

A DISCOURSE PROVING WEAK GRACE VICTORIOUS.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.—MAT. XII. 20.

WE need not take our rise higher than verse 17, where the quotation out of Isa. xlii. begins, where you find God like a herald proclaiming his Son to the world under the name of his servant : Mat xii. 18, ‘Behold my servant, whom I have chosen ; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased : I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.’ It contains, (1.) His election of him : God chose, called him to his mediatory office ; (2.) The agreeableness of the person to God : he did wholly acquiesce in him, and deposit in his hand the concerns of his glory ; (3.) The ability and assistance God gave him, ‘I will put my Spirit upon him ;’ (4.) The work he should do, ‘he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.’ Verse 19, his coming is set down ; not with pomp or noise, ‘he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.’ The meekness and tenderness of his carriage, ‘he shall not cry.’ *Palam noluit fieri hominum vitia*, as Grotius ; he shall not be contentious with the people, of which a sign is, an immoderate raising of the voice, and clamour against them.

Take notice hereof,

1. The Object.

(1.) A bruised reed. Jerome takes it for a musical instrument made of a reed, which shepherds used to have, which, when bruised, sounds ill, and is flung away by the musician, as disdaining to spend his breath upon such a vile instrument that emits no pleasant sound. But Christ will not cast off poor souls that cannot make so good music in God’s ears as others, and answer not the breathings of the Spirit with that life and vigour, but he will take pains with them to mend them. Bruised reeds, such as are convinced of their own weakness, vanity, and emptiness.

2. The smoking flax of the wick of a candle, wherein there is not only no profit, but some trouble and noisomeness. Though the soul is noisome by reason of the stench of its corruptions, yet he will not blow out that expiring fire, but blow it up and cherish it ; he will not rigidly oppress and throw off those that are weak in grace, and faith, and hope, but he will heal them,

nourish them, inflame them. Maldonate interprets it, that though he walk in the way where bruised reeds lie, he will step over them, and not break them more; he will not tread upon a little smoking flax that lies languishing upon the ground, and so put it out with his foot, though it hurts the eyes with its smoke, and offends the nostrils with its stench. Smoking souls that have some weak desires and fumings towards heaven, some small evaportations of their spirits towards God, he shall not quench them. The Chaldee paraphrase, Those meek or gracious ones which are like a bruised reed, shall not be broken by him.

2. The act. He shall not break; not quench, *litotis* or *meiosis*; he shall mightily cherish, support the reed, inflame the flax.

3. The continuance of it, 'till he send forth judgment unto victory.' In Isaiah it is, 'till he bring forth judgment unto truth;' *vere judicabit*, so Menochius, so the Septuagint hath it; but Matthew alters it, and instead of truth puts victory.

Judgment is taken several ways. For,

1. Wisdom : Isa. xxx. 18, 'The Lord will wait that he may be gracious, for the Lord is a God of judgment;' *i.e.* of wisdom to give in the most convenient season.

2. Righteousness : Isa. lix. 9, 'Judgment is far from us, neither doth justice overtake us;' *i.e.* there is no holiness in us.

3. Overthrow of a Christian's enemy : John xii. 31, 'Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out,' now shall the devil be conquered ; Isa. xlvi. 3, 'He shall bring forth judgment unto truth;' *i.e.* he shall govern in righteousness. Now Christ's government being chiefly in the souls of men, he shall assist and encourage that which is the better; as governors ought to be encouragers of the good, and discouragers of the bad. Matthew explains this, and shews the consequence of this government; if it be in truth, it will make the better part victorious. Some by judgment understand the gospel, the new evangelical law: ver. 4, 'The isles shall wait for his law;' so Christ will not rest till he makes the gospel glorious, and advances it in the world above the lusts and idolatries of men, which then overflowed the world. Some by judgment understand grace, which is the draught and copy of the gospel drawn in the soul; and both those senses the words will bear. The words in Isaiah seem to bear the first sense, 'the isles shall wait for his law;' the other seems most consonant to Matthew, 'and in his name shall the Gentiles trust'; *i.e.* he will make their faith victorious. The effect of this judgment, or evangelical law, should be the victoriousness of grace and faith. Implanting grace in the heart is the main design of the gospel; and grace is nothing else but a moulding the soul into the form of that law and doctrine of Christ. As Christ will make the gospel glorious above all the carnal reasonings of men, so he will make grace, which is the end of the gospel, victorious above all the corruptions of men. In this latter sense we shall now handle it; Christ shall make those beginnings of grace and infused habits to obtain a perfect conquest. By his governing of it, he shall make the conquest over corruption perfect; or if *κρίσις* be taken as the physicians use it, for the *κρίσις* of a disease, he shall make the *κρίσις* end in victory, and nature the conqueror over the disease.

Doct. True though weak grace shall be preserved, and in the end prove victorious.

Seeds of grace, though mixed with a mass of corruption, cannot be overcome by it, as gold cannot be altered in its nature by the dross, or transformed into the nature of the rubbish in which it lies. Grace is surely weakest at the first infusion, when it is newly landed in the heart from

heaven ; when the devil and wickedness of man's nature have taken the alarm, and drawn together all the armies of hell to hinder its progress ; yet though it be thus, in so weak a condition, indisposed to make a stout resistance, having got but little footing in the heart, and a man's own inclinations not well reconciled to it, nor his evil apprehensions and notions fully exterminated, and the predominant corruptions that held the empire before, having received but their first wound, and being much unmortified, and grace also as yet but in a strange soil, not naturalised at all, yet is grace then so strong, that all the legions of hell cannot totally worst it. Though it be like a grain of mustard-seed newly sown, yet it springs up into a mighty tree ; for as the weakness of God is stronger than men, so is the weakness of grace stronger than sin in the event and issue. The meanest grace is above the highest intellectual parts, as the smile of a sunbeam is more powerful to chase away the grim and sour darkness of the night, than the sparkling of a diamond. According to the degrees of its growth, its effects are wonderful ; as a small spark, by a breath of wind growing into a flame, may fire and consume a spacious and stately building. The weakest grace by degrees shall have strength, Zech. xii. 8, which is meant of the Jews' strength at their conversion ; ' He that is feeble shall be as David,' who was a mighty man of valour, and when a stripling laid Goliath in the dust, but in the strength of Christ ; for the ' house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before him,' *i. e.* Christ that descended from David. In the text, you see God assures us that Christ shall perform this ; therefore let us see what engagements are on God's part, and what also on Christ's part, to effect this business, which will be sufficient demonstration of this truth.

In general. Grace hath great allies ; the greatest power that ever yet acted upon the stage of the world had a hand in the birth of it. Should we see all the states of the world engaged in bringing a person to a kingdom, and maintaining him there in his right, we could not rationally think that there were any likelihood they should be baffled in it.

The Trinity sat in consultation about grace ; for if there were such a solemn convention held about the first creating of man, Gen. i. 26, much more about the new and better creating of him, and raising him somewhat above the state of a man. The Father decrees it, Christ purchaseth it, the Spirit infuseth it ; the Father appoints the garrison, what grace shall be in every soul, Christ raiseth this force, and the Spirit conducts it. The Trinity have an hand in maintaining it ; the Father purgeth out corruption, the Son washes, and the Holy Ghost sanctifies ; all this is but the carrying on the new creature : Titus iii. 4-6, ' But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, not by works of righteousness, &c., but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour' ; ' God our Saviour,' *i. e.* God the Father. The Father is the author of salvation from sin, Christ the purchaser, the Spirit the conveyer. There is a special relation between the Trinity and grace ; the Father is said to beget us, John i. 13. and we are said to be the seed of Christ, Isa. liii. 10, and born of the Spirit, John iii. 6. That, therefore, which hath so strong a relation cannot perish.

1. The Father, who is the first root of grace in his good will and pleasure. Though Christ merited the fruits of election, yet he did not merit election itself, for Christ himself is a fruit of that first election.

(1.) In respect of his attributes. Grace will engage God's assistance. Every grace is part of the divine nature, because it is an imitation of one or

other of the divine attributes, and exemplifies the divine perfections in its operations : 1 Peter ii. 9, ‘But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people ; that you may shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.’ Shew forth the praise of God, *ἀρετὰς*, the virtues of God. Grace in all the parts of it doth glorify one or other attribute of God ; humility his power, contentedness his sufficiency, watchfulness his omniscience, prayer his sovereignty, repentance and sorrow for sin his justice, faith his love and truth, a fiduciary reliance on his word, his wisdom, &c.

[1.] The love of God is engaged in it. The riches of his grace was the motive to work grace in the heart. Goodness made him bring light into the world, and it is the same motive makes him bring grace into the soul. It is called God’s workmanship, his *poem*, Eph. ii. 10, *ποίησα*, about which he spent more skill than about all other things. As usually men are more lofty in a poem than in prose, and enrich it with the sublimest fancies, and diligently observe their numbers and measures ; so is God exact in the production of the new creature, which is rather his *ποίησα* than *ἔγενον*, as if it were not so much the work of his hands as the work of his heart ; for, as ver. 18, his soul was pleased in Christ, so in all things which make to the glory of Christ. His soul, it notes an high joy which we find not expressed of the creation ; and therefore his heart is chiefly set upon grace, as that which he chiefly designed Christ to purchase, and Christ to implant.

