a divine statute, *i. e.* he was ordained to be put into the state and condition of a sinner in our stead ; not into the practical and experimental state of sin, but the penal state of a sinner ; to be a sacrifice for it, not to be polluted with it. Indeed, had not God appointed it, it had not been meritorious ; for the merit was not absolute for us, but pactional and conditional. It was capable of meriting, because of the worth and dignity of the person ; but not actually meritorious for us, but upon the covenant transacted between the Father and the Son, that it should be performed by him for us, and accepted by the Father for us, and applied by the Spirit to us.

And as it was appointed by God, it was,

1. An act of his sovereignty. Suppose God might have pardoned sin, and recovered man by his own absolute prerogative, had not his word been passed that, in case of man's transgression, he should die the death. As a word created the earth, and cast it into such a beautiful frame and order, so by one word he might have restored man, and set him upon his former stock, and have for ever kept him from falling again, as he did the standing angels from ever sinning. Yet God pitcheth upon this way, and is pleased with no other contrivance but this, and in a way of sovereignty he culls out his Son to be a sacrifice ; and the Son, putting himself into the state of a surety and Redeemer, is said to have a command given him on the part of God as a sovereign : John xiv. 31, 'As the Father hath given me commandment, even so I do ;' and received by him as a subject, John x. 18. And as God owns him as his servant, Isa. xlii. 1, so he 'took upon him the form of a servant,' Philip. ii. 6, *i. e.* the badge and livery of a servant ; and the whole business he came upon, from his first breath to his last gasp, is called the will of God ; and at the upshot he pleads his own obedience, in 'finishing the work given him to do,' as the ground of his expectations, and the glory promised him, John xvii. 2.

2. An act of the choicest love. God, at the creation, beheld man, a goodly frame of his own rearing, adorned with his own image, beautified with his graces, embellished with holiness and righteousness, and furnished with a power to stand ; and afterwards beheld him ungratefully rebelling against his sovereign, invading his rights, and contemning his goodness, forfeiting his own privileges, courting his ruin, and sinking into misery. So blinded is his mind, as not to be able to find out a way for his own recovery ; so perverse is his will, that instead of craving pardon of his judge, he flies from him, and when his flight would not advantage him, he stands upon his own defence, and extenuates his crime ; thus adding one provocation to another, as if he had an ambition to harden the heart of God against him,

and render himself irrecoverably miserable. God so overlooks these, as in immense love and grace to settle a way for man's recovery, without giving any dissatisfaction to his justice, so strongly engaged for the punishment of the offence. And rather than this notorious rebel and prodigious apostate should perish according to his merit, he would transfer the punishment (which he could not remit without a violation of his truth, and an injury to his righteousness) upon a person equal to himself, most beloved by him, his delight from eternity, and infinitely dearer to him than anything in heaven or earth. Herein was the *emphasis* of divine love to us, that 'he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sin,' 1 John iv. 10. It was love that he would restore man after the fall; there was no more necessity of doing this, than of creating the world. As it added nothing to the happiness of God, so the want of it had detracted nothing from it. There was no more absolute necessity of setting up man again after his breaking, than of a new repair of the world after the destructive deluge. But that he might wind up his love to the highest pitch, he would not only restore man, but rather than let him lie in his deserved misery, would punish his own bowels to secure man from it. It was purely his grace which was the cause that his Son 'tasted death for every man,' Heb. ii. 9.

3. An act of justice. As his love to us proposed it, and Christ, out of his affection to the honour of the Father and our welfare, accepted it, and was willing to undertake for us, and interpose between us and divine wrath, to stand in our stead, and bear our sins, so it was then an act of justice to inflict; for God being the governor of the world, the great lawgiver righteously exacting obedience from his rational creature, upon the transgression of his law becomes a judge, and his rectoral justice demands the punishment due for the transgression to be inflicted upon the offender. To preserve the rights of justice, and to give a contenting answer to the cry of the bowels of mercy, to wipe off, as I may say, the tears of one, and smooth the frowns of the other, God lays our iniquity upon Christ, Isa. liii. 6. Christ takes the punishment upon himself, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and becomes responsible for our transgressions. And though he never sinned, nor stood indebted to God in his own person, yet becoming our surety, and being made under the law, putting himself in subjection to the law, and standing in our stead, he put himself also under the obligations of it to punishment. And thus the weight of the whole punishment due to man was laid upon Christ by God as a just judge. That which he could not have from the debtors he might have from the surety, who had put himself under that obligation of payment, and so was bound to undergo all those curses the law might have inflicted upon us; and pursuant to this obligation, God imputed our iniquities to him, and punished them in him.