Well, then, did God’s love give his Son to die for thee, to purchase that grace ? And will not the same love engage his power to preserve and perfect that grace ? Shall his common love to his creature cause him to provide for sparrows, and will he neglect his children ? Shall he provide for his children, and not stand by to second that which gives them the denomination of children ? Shall their hairs be numbered, and not one fall to the ground without the will of God ? Hairs, I say, which are inconsiderable, of which there is no miss, no endangering of life by their fall ; and shall grace be thrown to the ground by corruption, which brings down with it the life and happiness of a Christian, and the glory of God ? No ; the weakest grace hath a certain interest in the love of God, because the weakest is the birth of that love ; as the child that is crying in the cradle is as much related to the father as the son stoutly working in the shop.

[2.] The power of God. It is not in a bare moral, but physical way, that grace is brought into the soul. If power must be employed in raising the body, less surely will not serve the turn to raise the soul, which is a far more noble and excellent work. Can it be possibly thought that when Satan, the strong man, had possession of the soul, well provided for defence, had a great interest in the affections and love of a man, making no laws, enjoining no commands but what were suitable for and pleasant to flesh and blood, that ever grace of itself could have dispossessed him, and wrested this empire out of his hands ? Surely it must be the power of God that did it, else so strong an enemy, so mighty a prince, could never have been overcome, so well beloved a governor could never have been overthrown. God is the strength of the soul ; all the contrivances and stratagems against the flesh are from him : 2 Cor. iii. 5, ‘Our sufficiency is of God : we are not sufficient of ourselves,’ *λογίσασθαι*, ‘to think,’ i. e. to come to some certain resolution, as men do when they sum up their particular accounts, or state our own affairs ; and when this is done, we cannot will it, or put it in execution without him ; therefore, Philip. ii. 13, ‘He works in us both to will and to do, and that of his good pleasure,’ *ἐυδοκίας*, love and power is put together. It would be derogatory to God if that should be totally overcome, which his immediate

power is the cause of, put on by his special love ; for it would either argue a want of love, or a want of sufficiency to maintain it. But it is not thus ; for the same power which brought us to God, keeps us from being drawn from him : 1 Peter i. 5, ‘If kept by the power of God through faith,’ then that faith is also kept by the power of God ; that faith whereby we overcome the invasions of Satan, and repel his fiery darts ; that faith whereby the corruptions of the heart are resisted and expelled by its purifying act ; for faith purifies the heart instrumentally, Acts xv. 9.

[3.] The holiness of God. Men are said to be like God, not in power, infiniteness, omniscience, &c., but in holiness, which is the attribute most cried up in heaven, Isa. vi. 3, an attribute which God doth most magnify, as swearing by it, Ps. lxxxix. 35, which he doth not particularly and expressly by any other attribute ; an attribute which he is so tender of. For what is the cause of that justice which employs his power in punishing offenders, but his holiness and hatred of sin ? Grace hath its print from God, and is conformity to the holiness of God, as appearing in his law. It is the image of God ; there is an harmony and proportion of all graces in the soul to those perfections of holiness which are in God, as there is of the members of the body of a child to its father ; in respect of this likeness men are said to be the children of God. It may better be said of grace than it was said of the soul by the heathen, *Scintilla divinæ essentia*, or, as the Jews say, souls were the shavings or chips of the throne of glory. Graces are the drops of God’s perfections, they are so exact an image of him. In respect of this likeness to God’s holiness, gracious souls that have escaped the corruptions of the world through lust, do partake of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4. It is called a bearing ‘the image of the heavenly,’ 1 Cor. xv. 48. Not that God bestows anything of the divine essence upon the soul, but an image and representation of himself, just as a golden seal conveys to the wax the image engraven on it, but not the least particle of its matter, the wax remaining wax, though under another form and figure. This likeness is a likeness to God in his highest perfection, viz., his holiness, which runs through all, and may be applied to all the attributes, as holy power, &c., and herein grace excels the perfections of the whole creation put together, for all the creatures are not so like to God as grace makes the soul. And how can we imagine anything, wherein we can be more like to God, than in that which is the highest excellency and perfection of God ? Now seeing grace hath so near a relation to God, and God doth so delight to see this in his people, that all his end is to make them like him, in a completing of holiness in them in heaven, and that this is that which Christ must do at the last, present them holy and blameless without any spot, will he neglect that which is so dear and like to him, and suffer his own image to be wholly crushed under feet by corruption, his basest enemy ?

[4.] The wisdom of God. The weakest grace is the birth of his eternal counsel : Eph. i. 4, ‘chosen us that we might be holy.’ If thou hast any grace, though never so mean, thou wert from eternity given by God to Christ ; and Christ purchased this grace for thee, else the Spirit would never have infused it into thee, for the Spirit receives of Christ, and shews it unto you ; there was a decree passed in heaven for all that grace thou hast. Therefore, that which made God at first resolve upon it, and made him send such a force and brigade into thy soul, will cause him to perfect it to a complete victory : Philip. i. 6, ‘Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’ The apostle was confident that because God had begun it, he would perfect it. What ground should he have for this confidence, if weak grace could be

totally overcome ? God being unchangeable in his counsels and decrees, if any saint whom he hath purposed to save should be totally drawn from him, it would argue God changeable, that his will was altered, or weak, that his power was extinguished or unwise, that his counsel was rashly undertaken. But surely his love, being founded upon his counsel, admits of no change. Besides, God doth infuse grace into those souls which are naturally and morally most incapable of it. The most rugged pieces he smoothes, the darkest souls he enlightens, the greatest enemies he makes friends, and would he begin this work to have it presently spoiled ? God, before he meddled with any soul, foresaw what contests and conflicts of sin and the devil there would be against him. He counted all the cost and charges, and all the pains he was to take. And it doth not consist with the wisdom of God to lay aside this undertaking, nor with the patience of God not to endure the brunt, when he foresaw every stratagem of the devil against such a soul when he first set up the standard in it. The gospel is called the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10 ; and surely all the effects of it, and this of grace in the heart, which is the chief effect and design of it, is an act of God's wisdom ; and should this, which is the birth of his manifold wisdom, be suppressed ?

[5.] The glory of God. God's end in everything is his glory, and that which grace aims at is the glory of God. As God minds himself and wills himself, the chief good, so doth grace mind and will God as the choicest and supreme happiness. Those graces which maintain the hottest fight against corruption, and are the strongest and most active legion, have a peculiar objective relation to God, as love to him, faith in him, desire for him. Those graces which are exercised about man, and the duties of the second table, have not so great an interest in this quarrel. Now, is it for the honour of God to let that which is his best friend in the world be totally suppressed ? Would not his honour suffer in it ? The two sisters thought it a good argument to prevail with Christ to come and help Lazarus when they sent him word, 'He whom thou lovest is sick ;' and Christ himself took an argument from his friendship to raise him, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps.' And is it not as good an argument with God to come in for relief of languishing grace, when you send him word how hard it is beset ?

(2.) Christ is engaged in this work. The promise in the text manifests that Christ was ordered by his Father to it, his Father having promised it upon his proclaiming him his chosen servant.

Christ is engaged as,

[1.] A purchaser. He died to 'redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' inward works as well as outward, Titus ii. 14. He gave himself that we might be without filth, and at last without spot, wrinkle, or blemish : Eph. v. 25-27, 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church,' not an imperfect church, 'not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,' anything like them, 'but that it should be holy and without blemish.' To sanctify and cleanse by degrees, to perfect it by wiping out all the spots and smoothing the wrinkles, and making it highly beautiful, fit to be presented to himself as his eternal spouse. If these spots and blemishes should keep their standing, it would argue that it was not Christ's purpose in the giving himself to remove them, or that his gift was not equivalent to so great an end, and sufficient to attain it, or else that he had since repented of his intent ; but none of those will hold. This scripture assures us he gave himself for this purpose. The Father hath exalted him at his

right hand for it, and his compassions work powerfully in his bowels, even in heaven. He was of the same mind after his ascension, when Paul wrote this epistle. Therefore he is said ‘by one offering to perfect for ever them that are sanctified,’ Heb. x. 14; that is, that one offering was of such infinite value, that it perfectly purchased the taking away of sin, both in the guilt, filth, and power, and was a sufficient price for all the grace believers should need for their perfect sanctification to the end of the world. There was the satisfaction of his blood for the removal of our guilt, and a treasure of merit for the supply of our grace. Though glory was due to him even from the moment of his incarnation, as he was the Son of God, yet he would not enter into it and sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, till he had purchased grace and all the measures of it for his people, and that by himself, by the laying down his life as the price for it: Heb. i. 3, ‘When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.’ Sat down when? Not till he had purged, *i. e.* made atonement for our sins, and paid for whatsoever holiness or purging grace his people should want. His blood was so valuable that the treasures of God were dealt out to believers before his coming upon the credit of his bond; much more will they be so after his coming upon God’s actual receipt of the price, and our Saviour’s sitting down at the right of God to see the grace he purchased given out. Upon this account Christ hath a care of the weakest saint as well as of the most glorious angel, because he died to purchase the weakest believer, not the highest angel, who stood in no need of it. If Christ bought us, we belong to the purchaser, which is the apostle’s inference: 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, ‘Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price;’ not our own governors, not our own keepers. The possession the Holy Ghost hath of us, making us his temples, is by virtue of this price. If Christ died that his people might have grace, and that it might be powerful, shall lust trample upon that which Christ hath so dearly bought? Was it a light thing for which he endured all the torments upon the cross, and will he now make no matter of it? If he purchased us, and grace for us, when we were enemies, will he not preserve it in us since we are his friends? Shall he be at the expense of his richest blood to buy it, and spare his power to secure it? Is the right of his purchase of so low a value with him as to suffer it to be usurped by his greatest enemy?

[2.] An actual proprietor and possessor by way of

(1.) Donation from his Father. Every believer is God’s gift to Christ as mediator for this end, to give eternal life to them, and every one of them: John xvii. 2, ‘That I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me,’ which eternal life is the knowledge of God, which includes all grace. And they were given to him that they might be perfect, one, as the Father and the Son are: John xvii. 11, ‘Keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.’ He gave them with an intent that they should be one in as high a manner as the creature is capable of. This was the end both of God’s giving and Christ’s keeping, for the particle *ινα* may refer to *keep* or to *given*. If they be not at last one, the end of God’s giving must be frustrate, and the petition of Christ not heard. Christ will not undervalue his Father’s gift. We prize even small tokens from a friend we love. Because our Redeemer valued this gift, he accepted of it, and took it into his own possession; and because he loves his Father, he will answer the ends of this donation. Christ calls those his sheep by virtue of this donation, John x. 16. Our being his sheep by virtue of this gift, will be as much a reason to preserve us in faith as it was at first to confer it on

us. The same is as valid for preserving as for first conferring, and that is the Father's gift.

(2.) He is proprietor and possessor by the conquest of every gracious person, and whatsoever was contrary to grace. As our Redeemer was to purchase us by his death at the hand of God's justice, so he was to rescue us by his power from the fury of our hellish oppressor. As he was to appease the justice of God, so he was to deface the works of the devil: 1 John iii. 5, 'He was manifested to take away our sins;' ver. 8, 'For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' As God's justice is so perfectly pacified as never to renew the curses of the law against a believer, so is the devil so thoroughly subdued as never to repair the ruins of his works. Did Christ rise as a conqueror out of the grave, to let sin and Satan run away with the fruits of his victory? Shall he overcome the powers of hell, and triumph over them, to let the devil rob him of the honour of his achievements by regaining his loss? Shall that man of his right hand, whom God hath made strong for himself, that we might not go back from him, Ps. lxxx. 17, be made weak again by man's own corruptions and the devil's repossession? Should grace truckle under the devil's works, and the standard which was set up in the soul when it was first snatched from the power of darkness be pulled down, what would become of the glory of our Redeemer's death, and the honour of his victory? What a disparagement would it be, to have that which he paid so great a price for, which was the special gift of his Father, the acqust of the travail and sweat of his soul, wrested out of his hand by an enemy he hath subdued, condemned upon the cross, and triumphed over at his ascension! No, this will never be. Christ and the Father are one in operation, and whom God delivers from the power of darkness he translates into the kingdom of his dear Son, not to return under the government of a hated devil, and makes them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' Col. i. 12, not to be partakers of the inheritance of the devils in darkness. Neither the Father nor the Son will lose the fruit of their pains.

(3.) By mutual consent and agreement. He hath possession of them by God's gift, and their own choice: John x. 27, 28, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' Believers are his sheep in his hand; he knows them with a knowledge of affection, and therefore will be careful of their feeding, growth, and safety. On the other side, they hear his voice, answer his call, and believe in him, and own him for their Lord and proprietor. They follow him, he calls them; they hear his voice, he knows them; they follow him, he gives unto them eternal life, a life never to perish, either by their own wills or the wolves' violence. Against both those, Christ in this promise, as their owner, secures them. Against their corruptions; they shall not perish, viz., by a corruptive principle in themselves; here he removes from them all inward causes of destruction. Against outward violence; neither shall any man, no, nor devil, pluck them out of my hands, *cōtr̄s*. By this promise he holds us safe in his own possession against the encroachments of our lusts, and the rapine of the devil. They chose him for their guardian, and cast all their care upon him, and follow his conduct, and he takes care of them to give them eternal life, and to mind the weakest as well as the strongest of his sheep. He hath them in his hand. They apprehend him, and are apprehended by him, that they may attain the same end of the race with him, the resurrection of the dead, viz., a state of perfection: Philip. iii. 11, 12, 'If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though

I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may (*καταλαβεῖν*) lay hold of that for which [for which end] I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' Apprehended, or laid hold on by Christ, a metaphor from those that run a race, that take hold of another to draw him after to win a prize as well as themselves. Christ lays hold on believers, and they follow him. Will Christ be easily persuaded to let go the hold of his own right? will he throw them out of his hand? That would be changeableness and unfaithfulness after his promise. Shall any pluck them out of his hand? That would be weakness. Faith cleaves to Christ, and Christ to faith. Faith hands Christ into the heart, and gives him possession; Christ takes the heart as his own property,—Eph. iii. 12, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,'—and engageth himself by promise that both he and his Father shall abide there, John xiv. 23. Will any gracious heart cast Christ out of his lodging? He that knows the sweetness of their company can never desire to have their room. Doth Christ dwell in the heart to let sin pull his house down about his ears? Will he suffer the devil to bring in hell-fire to burn up his dwelling? It is his own house, the church and every member of it, Heb. iii. 6. Will he not hinder the decays of it, and repair the beams and walls; yea, the very tiles and pins? Shall he not brush down the cobwebs, and sweep out the dust? The heart is his field; will he not gather in his wheat, and burn up the tares at last?

[3.] Christ is a steward and officer, appointed by God to this purpose, to take care of every believer and his grace. How is he the surety of the covenant, and of a better testament? Heb. vii. 22. How can it be a better testament, if it may be broken, and prove as weak as the first? He is bound for the performance of the articles of it, whereof those are the two standing parts of this agreement: Jer. xxxii. 40, 'I will not turn away from them, to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' That God will not turn away from us to do us good, and that we shall never depart from him; and our perpetual cleaving to him doth depend upon his putting his fear into our hearts, and is the end of it. This never departing is the end why God puts his fear into our hearts. And Christ being a surety of this testament, is to look to both parts of it, that both what concerns God's part, and what concerns ours, may be made good.

Here it is to be considered, that,

(1.) Christ had a charge from the Father to this purpose.

[1.] He had charge concerning what he was to do for them. He had a charge to redeem them, and a charge to govern them; he hath a charge to relieve them, and a charge to perfect them.

1. He had a charge to redeem them. The copy of it you may see: Isa. xlix. 9, 'That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.' He was to call them out of their prisons, knock off their fetters, bring them out of darkness into a marvellous light.

2. To be their governor was as much in his commission as to be their Redeemer, for, ver. 10, 'They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of waters shall he guide them.' So also in Isa. iv. 6, where by heat, &c., is meant all troubles and inconveniences in a Christian life. They should not be wasted by fiery temptations, nor left in a forlorn condition. And the reason is, because that Christ, that Holy One, to whom God speaks, ver. 7, that Redeemer that called them out of a state of darkness and captivity, was to lead them in his hand, and have his eye upon them, and guide them by the springs of water, that they might have a fulness of the Spirit, and all refreshings and supplies of grace necessary for their

present condition. By water, alluding to the river out of the rock, which followed the Israelites in the wilderness; and by the heat and sun, to the fiery serpents, and the plague at that time. Christ here had the conduct of those redeemed captives committed to him, and was not to rest satisfied with conferring the first grace in the conversion of them, but to provide all things for their future security as well as their present freedom. And Isa. xlvi. 3, when God proclaimed him his servant, this was in his commission, to have a special care of the bruised as well as the standing reed; of the smoking as well as the flaming flax; of the infant grace as well as the adult; and, indeed, the charge is chiefly for them.

3. He hath a charge to receive them: John vi. 37, 'All that the Father gives me shall come to me: and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.' Ver. 38, 'For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.' He was in no wise to cast them out. It is a *meiosis*; he was affectionately to entertain and shelter them. And that he might make it as firm as possible could be, he tells us it was not only his will, but his office, and that he was under a necessary as well as voluntary obedience to his Father in this case. It was a part of God's will and charge to him, upon the sending him into the world, to receive very kindly any that come to him, though the most feeble and crippled believers that came upon crutches. As he was to receive kindly those that came, so it implies that he should receive them as often as they came, and that in any exercises of faith they should find fresh welcomes. Though their faith were very feeble, it should not be denied entertainment, but be highly caressed. So that Christ was ordered here to entertain every comer, as well as to die for them, and charged upon his obedience not to discountenance any that come, come when they will, and as often as they will.

4. He hath a charge also to perfect them, not to lose one of those God hath given him: John vi. 39, 'Τοῦτο δὲ ἔστι τὸ Θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με πατρὸς,' 'That of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' This is my Father's absolute and immutable will; and he hath sent me to perform this will, that of every person he hath given me, *μὴ ἀπολέσω εἰς αὐτοῦ*, lose nothing of it, not the meanest, weakest person. Not one mite or grain of grace should be lost, but I should raise it up all at the last day. It was not the bare raising up that was the charge God gave unto Christ, but the raising up to eternal life, ver. 40, with that perfection of holiness and grace which God expects as the end of all his dispensations; otherwise it cannot be a raising up to eternal life in such a completeness as God intended in his charge. This charge not to lose any, but to raise them up fit to be presented unto God, without blemish, doth include all means and methods in subserviency to this end. And in this charge they are all implied to be looked after by Christ. Christ would be no friend to his Father should he slight his Father's orders. If he should fail of being a perfect Saviour, where would be his love and obedience to God? It is as impossible for an elect person to perish as it is for Christ, who is one with the Father, to act contrary to his Father's will. For since they are given to him, and that on purpose to receive eternal life by him, they must be preserved; and all that which prepares them to be vessels of glory, must be secured from a total and final miscarriage, or else Christ breaks his trust, disobeys his Father, and frustrates his expectations of a rest and satisfaction in him. (2.) A charge which Christ must give an account of. Officers are to give an account of the management of the trust reposed in them; so is Christ of every believer's soul. Our Saviour is in several places called God's servant. Servants are to give an account to those that employ

them ; and it is part of the faithfulness of a servant so to do ; and Christ's faithfulness is to be glorified. He is 'a merciful and faithful high priest,' Heb. ii. 17 ; faithful to God, as well as merciful to us ; and faithful to God in being merciful to us. And by giving account of his mercy to us, he gives an account of his faithfulness to God. God expects all to be returned to him in that perfection and conformity to Christ which he designed when he first made the deed of gift of them to Christ. He will see whether a man be lost by comparing the number of his sanctified ones with the names written in the book of life. Some model of this account we have : Heb. ii. 18, 'Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me.' When he shall deliver up his charge, and all be numbered, he will tell his Father of the faith of his people, as he did John xvii. 6, 8, 'Thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word. They have received the words which thou gavest me, and they have believed that thou didst send me.' This is the confession he will make of men before God and his angels, when he delivers up the kingdom to his Father. Will Christ be found tardy in his accounts ? What could he answer if any one given to him should be missing ? How could he say he hath kept them in his Father's name, and lost none, if any should miscarry, as he did, John xvii. 12, which is a copy of what will be said at the last ?