II. Consider the person suffering.

1. In regard of his dignity. The Son of God became man; the Lord of glory emptied himself. It was the Lord of angels that took upon him the nature of a servant; the Lord of life shed his blood. It was the Son of God that stooped down infinitely below himself into our nature, to be a sacrifice for our redemption; he that was greater than heaven became meaner than a worm.

2. The willingness of his suffering. He being equal with the Father, could not be commanded to undertake this; he willingly consented, and willingly accomplished it. He was not driven, as the legal sacrifices were, to the altar. His enemies were not so desirous to make him a sufferer, as himself was 'straitened' till he was a sufferer, Luke xii. 50. The cup was

as willingly drunk by him as it was tempered by God : and his enemies did not so maliciously ' put him to shame,' as he joyfully endured it, Heb. xii. 2. The desire that the cup might pass from him was the struggles of his human nature ; not an unwillingness in his person, or a repenting of his undertaking this office. It was a natural motion, evidencing the truth of his humanity, and the greatness of what he was to suffer.

3. The greatness of his suffering. His death had all the ingredients of bitterness in it. It was a grievous punishment, because the holiness of God would not have been so manifested in a light one.

(1.) Ignominious. It was a death for slaves and malefactors : for slaves, whose condition rendered them most despicable ; and for malefactors, whose actions had rendered them most abominable. The Lord of heaven endured the punishment of a slave, and was numbered among transgressors. It is called shame, Heb. xii. 2. Each suffering was sharpened with shame ; he was buffeted, spit upon, wounded in his good name, accounted an impostor ; the most odious terms of blasphemer, Beelzebub's agent, &c., were put upon the Son of God.

(2.) Cruel and sharp ; lingering, not sudden ; from his scourging by Pilate to his death was six hours, all that while in much torture ; he suffered from heaven, earth, hell, in his body, in his soul.

(3.) Accursed. As under God's blessing all blessings are included, so under the notion of a curse all punishments are contained : Gal. iii. 13, he was ' made a curse for us.' There must be something more dreadful than a bare outward pain, or bodily punishment ; Christ wanted not courage to support that, as well as the most valiant martyr ; he bore the beginnings of it till he saw a black cloud between his Father and himself. This made him cry out, ' My God, my God,' &c. The agonies of Christ were more than the sufferings of all the martyrs, and all men in the world, since God laid upon him the sins of the whole world.

III. Consider the fruits of this death, which will render it worth our study.

1. The appeasing the wrath of God for us. God was willing to be appeased (hence the sending of Christ is everywhere in Scripture ascribed to the love and grace of God), but his justice was not actually appeased till the death of Christ. As a merciful God, he pitied us ; but as a holy God, he could not but hate our transgression ; as a God of truth, he could not but fulfil his own threatening ; as a God of justice, he must avenge himself for the offence against him. He gave Christ as a God of mercy, and required satisfaction as a God of justice. He ' set him forth as a propitiation, that he might be just,' Rom. iii. 25, 26. His mercy rendered him placable, but his righteousness hindered the actual placation. He had a kindness for man, but could not have a kindness for his sin ; he had bowels for his creature to free him, but no bowels for his transgression to let that go unpunished. That justice whereby he can no more absolve the guilty than condemn the innocent, was an obstacle to the full issues of his mercy. But when an offering for sin was made by an infinite person, and our near kinsman, who had a right of redemption, there was no plea in justice against it, since the sacrifice was complete ; no plea in divine veracity, since the penalty was suffered ; no plea in divine holiness, since that was infinitely manifested ; no bar to mercy to come smiling upon the world. The wrath of God was appeased upon the death of the Redeemer, and this reconciliation is actually applied upon the acceptance of the believer. If God had not been placable, he had never accepted a substitute ; and if he had not been appeased, he had never raised this substitute after his passion, nor ever held out his hand of grace to invite us to be reconciled to him. There is nothing now remains to be done but