[2.] As he hath a charge, so there is a power conferred on him to perform that charge.

(1.) A power of authority. He hath a power over death and hell to this end : Rev. i. 17, 18, 'Fear not ; I am he that lives, and was dead : and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and death.' The giving the key is a mark of authority, and is a ceremony used in investitures into office. Christ hath the keys of death and hell delivered to him by God, and he hath them to prevent the fears and unbelief of his people ; for such a use he makes of them here : 'Fear not.' By hell and death are meant all kinds of evils which were the bitter consequents of sin. Sin opened the mouth of death and the gates of hell ; they are the only things which can possibly prevail against a believer to hurt him. Will not Christ keep those fast locked up, never to send them out upon a believer for his destruction ? And if Christ hath the keys of hell and death, he hath also power to keep his people from that state which will necessarily run them into hell and death. All the power Christ hath given him over all flesh is in subserviency to the performing this charge : John xvii. 2, 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,' εἰσαγάγειν ; not only a power over those given to him to give them eternal life, but a power over all flesh, all the corruptions of men and devils, in order to this end of giving eternal life to every believer, 'to as many as God hath given him ;' so that there is not one believer, no, not the weakest, but all the power God hath put into the hands of all flesh is with a design that it should be used for his security ; as if God should say, Son, look to it ; if any one that I have given to thee miss of eternal life, since I have given thee power over all flesh for their sakes ; if any sinful or natural flesh deprive them of this life, it is for want of thy exercising the power I have granted thee to this purpose. Will Christ be unfaithful not to exercise his power to the right end ? No. Much less will he abuse his power over all flesh to an end quite contrary to that for which it was given him. And Christ doth so exercise his power ; for those righteous judgments and just reproofs of men in the world, they are for the sakes of the meek of the earth : Isa. xi. 4, 'With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.'

(2.) Power of ability. Christ had the Spirit upon him, to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, and judgment unto truth or unto victory, Isa. xlvi. 4. This rich *depositum*, his jewels, laid up in the hand of Christ, are more highly valued by God than to be entrusted with a weak and feeble keeper.

Ability in respect of,

[1.] Strength to lay the foundation of our security. God made him strong for himself for attaining the ends he proposed : Ps. lxxx. 17, ‘ Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee.’ The death and mediation of Christ is the strongest preservation against apostasy. God made Christ strong for his own glory, to purchase a people that should keep their standing with him, and not fall as Adam did. The effect of the hand of God being upon Christ, and the strength he had to go through in his work, was to keep his people’s wills and hearts close to God. This is the issue and inference the psalmist makes of it. What might in Adam’s or angels’ hands miscarry, never shall in his.

[2.] Assistance in this business to hold his people secure. Though God gave them to Christ as his charge, yet not wholly to leave them in Christ’s hands, and take no care of them himself. Though they were safe enough in Christ’s hands, yet the Father, to shew his care of them, and tenderness towards them, would have the keeping of them too, and would have fast hold as well as his Son, to assist his Son in it : John x. 29, 30, ‘ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all (greater than Christ in his office of mediation), and no man is able to pluck them out of my hand. I and my Father are one.’ God would have his hand upon them to assist Christ in it, to give him the highest security for their happiness. ‘ I and my Father are one :’ one in resolution, affection, power, ability, and consent in this business ; one in holding of my sheep ; we both have our hands upon them. It is strange that any should perish that are grasped both by the Father and the Son. What power is able to do it, since the Father is greater than all, all men and devils, corruptions and temptations, and falls in with his greatest assistance to enable Christ in this business ?

(3.) Of knowledge and wisdom. He is the wisdom of the Father ; in him are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for the advantage of those persons designed in his commission. The all-wise God would never have put so great a concern as his own glory in his people’s security into unskilful hands, and have disparaged his own wisdom in the choice of an unfit steward. He hath the book of God’s decrees delivered to him, therefore called the Lamb’s book of life, and there he finds every name written, Rev. xxi. 27, and he hath their names written in heaven before him : Heb. xii. 23, ‘ To the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven.’ There is a commerce between Christ and his Spirit, so that by the Spirit he knows the state of every believer ; their offices depend upon one another. Christ is the treasurer of grace, the Spirit the conveyer of it. He receives of Christ’s and shews it unto us. Christ knows what goes out, and he knows to whom the Spirit hands it ; knows the mind of the Spirit. He searches and listens to know the Spirit’s mind, what it would have, what is fit to give to the soul. The Spirit intercedes in us ; Christ intercedes for us. Christ knows the voice and mind of his own Spirit, and the Spirit knows the will of our Redeemer ; for he ‘ makes intercessions for us according to the will of God,’ Rom. viii. 27. So he cannot but know our state, because he hath a faithful Intelligencer, the same that is our faithful Comforter, and watcheth over us to take care of us. The catalogue of the gifts he had is reckoned up : Isa. xi. 2, ‘ And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit

of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' All his wisdom, and knowledge, and counsel, and understanding, are managed by the fear of the Lord, which is put last, as that which is the end of all the rest, viz., faithfulness to God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom in us, and the top of wisdom in Christ. His wisdom and knowledge is to fit him for his faithfulness; as ver. 3, 'and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord,' in all the methods of obedience to his charge; and God gave him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary, Isa. 1. 4, *i. e.* that are weary under sin, and apprehensions of wrath, and power of corruptions. The wisdom God gives him is principally for this end.

(4.) The sufficiency of treasure for it. Christ hath a ministerial fulness to this end: 'it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell,' Col. i. 16. The issues of this fulness are our reconciliation to God, and the presenting us holy, unblameable, and unreprovable in God's sight, *i. e.* in such a state that his infinitely pure eye should find no fault in us, ver. 20-22. These are the effects of this fulness, and therefore are the end. Though the condition be put in, ver. 23, 'if you continue in the faith grounded and settled,' it doth not signify that our continuance in faith depends upon our own wills. It is frequent in Scripture to put into promises those conditions which in other places are promised to be wrought in us; so that all those promises of life upon our continuing and holding out to the end, do not weaken this, that our preservation is the effect of this fulness, because those conditions are promised in other places, and are parts of the covenant of grace, for the performance of which this fulness was given to our Saviour. Our completeness and perfection doth depend upon that fulness of the Godhead which dwells in him bodily: Col. ii. 9, 10, 'For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' It is a ministerial fulness, whereby he is made sanctification to us as well as righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is made to us sanctification, and as much sanctification, and as perfect sanctification, as righteousness, or wisdom, or redemption; so that if any of those be perfect, as our righteousness and redemption, our sanctification also shall be perfect, though it be never so weak at present. The oil first poured upon Christ's head, as well as that upon Aaron the type, runs down to the skirts of his garments, and anoints all the other members. God poured out this grace first upon Christ, and through him upon all believers. There is as much a dependence of the grace in our hearts, not only in its birth, but in its continuance, upon this fulness of grace in Christ, as there is of light in the moon or air upon that in the sun; and there is a constant efflux of it from him to expel the darkness of sin, as there is of light from the sun to conquer the darkness in the air. And indeed, were it not maintained by a constant influence of Christ's fulness, we should quickly have no more grace left than Adam just after his fall, and should prove as very bankrupts as the worst of sinners. The sun is not able to dry up a drop of sea-water that lies in the midst of the sand, which the sea every minute rolls upon and preserves; neither can the flesh the least grace, while the fulness of Christ flows out upon it to supply it.

(5.) The perpetuity of this office. The continuance of Christ for ever in an unchangeable priesthood, makes him able to save to the utmost in spite of all men and devils: Heb. vii. 24, 25, 'But this, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood: wherefore he is able,' &c. If he continues for ever in his office, he will then be for ever able to perform the business pertaining to the office, which is to save to the utmost, *εἰς τὸ παντελέσ*, per-

fectly, both in respect of the *terminus a quo*, from which he saves, and the *terminus ad quem*, to which salvation tends; from all kind of sins and corruptions, though never so powerful; but it continues for ever, none can deprive him of his office, because none can deprive him of his life. God neither can nor will, because he hath consecrated him by an oath to be a priest or officer upon this account for ever. And this office being conferred upon him on purpose for the salvation of believers, the ends and effects of this office are of as long a continuance as the office itself; for if Christ did not perform the end of his office, it would be but an empty title. And this life which is for ever, Christ doth intend to use for the standing and perfection of the weakest grace; so that as long as that endures, the grace and happiness of a Christian stands immovable: John xiv. 19, ‘Because I live, ye shall live also.’ You shall live a spiritual life here, and an eternal life hereafter; all my life shall be employed for you, to communicate a gracious life to you, and preserve it in you, till it come to be swallowed up in a life of glory with me for ever. If the spring of Christ’s life fail, then, and not till then, may the stream of ours. Grace cannot be destroyed while Christ’s life is continued, which will be for ever: Rev. i. 18, ‘I live for evermore.’ A creature under the full beams of the sun cannot be cold till the light and heat of the sun be extinguished.

(6.) Honour. By this God encourageth Christ in this business; Christ hath his honour to this end. Places of trust among men are places of honour. Will Christ be careless of his own happiness and glory? He ‘was exalted to give repentance, and forgiveness of sin,’ Acts v. 41. The grace of repentance is only mentioned; but, by consequence, all the rest which accompany remission of sins are intended. What was the reason he had so great a glory conferred upon him? Because ‘he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity,’ Heb. i. 9, Ps. xlv. 7. Because he manifested this love and hatred by vindicating the righteousness of God, and setting up an everlasting righteousness, and taking away iniquity. Now, this disposition of loving righteousness and hating iniquity, must needs be as powerful in him in heaven as it was before; nay, he must needs love this disposition the better, which was the cause of so great an exaltation. And if this disposition was the reason of his advancement, should this disposition languish in him, his very advancement would decay with it. If it were the reason why he was exalted, it must then follow that he was exalted that he might still love righteousness and hate iniquity, and διὰ τοῦτο may imply so much; for this end, for the exercise of this, he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Since therefore this affection continues in him, is it possible he should endure to see that iniquity which he hates prevail over that righteousness which he loves, after he hath planted one in the heart, and subdued the other? The apostle prays, 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, ‘That God would fulfil the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.’ The name of Christ is glorified in a believer when the work of faith is fulfilled with power. It makes his crown shine the brighter. What hopes then have the devil and corruption of ever regaining their former standing in a believing soul? None, till the glory of Christ becomes vile in his own eyes.

3. As there is a charge and office given by God to Christ, and an ability to perform, so there is a compliance of Christ with it; which appears,

(1.) In his faithfulness in the discharge of it to this end. He promiseth this; he promised it to his Father in their agreement, else he had never been sent; he promises it to us. In John vi. 39 there is God’s charge to him, that he should lose nothing of what he had given to him, but raise it up. In verse 40 there is one absolute promise, ‘I will raise them up at the last day,’

i.e. every believer; where he engageth himself to be faithful in the performance of God's will. He hath given a full evidence of it already, in finishing the work God gave him to do upon the earth: John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;' for he appeals to God for his faithfulness in this particular. And he will be no less faithful in finishing the work which is to be yet done by him in heaven in the behalf of his people and their graces, for such a work he hath to do: Heb. xii. 2, a finisher of faith, in his sitting at God's right hand. His faithful care extends to all his subjects, even the weakest as well as the highest believer, as God's providence doth to every creature, the lowest worm as well as the highest angel. They are all one in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, Gal. iii. 8. They are all one to him, for he is faithful in the exercise of his office to every one.

(2.) In his affection (and that a strong one) to this office, besides his faithfulness; such as,

[1.] His stirring compassions to weak grace. These were great in him before the assumption of our nature: Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3, 'I will send an angel before thee, for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way.' They will give me so many provocations that I shall be as a consuming fire, as God must needs be in a way of justice when he treats with a sinful people himself. But I will send an angel. What angel was this? It is called his presence, ver. 14. Isaiah puts them both together, chap. lxiii. 9, and calls him the angel of God's presence or face. Jesus Christ, the messenger of his favour, he shall go up, for he hath compassion; therefore it is said, Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In his pity he redeemed them.' The antithesis doth easily manifest this sense. He shall go up with thee, and he shall not consume thee, though thou art a stiff-necked people, because he is a mediator, and hath undertaken to satisfy my consuming justice; and being designed by assuming of your nature to be kin to you, hath great compassions towards that nature; his delights are among the sons of men. For God here is considered as a judge, and the angel of his presence as a mediator. The government of them by Christ is here appointed for their security, which they could not have under the immediate government of God. His compassions are in some sense greater now than they were then, since he hath been made like unto us, and compassed with our infirmities, and hath learned obedience (the necessity of obedience to the mediatory law) by the things which he suffered. Infirmitas is the object of compassion, and the more pressing the infirmity is, the more stirring is the pity. As God pities the more when he 'remembers they are but dust, and knows their frame, Ps. ciii. 13, 14, so doth Christ know thy frame, thy believing frame, how weak it is; thy sinful frame, how strong it is; he knows thy enemies and he knows thy indigence, and how unprovided thou art of thyself to make a stout resistance, and this awakens his compassion. As the sickly, faint child, hardly able to go, and not the strong one, is the object of the Father's pity, the weaker thy faith, which lies mixed with a world of strong corruptions, the more will Christ be affected with thy case, and pity that grace of his own which suffers under them; for to this end his heart was stored with bowels to be exercised upon such occasions. He cannot have a greater object of pity than his own grace at the lowest ebb, nor a fitter opportunity to shew what a priest he is, how merciful to man in his misery, how faithful to God in his interest, which was the end of his being 'clothed with our infirmities,' Heb. ii. 17. That very sin which he hates, which is a burden, a grief, a trouble to him, shall rather excite than damp his compassion. It shall draw

out his bowels to thy person and thy grace, and his anger only against thy sin. If he hath any compassions in heaven, they are for those that are his own, and for that grace which he loves when it is shot at by powerful corruptions.

[2.] A choice love to the weakest believers and their grace. The having a seed is the greatest article that he insisted on in his first agreement with God in this mediatory work. He was satisfied with the promises of it, for all the satisfaction he was to give to God by his blood : Isa. liii. 10, 11, ‘He shall see his seed, and the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied ;’ and in his last prayer, John xvii., he prays more for his people and their graces than for himself, to shew that his seed lay then nearest his heart, and that his soul travailed most with them. And shall that which he had an entire affection for in the first agreement between his Father and himself be slighted now after all his agonies, pains, sweat, and blood to gain it ? When he was in the flesh, he admired not the buildings of the temple, had no fondness for the pomp of the world or the splendour of a prince’s court. No ; the faith of the centurion was the matter of his wonder, that of a Canaanitish woman, and the penitent love of a converted harlot the object of his affection, the revelation of God to babes and sucklings the subject of his thanksgiving. He had more desire to recover a little languishing grace to its former vigour than to preserve his life. When he was near his sentence of condemnation, he would in that extremity look back upon Peter to inspire him with a new strength after his fall, and by rallying his scattered graces make him victorious, who had been so miserably baffled by his corrupt fears. Would it be correspondent to the sincere love of Christ to let that which is his special favourite lie grovelling in the dust, wounded to death by sin, his hateful enemy ?

[3.] His delight in believers and their graces. The very first grace acted by a new convert causes a jubilee in heaven. Christ, as it were, makes a feast in heaven when the lost sheep is found, and calls upon all the angels to congratulate with him for the recovery of it. Surely he will never have this joy turned into sorrow, these graces rifled and routed by the devil, and so give him occasion to laugh or scoff both at himself and the angels for their too forward joy. He was glad even of sad occasions contrary to his nature, when they might further the increase of a little faith. When Lazarus was dead, he was glad he was not there in the time of his sickness to hinder the death of a friend he loved, because by his raising him again his disciples might be confirmed in faith, and gain a greater power against their frequent doubts and unbelief : John xi. 15, ‘I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that you may believe.’ If Paul calls the Philippians his joy and crown, because he instrumentally converted them, believers then are Christ’s joy and crown, because he effectually died for them. Will Christ have his joy torn from his heart, his jewels rifled from his crown, and his crown plucked from his head ? What was that joy of his which he desires of his Father to be ‘fulfilled in his disciples,’ John xvii. 18, but the sanctification of his people which he prays for ? The very discourse of the fruitfulness of his saints’ graces cheers his heart : John xv. 11, ‘These things I have spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you,’ i.e. that I might rejoice in you. He delights in the beauty, i.e. the graces of his queen : Ps. xlv. 11, ‘So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.’ And will he not increase his own pleasure by increasing the spiritual beauty and graces of a believer ? He doth boast of believers which are his heritage, Ps. xvi. 6, ‘The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.’ And can we think he will not improve it ? It must be more pleasure

to enjoy it flourishing than to possess it wasted. And Christ doth not repent of any undertaking of his for the happiness and security of his people : Hos. xiii. 14, ‘ I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction : repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.’ It is the speech of Christ triumphing over death. That it is meant of Christ, the word יְמִלָּא, to redeem with a price, and בְּנֵי, to redeem *jure affinitatis*, do evince. It includes the conquest of all other enemies, as the apostle descants upon it, 1 Cor. xv. 55–57. Sin and the curses of the law, of this he would not repent ; ‘ Repentance shall be hid from my eyes ;’ I will cast away any motion to it, that it shall never come more in my sight. If he rejoices in this redemption, he will also in the effects of it upon the hearts of his people. These affections are unchangeable as his office. If that be perpetual, Heb. vii. 24, the qualifications necessary to that office must be as perpetual as his office itself. ‘ Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,’ Heb. xiii. 8. The same in credit with his Father, faithfulness to his charge, affection to his people, ability for his office, fulness of his person, virtue of his blood, compassions to his weeping, gasping new creature, and his hatred of that which doth oppress it. And when there is such a combination in the heart of Christ, and the end of all is the good of these poor bruised reeds his believing creatures, can we think it possible that those affections should be idle ? And if they be excited, as undoubtedly they will, they will attain their ends, being all armed with a mighty power for the effecting of them.