our consenting to those terms upon which he offers us the actual enjoyment of it. This crucified Redeemer only was able to effect this work. He was an infinite person, consisting of a divine and human nature; the union of the one gave value to the suffering of the other. The word of God was passed in his threatening; his justice would demand its right of his veracity; a sacrifice there must be to repair the honour of God by bearing the penalty of the law, which could not be done by the strength and holiness of any creature. All the created force in the earth, and the strongest force of the angelical nature, were too feeble for so great a task. Justice must have satisfaction; the sinner could not give it without suffering eternal punishment. He then puts himself into our place to free us from the arrest of justice, and bear those strokes which, by virtue of the law, wrath had prepared for us. The dignity of his person puts a value upon his punishment, and renders it acceptable for us, it being a death superior in virtue to the death of worlds; it was a death which justice required, and at the sight of it justice was so calmed, that the sharp revenging sword drops out of its hand. God hath smelt in it so sweet a savour that hath fully pleased him. He can now pardon the sins of believers with the glory of his righteousness, as well as of his grace. He can legally justify a repenting sinner. God hath been served in the passion of the Redeemer, his justice and holiness were glorified and the law accomplished, the honour of God is saved, and the author of the law righted, the justice of God sweetened. By this propitiation for sin, God is rendered propitious to guilty man, and stretcheth out his arms of love, instead of brandishing his sword of vengeance. The ancient believers lived in the expectation of this, but they beheld not the consummation of it: they thirsted for it, but were not satisfied with it till the fulness of time. It solely depended upon the passion of Christ; it is by the cross that God is reconciled and all enmity slain, Eph. ii. 14. He was then wounded for our iniquities, and being cast into the furnace of divine wrath, quenched the flames; as Jonah, the type, being cast into the raging sea, quelled the storm. He bore our sins by bearing the wrath due to them, and satisfied justice by suffering its strokes. It could not stand with that justice to punish him, if he were not placed in our stead to be the mark and butt of that justice for us and our sins. Doth not then a crucified Christ deserve to be known and studied by every one of us, who hath done that upon the cross which the holy law, sacrifices divinely instituted, the blessed angels, the purity and strength of universal nature, had never been able to effect? He hath expiated our sins, and by his blood hath secured us from the sword of divine vengeance, if we refuse not the atonement he hath made.

2. Silencing the law. Christ crucified, by satisfying the justice of God, brake the thunders of the law, and dissolved the frame of all its anathemas: 'Being made a curse for us, he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,' Gal. iii. 13, *i. e.* from the sentence of the lawgiver, denounced in his law against the transgressors of it; so that 'now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,' Rom. viii. 1, because they are 'dead to the law by the body of Christ,' Rom. vii. 4. By the body of Christ as slain and raised again: for this 'handwriting of ordinances, which was contrary to us, is taken out of the way by God, being nailed to his cross,' Col. ii. 14. He hath abolished the obligation of the moral law, as to any condemning power, it being the custom to cancel bonds anciently by piercing the writing with a nail. The ceremonial law was abolished in every regard, since the substance of it was come, and that which it tended to was accomplished; and so one* understands ver. 15, 'Having spoiled principalities and

* Pearson on the Creed, p. 424.

powers, he made a show of them openly,' of the ceremonies of the law, called principalities and powers in regard of the divine authority whereby they were instituted. These he spoiled; the word ἀπεκδυσάμενος signifies *unclathing*, or unstripping; he unveiled them, and shewed them to be misty figures that were accomplished in his own person. The flower falls when the fruit comes to appear; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, grace to obey the precepts, and truth to take away the types. But it is also meant of the condemning power of the moral law, which was nulled by the death of Christ, who, upon his cross sealing another covenant, repealed the former. The settling a new covenant implies the dissolution of the old. That was nailed to his cross which was contrary to us, a law that was a charge against us, and by virtue whereof we were sued; and this was the law as sentencing us to death, which was pierced and torn by those nails, that did discover that debt and denounce the sentence, which cannot be meant so properly of the ceremonial as the moral law. The ceremonial law of sacrifices was the gospel in shadows, and appointed for the relief of men, and as a ground whereon to exercise their faith till the appearance of the substance, and therefore cannot be said to be contrary to us, but an amicable discovery, that we are to have that relief in another which we wanted in ourselves; and that we were to be freed from the sentence of death by some grand sacrifice represented by those sacrifices of animals. Besides, the apostle writes this as a cordial, issuing out of the blood of Christ to the Gentile Colossians, who never were under the obligations of the ceremonial law, that being appropriated to the Jews. The apostle brings it to back his assertion, that their trespasses were forgiven. This argument had been of no use to the Gentiles, who sinned not against the ceremonial law, but the moral law; and if one only had been cancelled, and not the other, the Jews themselves, whose offences were most against the moral law, had had little or no comfort in having the fewest of their sins forgiven. Our Saviour died by the power and force of the moral law: that brought him to the cross for the fulfilling it in its penalty, as well as he had done in his life by his obedience; and he receiving the full execution of its sentence upon himself on the cross, as a substitute in our place, nulled that sentence as to any force upon those that believe in him. The plea against it is, that it hath already been executed, though not upon our persons, yet upon our surety; so that, being nailed to his cross, the virtue of his cross must cease before the killing power of the law can revive. This crucified Christ, who disarmed the law of its thunders, defaced the obligation of it as a covenant, and, as it were, ground the stones upon which it was writ to powder, is worth our exact knowledge and studious inquiry.

3. Upon this must follow the removal of guilt. If God, the judge of the world, be appeased and satisfied; and the law, upon which our accusation is grounded, and which is the testimony of our debt, be cancelled, the removal of our guilt must necessarily follow. And this forgiveness of sin is the chief and principal part of our redemption, and ascribed to his blood as the procuring cause; Eph. i. 7, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.' He bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, there necessarily follows a discharge of every believer from them. The payment made by the surety is a discharge of the principal debtor from the pursuit of the creditor. As he took away the curse from us by being made a curse, so he took away sin from us by being made sin for us. The taking away the sins of the world was the great end of his coming. There had been no need of his assuming our nature, and exposing himself to such miseries for our relief, had we been only in a *simple* misery, for then we might

have been rescued by his strength ; but being in a *sinful* misery, we could not be relieved but by his sacrifice to remove our guilt, as well as by his strength to draw us out of our guilt. Our sin was a bar upon the treasures of divine blessings ; this must be removed before those could be opened for us, and could not righteously be removed by bare power, but by a full payment and satisfaction of the debt. It is a violent oppression to free a creditor from the hands of a debtor by force ; it is righteous only when it is by legal payment. Well, then, Christ was 'made sin for us,' 2 Cor. v. 21, and that in his death upon the cross ; to what end ? that sin might remain in its guilt upon us ? No ; for him to be made sin, and that by God, without respect to the taking away of sin, had been inconsistent with the wisdom and righteousness of God. The justice of God would not permit him to take our debt of another, and yet to charge it upon ourselves. He was therefore 'made sin for us,' that we might 'become the righteousness of God in (or by) him.' He was made sin, that we might be counted without sin, by the imputation of the righteousness of the mediator to us, as if it were our own ; that as he represented our persons, and bore our penalty, we might likewise receive the advantages of his righteousness for the acquittal of our debts, the sin of our nature, and the sin of our persons, the removal of the guilt contracted by Adam, and imputed to us, and the guilt contracted by ourselves ; for it is 'of many offences unto justification,' Rom. v. 16. He was the true person, figured by the scape-goat, that took away our sins and carried them into a land of forgetfulness, where none dwells to take notice of them, and censure us to death for the crimes. Is not, then, this crucified Christ worth the knowing, who took such heavy burdens upon his own shoulders, that they might not oppress ours, and suffered as a victim in the place of our guilty persons, to 'obtain an eternal redemption for us' ? Heb. ix. 14. He that gives so great a ransom for us as that of his life and precious blood, rather than we should remain in our chains, deserves the choicest place in our understanding as well as affections. Were it a bare deliverance, it would challenge this ; but he is said not only to deliver us, which speaks power, but to redeem us, which speaks price, and a buying what was passed into the possession of another ; a payment of that which we were never able to pay.