Well then, let us act faith upon these engagements of Christ, and say with him in the psalm, Ps. xlvi. 14, ‘ This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death,’ and beyond death too. It is his office to guide by his counsel here, those that he will bring to glory hereafter. Lord Jesus, direct us by thy counsel here, as parts of thy charge, and bring us to glory as vessels of thy mercy, to be filled with everlasting riches of grace ; cherish our bruised reeds, and inflame our smoking flax.

[4.] The author of grace. He keeps this treasure in his own hands. He is so choice of it, that he never entrusted an angel to bestow it. Angels were employed to strengthen him both after his temptation and in his agony ; they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, but they have not the custody of that which brings them into a state of heirship. He employs none but his Spirit to be his attorney and deputy in the world to this purpose, which Spirit is sent in his name, John xiv. 26. What it bestows, it receives from Christ, and doth it by his order : John xvi. 14, ‘ He shall glorify me,’ in doing my work, for ‘ he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.’ To his glory, and by communication from him, all the saving light in our understanding, that vital principle in our will, those supernatural impressions upon our affections, are all handed to us from Christ by the Spirit, and wrought in us by our Redeemer’s order. It is all his work by his proxy. The Father is the fountain of grace, Christ the treasurer, the Spirit the dispenser. It was his prerogative to be the author of faith, when he endured the cross and despised the shame : Heb. xii. 2, ‘ Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God,’ that he might thereby be the author of faith. And he will not lose the other part of his royalty to be the finisher of it, for that is his title too, and he performs this by sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. There he sits upon a throne of grace, to distri-

bute grace upon every emergency, to finish that faith which is the weakest, and because it is the weakest, needs most assistance for its relief and perfection, and wants his greatest care for the support of it : Heb. iv. 15, 16, ‘ Let us therefore’ (*i.e.* because we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities) ‘ come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace ; ’ εἰς τὸν θρόνον τῆς χαρᾶς, an emphatical word, *χαρᾶς*, signifies season, without the addition of the adverb τοῦ in the composition. He gives out mercy from thence for the remission of sin, and dispensesthe grace for a seasonable help. It is then most seasonable, when habitual grace is weakest in itself, and its enemy strongest. If he would be the author of faith by his death, because of the joy set before him, he will be no less the finisher of it by his life, because of the joy possessed by him. This being his work since his return to glory, his care to look after both the supporting and completing bruised and imperfect faith is greater, because hereby he shews more of his art (as masters reserve the completing of a work to themselves for the honour of their own skill), and manifests more of his faithfulness to God, which is more evident in the perfection of a thing, than the first draught of it. And perhaps this may be meant by that expression, ‘ he learned obedience by the things which he suffered ; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,’ Heb. v. 8, 9. He learned by his sufferings the necessity and the acceptableness of obedience to God in this mediatory work, and therefore will not be wanting to that part of faithfulness and obedience, which is still due, in being the author of eternal salvation, by his being made perfect in heaven, as he was the author of faith by his being humbled upon the earth. And indeed that grace which he gives is eternal life, for so he calls it, John xvii. 2, 3. What he calls eternal life, which he had power to give, he calls, ver. 3, ‘ the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ whom God had sent.’ The knowledge of God in Christ, a gracious, affectionate knowledge of faith, spiritually to know him as sent by God for such great ends, is faith and eternal life. Though it be but a bud in this world, subject to storms and winds, mixed with much ignorance and doubts, yet it is life, and eternal too. For there is no essential difference between grace and glory, but only in degree ; therefore Christ saith so frequently in John, ‘ I give unto them eternal life ; ’ I give, not I will give, but I give at present ; and he that believes hath eternal life, not shall have ; for grace is a preserving principle, which shall overpower the corruptive principle of sin. If this knowledge of God in Christ, implanted in the soul, should perish, it cannot then deserve the title Christ gives it. And indeed it is not agreeable to the wisdom of God, and the honour of his Son, to cast about so much, and contrive the sending of Christ, to bestow only a perishing gift, and to let the honour and fruit of his Son’s death, his gift of grace, depend upon the mutable will of man.

Well then, to be the author and finisher of faith, are his two titles combined together ; and therefore where he is the author, he is engaged to be the finisher of the weakest grace. The smallest star receives its light, and the preservation of it, from the sun, as well as of the greatest magnitude.

[5.] The exemplar and pattern of grace. God set up Christ as the great standard or standing copy, according to which all believers should be framed and wrought just like him : Rom. viii. 29, ‘ Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.’ To the image of his Son; not to the image of the most glorious man that ever was in the world. Not to Enoch, that signal walker with God ; nor Noah, the only loyal preacher of right-

eousness in his time; nor Abraham, God's friend and the believers' father; but his own Son, who was free from all taint of sin. As his perfect purity made him fit to be a sacrifice to take away sin, 1 John iii. 5; to be an advocate to plead against sin, 1 John ii. 1, 'Jesus Christ the righteous;' so also to be the idea according to which all believers should be framed. Now the weakest habitual grace is an inchoative conformity to Christ as well as the strongest, and as well as that which is perfected in heaven, and hath in its own nature all the parts of that grace which is in Christ; as an infant in his body hath the lineaments of his father, as well as the grown son: 1 John xvi., 'And of his fulness have all we received grace for grace.' Grace in us suited to that grace which is in Christ, as some well express it; as the paper receives the image of every letter set in the press. The highest believer in the world was not wrought according to a more exact mode than the lowest. The meanest branch of God's affectionate foreknowledge is conformed to Christ, and the highest cannot have a more excellent pattern. The Spirit, in drawing grace in the soul, fixeth his eye upon Christ in every line he draws, and forms the lineaments of habitual grace in some proportion to that original. Here we are said to be *συμμόρφωτοι*, of the same spiritual form and shape, with the image of his Son. It is therefore called 'a forming of Christ,' Gal. iv. 19; 'a changing into the same image,' 2 Cor. iii. 18, *μεταμορφούμεθα*, metamorphosed from our natural into a spiritual shape, from glory to glory; from grace, glory begun, to glory, grace perfected. There is not only the shape of Christ, as a limner draws the picture of a man, but not the intellectual or moral endowments; but in this draught of grace in some measure there is. Believers are therefore said to have 'the Spirit of Christ,' Rom. viii. 9; the same dispositions of holiness, &c., which were in Christ; the same mind which was in Christ, Philip. ii. 5; and to be 'partakers of Christ,' Heb. iii. 14, not of a part of Christ; partakers of his purchase, of his grace, of his nature; and that by faith, by holding the beginning of our confidence, our first ground of faith, and our first act of faith, stedfast to the end; and are called his brethren, not by the human nature (for so all men are), but by a nature like his. Now the end of this conformity being that Christ might have brethren, and many brethren, can we imagine he would have one brother among the sons of men, if this conformity to Christ were to be preserved by our own power? Certainly that tempter who would have deprived us of a Saviour, by making him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, would quickly deprive us of his image, by hurling it down from the pinnacle of our hearts, and dashing all the dirt of hell upon it; and so the end of God in this absolute will of conforming us to Christ, being thereby to make him the first-born among many brethren, would be frustrate. For if any one true believer, thus conformed to Christ, might totally and finally fall, then a second and a third might, and all till you come to the last man of them. And if we were left to our own care, we should as certainly lose this image as Adam did in innocence. Can we preserve our spiritual life without this constant influence of God's grace, when we cannot our natural, without an uninterrupted stream of his providence; and when Adam did not will to preserve himself without the influx of God's grace preserving him in the integrity of his nature?

Well then, will Christ suffer one to perish who hath the same nature, spirit, and mind which he himself hath? Will he endure that his own picture, limned by the art of his Spirit, with the colours of his own blood, in so near a resemblance to him, that he hath not his image again in any thing in the world besides it; and this drawn for his own glory, that he might

be a head among many brethren; will he suffer so excellent a piece as this to be torn in pieces, in contempt of him, either by flesh or devils?

[6.] As the head and husband of believers, by virtue of union with them. Union in all bodies is the ground of stability. There is no straiter union in the world than that of Christ to believers; it is therefore compared to all kinds of members, natural and political, to shew the firmness of a believer's state upon all accounts. He is the head, believers the members; he is the root, they the branches; he the husband, they the wife. The bands of this union are, on Christ's part, the Spirit; on our parts, faith and love. The greatness of the person he sends to bind it close on his part, shews the high delight he hath in it; and shall he not as much delight in continuing this union by preserving that faith and love which knits us to him? Christ's delight shall not be quenched, nor the Spirit's operation prove fruitless.

This will further appear by shewing what kind of union this is.

(1.) It is a marriage union, and as a natural union of head and members. Both are discoursed on together by the apostle: Eph. v. 28-30, 'He that loves his wife, loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.' Where, exhorting husbands to love their wives, he sets Christ as a copy to enforce it upon them. And ver. 32, he seems to intimate, that his whole discourse, wherein he began to speak of the love of Christ to the church, from ver. 25, did refer to this: 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it,' *ἐντρέψει*, provides for it, and *Ὥραπτει*, clothes it, and beautifies it, and defends it against the injuries of the weather. So doth Christ nourish the graces of his people, and protects them against the temptations of Satan. What prince would without resistance see a traitor wrest his beloved queen from his arms, and cut her throat?

The apostle from this passes to mix both those unions together, and illustrates one by the other: ver. 30, 'We are members of his body, of his flesh,' &c., alluding to Eve's being taken out of Adam's side. And not only the church in general, but every believing member, 'We are members of his body;' we believers, and every one of us. It being thus, it is impossible Christ can do any other than nourish and cherish his own body, and every member of it, his own spouse. For in doing so, he loves himself, ver. 28, as a head, a husband, his mystical self, and his own honour, which is concerned in his spouse: 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh.' Whatsoever is implanted in our nature as a perfection of it, is eminently in God; now since he hath twisted with our nature a care of our own bodies, this care must be much more in the nature of Christ, because he hath a higher affection to his mystical body than we can have to our natural, for he is set here as the exemplar, and originals are always more excellent than the copied draughts. Would not every man improve both the beauty and strength of his own body, take care to preserve it from wounds, and to heal them when they are received, and not suffer the flesh to be mangled, unless it be for the security of the whole? This would be a hatred of his own flesh, which never any man in his right wits was guilty of. Shall Christ then let spots always defile his body, and wounds putrefy it for want of curing? Shall he let sin within, and the devil without, gnaw, slash, and cut his members, and stand by unconcerned? Will he suffer the least member of his body to be torn from him by his enemies? Shall our affectionate Redeemer, that hath taken upon him to be our head, and to cause this union, and delights in it, be the first that shall do such an unnatural act, and be worse natured to his body than the wickedest man in the world is to his? Men do not use to cut off

a finger for every wart or wen, or for every wound that hath putrefaction in it. Christ doth not cut off believers for their infirmities, he would then cut off his own members. Men rather use diseased parts with more tenderness, because they stand in more need of it. Christ therefore will much more cherish the affected part, and chase the disease away. Certainly believers, being members of his body, he must naturally care for their state, especially for that grace which is the band of union, and the vital spirit in all its members. Will he ever suffer that to decay for want of food? Christ hath not only the name, but the affection, of a head; and it is his office by union (and not only so, but his nature), as well as his Father's charge, to be careful of the preservation of his members. Shall he feel what is done against his people by persecutors? And will he not be much more sensible of what the flesh, that grand tyrant and persecutor of his people's graces, doth against his body, as well as what the lesser and more extrinsecal enemies execute?

Obj. But if it be said, that there is no doubt of Christ's faithfulness to us while we continue faithful to him; but we may cast off Christ from being our husband, and we being not natural, but mystical members, may cut off ourselves;—

Ans. Against this the covenant secures: Jer. xxxii. 40, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' The fear he hath put into our hearts, keeps us from ever departing from him. Besides, there is a stronger stay, 'God will not turn from us, to do us good,' even the highest good, all the good he can. God stores us with habitual grace, and stands by it. It is God's keeping close to us, secures us from turning our backs upon him. Again, Christ's love to keep, is armed with gracious omnipotency to effect it, which no husband in the world hath over his wife, nor any man over any members of his body.

(2.) It is so strong a union intensively, that Christ and a regenerate man become one spirit: 1 Cor. vi. 17, 'But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,' *κοιλωνετος*, glued; one spirit, as if they had but one soul in two bodies. What the Spirit doth in Christ, it doth also in a believer, according to the capacity of his soul. The same Spirit, which was the immediate conveyer of grace to the human nature of Christ, is so to us. Christ had an essential holiness in respect of his Godhead, but a derivative holiness as man. And this derivative holiness proceeded from the Spirit in him without measure, which we have in our measures. And by virtue of this union, by the same Spirit whereby you become one spirit with Christ, not only that grace which is in you and the greatest apostle are the same, but that grace which is in you and our great Mediator the man Christ Jesus, are of the same nature and original. As the light of the sun and the light of a star are the same, but they differ in degrees, not essentially; and as we say of souls, *animaे sunt pares dignitate*, though the actions are not the same, because of the indispositions of the organs, and the predominancy of some particular humour. It is the same Spirit in Christ and a believer, as it is the same soul in dignity, which is in an infant and a man of the most refined parts. It is more here, for it is the same Spirit, in respect of his person, which makes Christ very near of kin to us. This Spirit must either desert Christ or us, before this union can be dissolved: not Christ, for he had it in the world not by measure, and he is yet anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; not us, because the promises of Christ cannot be broken; this being the top-stone of the comfort of believers, in sending this Comforter, that he was to abide for ever.

(3.) This union of the soul to Christ is strengthened by the union of Christ

to the Father : John xvii. 23, ‘I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ;’ εἰς ἕν, into one. First, the Father in Christ, and then Christ in believers ; so that whatsoever fulness, strength, grace, the Father gives to Christ by virtue of his union with him, and which is communicable to his members, the same hath the soul by virtue of its union with Christ. And both these unions, that of the Father with Christ, and that of Christ with us, are for the perfection of all those that should be with him to the end of the world, even the weakest as well as the strongest ; for it refers to ver. 20. But we must understand this, not of that essential union between the Father and the Son, as they are one essence, but of the union of the Father to Christ as mediator, in respect of the Father’s influence upon him, and assistance of him. Christ being the medium of our union with God, both the Father’s union with him, and his with us, are for our perfection. Because, whatsoever grace Christ hath, by virtue of his union with the Father, is to be communicated to us according to our capacity, or employed for us according to our necessity. And from this union it is that God loves believers as he loves Christ : ver. 23, ‘That the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.’ Christ himself made no question but the Father loved believers as he loved him their head, *amore similitudinis*, not *a qualitatibus*; but Christ would have the world know it, and themselves know it too, and therefore would have them sanctified, and at last perfected. From this passage, I think, this will plainly follow, that as Christ cannot miscarry because of his union with the Father, whereby he hath a continual influence from him, so neither can a believer by virtue of his union with Christ, which invests him in the same love which the Father bears to Christ.

Methinks the apostle refers to this passage : Col. iii. 3, ‘Our life is hid with Christ in God.’ Our life is hid with Christ by virtue of our union with him, as Christ is in God by union with the Father ; Christ in God, and our life in Christ. The flesh then and the devils may as well pull God out of heaven, and overthrow the security of Christ, and pull him from the right hand of the Father, as rob a true believer of his spiritual life, or pull grace, which is Christ formed in the heart, out of the soul of a new creature.

(4.) From this union with Christ doth result a communion with him, which secures grace in a believer’s heart. A communion with him in his death, and from thence a perfection. So the apostle argues : Rom. vi. 5, 6, ‘If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection : knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed,’ &c. If we are planted with him in the likeness of his death for the destruction of the body of sin, we shall grow up with him in the likeness of his resurrection for the perpetual life of grace ; for by our dying with him we are freed from sin, *i. e.* from serving sin, and yielding up ourselves to it. And this communion in his death will introduce a communion with him in his life : ver. 8, ‘Therefore, as Christ, being raised again, dies no more,’ so a Christian being regenerate, and raised from a death in sin, which spiritually answers to a resurrection of the body, cannot spiritually die again, ver. 9–11 ; for Christ formed in the heart dies no more there, than Christ exalted in heaven doth. And after an exhortation, that they should not obey sin in the lusts thereof, whereby he shews what this communion with Christ in his resurrection is, not a total freedom from sin, but a not obeying sin in its lusts and motions ; not reverencing the commands of it, as if it were our lord ; not yielding ourselves to its service, but to the service of God, ver. 12, 13 ; which is a good comment upon those places which some have made an erroneous use of, and

from which they do at this day cry up an absolute perfection in this life, 1 John iii. 9 : 1 John v. 18, ‘ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin : for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.’ He cannot morally, because of the seed of God and strong habit of grace, fed by union to and communion with Christ. I say, after this exhortation, this is the final inference the apostle makes : ver. 14, ‘ Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace,’ *i. e.* by virtue of your being in the covenant of grace, united to the mediator of that covenant, who as surety hath satisfied the law for you, and brought it about that you are no more under the law, but under grace ; and having a communion with him in his death and resurrection, you are in the same stable state inchoatively as Christ himself is, and you will be at last perfectly so in heaven. For that is the strength of the apostle’s reasoning, as you will find perusing that chapter at your leisure, viz., to shew that it was impossible that any one that was in the covenant of grace should abuse that grace to a licentiousness in sin, and a devoted affection to it, because if he had been once planted into that likeness of Christ’s death, he is freed from sin, and will be planted in the likeness of Christ’s resurrection ; and therefore it will be impossible for him to be under the reign of sin. And to encourage them to keep up their standing against sin, he assures them that sin shall have no dominion over them ; as nothing makes a man fight more courageously in a battle than to be sure of victory. Union cannot be without communion ; for while the members are united to a living, sound head, there will be an influx of animal spirits whereby they shall partake of life and motion. The spirit from our mystical head will be working in us, providing for us, and standing by us for our mystical preservation.

Well, then, sum up this together, that this union is a marriage union, and that thereby we become the body of Christ, yea, and are acted by the same Spirit ; add the union of the Father with Christ, as well as that of Christ with us, and the communion both of his death and resurrection resulting from this union ; and if those be not strong enough to hold and secure a true believer, though he have but little strength, he may then, and not till then, totally and finally fall away.

[7.] An advocate of grace in respect of his intercession. Christ’s office being that of an advocate, doth ascertain this truth. An advocate is so to plead his client’s right, that he may gain the victory over his adversary in the suit. Christ being an advocate that always entertains a good cause, will certainly so manage it that grace shall at length prove victorious.

(1.) The concerns of grace are the principal subject of his intercession.