4. Another fruit is the conquest of Satan. The empire the devil exercised over man did not arise from any dignity in his person, or any right he had to him in himself, but it was first founded on sin, and granted to him by the justice of God, and was not the power of a prince, but of an executioner. Had not sin first opened the door, his venom could not have infected us, nor his power have hurt us. He could never have been our accuser without some matter of charge from us ; nor ever have been our executioner, had we not fallen under the hands of divine justice. His power is erected upon our crimes, whereby he becomes the minister of divine vengeance. But a crucified Christ hath bruised the head of this old serpent, and wounded the prince of this world ; he hath displaced him from his power, snatched from him the ground of his indictments, by cancelling the law upon which his accusations are founded ; and despoiled him of his office by satisfying divine justice, which conferred an authority upon him of executing divine vengeance : Rev. xii. 10, 'The accuser of the brethren is cast out,' and 'destroyed him that had the power of death,' and that through his own death, Heb. ii. 14, 15. That the devil had not a total power over Adam after the fall, proceeded from the intervention of this surety, and the absolute credit of his future victory over him ; yet that promise, that the serpent's head should be bruised, did not, through the weakness of their faith, and the

long delay of performance, preserve them from the fear of death; notwithstanding, that they were all their lifetime subject to bondage; for since the devil's empire was reared upon the ruins of men by sin, he could continually object to them that their sins were not expiated, that death remained as a punishment of sin; but the cross of Christ hath disarmed him of this weapon; his grand plea whereby he kept men in servile fear is completely answered. In bruising our Saviour's heel by the death on the cross, he felt a fatal blow on his head; his conqueror got above him out of his reach, without any hope left in him to touch his heel again. The devil's right was legally taken from him by Christ's death on the cross; the foundation of his authority, viz., sin, was taken away. He was 'destroyed,' that is the apostle's expression, not in his person, but in his authority; he was irrecoverably expelled from his dominion, which he had by his false oracles usurped over the world, John xii. 31; and it is by this crucified Christ that we are more than conquerors over him. And should we not know this crucified Christ, who hath weakened the venom of the serpent, broke the force of the tempter, vanquished him on the cross by the merit of his blood, and conquers him in us by the efficacy of his Spirit?

5. Sanctification is another fruit of the cross of Christ. To be delivered from the guilt of sin, that bound us over to punishment, had been a great favour; but it would not have been a perfect favour without being delivered from the venom of sin that had infected our nature. Though God willed man good by a love of good will, yet he could not delight in him with a love of complacency. If the contagion and filth of sin had deformed and sullied our souls as much as before, if our guilt were only removed, we had been freed from punishment, but without restoring the divine image we had not been fit for any converse with God. It was necessary that our souls should be washed, and our faculties put into a state to serve, in some measure, the glory of God and the end of our creation. God would have seemed to deny his own holiness, if he had regarded only the reverence of his justice, by appointing a sacrifice for atonement, and not consulted the honour of the other by renewing his image in the nature of man. But this is purchased by the death of Christ: 'He came by water and blood,' 1 John v. 6; by blood to expiate our sins, and by water to purify our souls, answerable to the Jewish state wherein it was typified, where there were sacrifices for guilt, and washings for filth. These two things come to us by the death of Christ, the remitting our crime, and the removing of our spot. He gave himself that he might save us, Eph. ii. 25, Titus ii. 14; when he came to purchase the blessings we had forfeited, he would not omit this, which was one of the chief. By him the conscience is purged from dead works, from sin which brought death, and being worse than a pollution by a dead body, hindered us from access to God, as that did from an entrance into the temple. He hath broke our chains, as well as blotted out our crime; healed our natures, as well as procured our pardon; purchased our regeneration, as well as remission. It is by his cross that 'the old man,' which had incorporated himself with our souls, 'is crucified,' Rom. vi. 6. By this he gained the power of sending a saving Spirit, which had not entered into our souls had not Christ's blood flowed out of his veins. The effusion of this blood was the cause of the effusion of the Spirit; it was shed upon us through Christ alone. He hath by suffering for sin on the cross rendered it a detestable thing, and shewed how dreadful that is, that could not receive its fatal wound without a wound first in the heart of the Son of God. This is the most powerful motive to quicken us to a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness, and his life the most illustrious pattern. But all this had been of

little efficacy to us, had not the water of the Spirit flowed out from the rock when it was struck, to cleanse the filthiness of our souls. This is given upon the account of his death to believers, to purify their hearts from the mud of the world, and to form them to a new life for the honour of God; and it is not denied to those that will ask, and seek, and knock, Luke xi. 13. Had Christ only purchased remission without sanctification, it had not been for the honour of God's holiness, nor would our condition have been elevated, heaven had been no place for defilements or slaves. It was necessary the filth of sin should be removed, the dominion of sin be abolished, that we might as holy persons approach to God, and as free men converse with God. Is not a crucified Christ, then, worth the knowing, that hath not only destroyed Satan our enemy without us, but can destroy sin our enemy within us? As he hath snatched us from punishment by expiating our sins, so he can bring us to communion with God by razing evil habits out of our hearts; without this latter, we are not capable of enjoying a complete benefit by the former.

6. Opening heaven for us. What is this life but a wallowing in a sink, a converse in the dregs of creation, in an earth polluted by the sin of man, wherein we every day behold fresh affronts of God, and find motions in us dishonourable to ourselves? But Christ by his death hath provided a better place than this, yea, a place more glorious than Adam's paradise, which was designed for our habitation by the first creation; a place not only built by the word of God, but cemented and prepared by the blood of Christ. By the law against sin we were to have our bodies reduced to dust, and our souls lie under the sentence of the wrath of God. But our crucified Saviour hath purchased the redemption of our body, to be evidenced by a resurrection, Rom. viii. 23, and a standing security of our souls in a place of bliss, to which believers shall have a real ascent, and in which they shall have a local residence, which is called the purchased possession. As Adam brought in the empire of death, so Christ hath brought in the empire of life: Rom. v. 17, 'Shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.' He hath not purchased for us a paradisaical life, or restored us to the mutable state wherein Adam was created; he hath not linked us for ever to the earth, and the use of the creatures for our support; he hath purchased for us an eternal life, and prepared for us eternal mansions, not only to have the company of men, or the society of the blessed angels, but to be blessed with the vision of God, to reside in the same place where his glorified person is adored by the happy spirits, to 'live with him,' Rom. vi. 8, a life wherein our understandings shall be freed from mists, and our wills from spots, and our affections from disorder. We lost a paradise by sin, and have gained a heaven by the cross. And should not this crucified Christ be studied, who hath settled the regions above for our reception, and procured an entrance into that place which justice, by reason of our sin, had else made for ever inaccessible to us?

I might mention more, as the establishment of the covenant, access to God, perseverance, and the conquest of the world.

Use 1. Let us be thankful to God for a crucified Redeemer.

There is nothing in heaven or earth such an amazing wonder as this, nothing can vie with it for excellence. All love and thankfulness is due to God, who hath given us his Son, not only to live, but to die for us a death so shameful, a death so accursed, a death so sharp, that we might be repossessed of the happiness we had lost. All love and thankfulness is due to Christ, who did not only pay a small sum for us as our surety, but bowed his soul to death to raise us to life, was numbered among transgressors, that we might have a room among the blessed. Our crimes merited our suffer.

ings, but his own bowels made him a sufferer for us ; for us he sweat those drops of blood, for us he trod the wine-press alone, for us he assuaged the rigour of divine justice, for us, who were not only miserable but offending creatures, and overwhelmed with more sins to be hated than with misery to be pitied. He was crucified for us (by his love) who deserved to die by his power, and laid the highest obligation upon us who had laid the highest dis-oblige-ments upon him. This death is the ground of all our good, whatever we have is a fruit that grew upon the cross. Had he not suffered, we had been rejected for ever from the throne of God, salvation had never appeared but by those groans and agonies. By this alone was God pleased, and our souls for ever pleased ; without it he had been for ever displeased with us, we had been odious and abominable in his sight, and could never have seen his face. Nothing is such an evidence of his love as his cross ; the miracles he wrought, and the cures he performed in the time of his life, were nothing to the kindness of his death, wherein he was willing to be accounted worse than a murderer in his punishment, that he might thereby effect our deliverance. If he had given us the riches of this world and a greater, had he given us the honour of angels, and made us barons of heaven, without exposing himself to the cross to accomplish it, it had been a testimony of his affection, but destitute of so endearing an emphasis. The manner of procuring is more than a bare kindness in bestowing it ; he testified his resolution not only to give us glory, but to give it us whatsoever it should cost him, and would stick at nothing rather than we should want it. The angels in heaven, in their glistering lustre, are the monuments of his liberality, but not of so supreme an affection as is engraven on the body of his cross.

2. Let us delight in the knowledge of Christ crucified, and be often in the thoughts and study of him. Study Christ, not only as living, but dying ; not as breathing in our air, but suffering in our stead ; know him as a victim, which is the way to know him as a conqueror. Christ as crucified is the great object of faith. All the passages of his life, from his nativity to his death, are passed over in the creed without reciting, because, though they are things to be believed, yet the belief of them is not sufficient without the belief of the cross : in that alone was our redemption wrought. Had he only lived, he had not been a Saviour. If our faith stop in his life, and do not fasten upon his blood, it will not be a justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for his doctrine, his holiness, which fitted himself for his suffering, had been insufficient for us without the addition of the cross ; without this, we had been under the demerit of our crimes, the venom of our natures, the slavery of our sins, and the tyranny of the devil ; without this, we should for ever have had God for our enemy, and Satan for our executioner ; without this, we had lain groaning under the punishment of our transgressions, and despaired of any smile from heaven. It was this death which as a sacrifice appeased God, and as a price redeemed us ; nothing is so strong to encourage us, nothing so powerful to purify us ; how can we be without thinking of it ! The world we live in had fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross, had not Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things consist ; not a blessing we enjoy but may put us in mind of it ; they were all forfeited by our sins, but merited by his precious blood. If we study it well, we shall be sensible how God hated sin and loved a world ; how much he would part with to restore a fallen creature. He shewed an irresistible love to us, not to be overcome by a love to his own bowels.

(1.) This will keep up life in our repentance. We cannot look upon Christ crucified for us, for our guilt, and consider that we had deserved all that he

suffered, and that he suffered not by our entreaty, nor by any obligation from us, but merely from his own love, but the meditation of this must needs melt us into sorrow. Should we not bleed as often as we seriously thought of Christ's bleeding for us? You cannot see a malefactor led to execution for a notorious crime, but you have some detesting thoughts of the fact, as well as some motions of pity to the person. A strong meditation on Christ will excite compassions for his sufferings, but a detestation of our sins and selves as the cause of it. It is a 'look upon Christ pierced' that pierceth the soul, Zech. xii. 10. Would not this blood acquaint us that the malignity of sin was so great, that it could not be blotted out by the blood of the whole creation! Would it not astonish us that none had strength enough to match it, but one equal with God! Would not such an astonishment break out into penitent reflections! Would not the thoughts of this make us emulate the veil of the temple, and be ashamed that it should outstrip us in rending, while our hearts remain unbroken! Should we not be confounded, that a lifeless earth should shake in the time of his sufferings, while our reasonable souls stand immoveable! Could any of the Israelites, that understood the nature and intent of sacrifices, be without some penitent motions, while they saw the innocent victim slain for their sin, not for any fault of its own; and should we be unmelted, if we considered the cross, the punishment of our crimes, not any of his!

(2.) It would spirit our faith, when we shall see his blood confirming an everlasting covenant, wherein God promises to be gracious. All the promises centred in the cross, received their life from his death, and are from thence reflected on us. Where can faith find a vigour but in the royalties of mercy, displayed in the satisfaction of justice? Where can it find a life but in the views of its proper object? When we behold a Christ crucified, how can we distrust God, that hath in that, as a plain tablet, writ this language, that he will spare nothing for us, since he hath not spared the best he had. What greater assurance can he give? Where is there anything in heaven or earth that can be a greater pledge of his affection?

(3.) This will animate us in our approaches to God. Not only a bare coming, but a boldness and confidence in coming to God, was purchased by a crucified Christ, Heb. x. 19. God was before averse from man, and man unwilling to approach to God. Now God invites, and man may come; man calls and God answers. What can be more encouraging than to consider, that 'by his blood he hath made us kings and priests to God,' Rev. v. 9, 10, to offer up sacrifices with a royal spirit, since the curse which should have fallen upon our heads has been borne by him. We should think of it every time we go to God in prayer; it was by this death the throne of God was opened. This will chase away that fear that disarms us of our vigour. It will compose our souls to offer up delightful petitions. It is in this only we see the face of God appeased toward us.

(4.) This will be a means to further us in a progress in holiness. An affection to sin, which cost the Redeemer of the world so dear, would be inconsistent with a sound knowledge and serious study of a crucified Saviour. We should see no charms in sin, which may not be overcome by that ravishing love which bubbles up in every drop of the Redeemer's blood. Can we, with lively thoughts of this, sin against so much tenderness, compassion, grace, and the other perfections of God, which sound so loud in our ears from the cross of Jesus? Shall we consider him hanging there to deliver us from hell, and yet retain any spirit to walk in the way which leads thereto? Shall we consider him upon the cross, unlocking the gates of heaven, and yet turn our backs upon that place he was so desirous to purchase for us, and

give us the possession of? Shall we see him groaning in our place and stead, and dare to tell him by our unworthy carriage that we regard him not, and that he might have spared his pains? It must be a miserable soul, worse than brutish, that can walk on in ways of enmity, with a sense of a crucified Christ in his mind. Could we then affect that sin which appears so horrible in the doctrine of the cross? Can we take any pleasure in that which procured so much pain to our best friend? Can we love that which hath brought a curse, better than him who bore the curse for us? For want of this study of Christ crucified, we walk on in sin, as if he suffered to purchase a license for it, rather than the destruction of it. The due consideration of this death would incline our wills to new desires and resolutions. It would stife that luxury, ambition, worldliness, which harass our souls. We should not dare to rush into any iniquity through the wounds of Christ; we should not, under a sense of his dying groans, cherish that for which he suffered; we should not do the works of darkness under the effusions of his blood, if we did in a serious posture set ourselves at the feet of his cross.

(5.) This will be the foundation of all comfort. What comfort can be wanting, when we look upon Christ crucified as our surety, and look upon ourselves as crucified in him; when we can consider our sins as punished in him, and ourselves accepted by virtue of his cross? It was not an angel which was crucified for us, but the Son of God; one of an equal dignity with the Father; one that shed blood enough to blot out the demerit of our crimes, were they more than could be numbered by all the angels of heaven, if all were made known to them. He was not crucified for a few, but for all sorts of offences. When we shall see judgments in the world, what comfort can we take without a knowledge and sense of a crucified Christ! What a horror it is for a condemned man to see the preparation of gibbets, halters, and executioners! But when he shall see a propitiation made for him, the anger of the prince atoned, the law some other way satisfied, and his condemnation changed into remission; all his former terrors vanish, and a sweet and pleasing calm possesseth him. With this knowledge and sense we should not be much terrified at the approaches of death in our last gasps, when we consider itself gasping under the weight of the cross. The blood of Christ is as a balsam dropped upon the points of the arrows of death. That, by removing the guilt of sin, pulled out the sting of death. When we tremble under a sense of our sins, the terrors of the judge and the curses of the law, let us look upon a crucified Christ, the remedy of all our miseries. His cross hath procured a crown, his passion hath expiated our transgression. His death hath disarmed the law, his blood hath washed a believer's soul. This death is the destruction of our enemies, the spring of our happiness, the eternal testimony of divine love. We have good reason, as well as the apostle, to determine with ourselves, 'to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and especially him crucified.'