[1.] Our standing in grace. Our first access by faith is the immediate fruit of his reconciling us. But our actual salvation, and all the methods of it, are the fruits of his life : Rom. v. 2, ‘ By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’

The apostle in that verse mentions three things :

1. Our access by faith.

2. Our standing in this grace, whereunto we have access.

3. Our joy in the hopes of all the fruits of it. All which are ascribed not only to his death, but to his life, and the two last principally to that, ver. 10. 11. By his death, he takes away the partition wall between God and us, built on our parts by sin, and on God’s part by the hand of justice. By his life, he preserves this access free and open, and secures the wall from ever being built up again to hinder our access, which would be if sin should prevail ; for if sin builds it on our part, justice could not but rebuild it on

God's part, were it not for the life of Christ, which doth as much maintain our standing, as his death did work our reconciliation, otherwise the apostle could not have put a *much more* to it. For by this life of Christ we can joy in God as our friend, who was formerly our enemy, because by Christ thus living we receive the atonement, *i.e.* it is continually applied to us : ver. 11, 'by whom we have now received the atonement, *ἐπέσκοψεν*, *aorist*, just now,' the fruits of the atonement ; and by this constant application of the atonement, our standing is secured with joy ; for in receiving the atonement made by his death from him now living, we receive all the other fruits of his purchase. Hence he is said to prepare heaven for us, *i.e.* by keeping up the favour of God towards us, that when we come we may have the kindest reception, just as he doth make us meet below for the inheritance of the saints in light by his Spirit.

[2.] Our progress in sanctification. The keeping his seed from the evil, and preserving of them, is the main matter of all that prayer, John xvii. 15, 'Keep them from the evil,' *ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ*; from the devil, the head of sin, from all sorts of evils, evils within and evils without; which implies not only a desire negatively, that they might not be hurt by evil, but also that they might overcome it, and be improved by it. And that no believer should be discouraged, and think himself out of Christ's thoughts, he presents to his Father the whole generation of them to 'the end of the world,' ver. 20. He holds up here all his seed, as it were, in his hand, as those to whom he would have those petitions then put up, answered in time, to every one of them, weak and strong, to the very last man that should give up his name to him ; every one that should believe through the apostles' word, their word ministerially, because committed to them to be delivered down by them from age to age, so that the same gospel being now preached in the world, and producing the fruit of faith in any soul, entitles him to the benefits of this prayer. In his recovery of Peter by his prayer on earth, he sets a pattern of what he would do for all his people in heaven : Luke xxii. 32, 'But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' which is evidenced by those words, 'when thou art converted,' &c. Tell them that the rallying of thy routed faith was by the prevalency of my prayer, and that they may expect the like from me in their temptations ; that their faith shall not fail, but rather get a surer standing, as indeed Peter's did, who, though he so shamefully denied his Master under the power of the temptation, yet was the most forward afterwards to confess him in the teeth of his adversaries. As Paul's conversion was a pattern to after-ages of the power of his grace for the turning the most giant-like sinners, so was this a pattern of the force of his intercession for the preservation and further sanctification of oppressed believers. These words, 'strengthen thy brethren,' would be of little force if it were not a leading ease, and that Christ intended to make it a rule of court for the comfort of his people that are like Peter, having the revelation of Christ from God, and not from flesh and blood.

[3.] The keeping the covenant firm in both the parts of it, as the foundation of both these. Therefore in the solemn appearance of God in prophetic visions, relating to the gospel dispensation, both before the manifestation of Christ and since, the throne of God is encircled with a rainbow. But the place I would consider is Jer. xxx. 21, 22, 'And their governor shall proceed from the midst of them ; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me : for who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me ? saith the Lord. And you shall be my people, and I will be your God.' God causeth Christ to draw near, and gives him a power of mediating : 'I

will cause him to draw near ;' Christ accepts it ; ' he shall approach unto me.' Who ? ' Their governor,' that ' shall proceed from the midst of them.' God then breaks out into a delightful astonishment at this approach of Christ to him as a surety and advocate, so that he gives out all blessings upon his asking, ' Who is this that hath engaged his heart ? ' עָרֵב אַתְּ הַנֶּעֶר, hath pawned his heart, hath become a surety in his heart ; so the word is used and translated, Gen. xliv. 32, עָרֵב אַתְּ הַנֶּעֶר, thy servant hath ' become a surety for the lad ;' and likewise Prov. vi. 1, ' If thou be surety for thy friend.' This is that which makes the covenant firm, and preserves the knot between God and us. Ver. 22, ' You shall be my people, and I will be your God ;' I understand it of the mediation of Christ in general, but with a particular application to his intercession, as being a great part of that mediation, and the principal, if not the only, continued act of it. Now as long as those engagements of his heart, those affections, remain, he hath liberty as a surety to approach to God, which he will always have ; and as long as God delights in it, as here he doth even to admiration, so long shall believers be God's people, and he their God. Certainly such an answer doth Christ receive upon every act of his intercession, even a covenant answer ; God saith, that poor, weak, believing soul whom thou dost plead for shall be mine, one of my people, and I will be his God, and I will do what thou wilt for him.

(2.) His intercession seems to be appointed by his Father for this end, the support and happiness of those that believe in him ; which appears not only in that fore-mentioned place of Jeremiah, wherein God would cause him to approach to him for the keeping the covenant stable between God and his people ; but in Ps. ii. 8, ' Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession ;' which is Christ's patent for this office of advocate, and granted him after his resurrection, intimated in those words, ' Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' As Christ did not die for himself, or rise again for himself, but as a public person, so he hath this power of asking, and promise of receiving upon asking, as a public person, as a king and governor, as he is styled in Jer. xxx. 22, and as he is set King upon his holy hill of Sion, *i. e.* king in his church. If he had then this grant of asking, as a public person, and as king in his church, it must then be employed for those who are his church, his voluntary subjects, those for whom he died and rose again. If his asking were designed as a means to come to the possession of his inheritance, the possession of the Gentiles, by the same reason it is also designed as a means for the improvement of his inheritance ; for those that are chiefly his heritage in the world, his garden in the wilderness, so pleasant to him, Ps. xvi. 6, that if he can make it more pleasant for asking he will not stick at it, and God will do it for him. For the large promise made him implies both the preservation and improvement of his inheritance, to make it comfortable to him. This power of asking was chiefly designed for believers, as appears by the use the psalmist makes of it, of exhortation to the powers of the world, ver. 10, 11, ' to serve him ;' but of exultation in the latter end of ver. 12 to believers, ' Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.' If it were not designed by God for them, and for every one of them (all they), and to be employed for them chiefly, they would be no more blessed than others. And this blessedness doth consist in justification and sanctification, for ' blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven,' Ps. xxxii. 1 ; and Christ blesseth us ' by turning us away from iniquity,' Acts iii. 26.

(3.) Christ doth ask this blessing of grace in particular, for every believer n particular, which still adds a strength to this truth. Christ's living for ever to make intercession for us is the reason rendered why he is able to

' save to the utmost,' Heb. vii. 25. It is εἰς τὸ παντελέσ, *ad omnitudinem perfectionem*, so Camero; perfection of parts here, perfection of degrees hereafter. If he lives for ever to make intercession for the perfect salvation of his people, he doth consequently intercede for all those things which may promote the perfection of their salvation, and consequently for their graces, which are necessary to it. Therefore the habit of grace shall be actually and perpetually preserved, otherwise Christ's intercession would be in vain. And this he doth in particular for every believer. They were given to him in particular, they come to God by him in particular, and he saves them in particular; therefore he intercedes for them in particular, even for all those that come unto God by him. As they come, he intercedes for them; as a great master of requests, he receives the petitions of every comer, and presents their particular cases to his Father with a good and powerful word of his own; so he prayed for Peter in particular, Luke xxii. 32, 'I have prayed for thee (and for thy grace too), that thy faith fail not.' It is probable Christ prayed for all, it seems to be implied; Satan had an aching tooth at every one of them; Εξηρήσατο, he hath earnestly desired you to sift you as wheat. He prayed particularly for their faith, that it might not be conquered, because this being the fundamental grace, if this stands all the rest keep up their heads. His intercession is for everything which may preserve, and against everything which may destroy. Not only for the preservation itself, but for the particular means of it: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.' Do it by thy word, where he intercedes for the keeping up a gospel in the world in subserviency to this end, viz., their sanctification. Do it by thy truth, that incorruptible seed, that eternal gospel, eternal in the duration of the effects of it. So that thy standing, and all the means of it, the habit and the very acting of thy faith, the impressions made upon thy soul by any particular truth, are the fruits of Christ's intercession. I cannot imagine that a person that Christ doth in so particular a manner intercede for in all his concerns, can fall totally and finally.

(4.) He intercedes more fervently (if there be any degrees at all in his affection in heaven above what he had here) in heaven than he did upon the earth. If he, upon the earth, did pray so earnestly to his Father to keep them, and that a little before his death, when the sorrows of death and the grave, the contest he was to have with his Father's wrath, began to stare him in the face; when he had a foresight of all those bruises his soul was shortly to suffer, which, if anything, might reasonably divert his thoughts, and damp his affections from praying for others; when he hath conquered all this, and hath no more death to suffer, no infirmity of the flesh to clog him, not the least eclipse of his Father's countenance so dreadfully to groan under, he will rather be more fervent than cold in his suit. Shall he pray against the indulged sins of his enemies under the anguish of death, and not against the lamented and troublesome corruptions of his friends in the triumphs of glory? Shall he pray for his murderers under the horror of his Father's wrath, and not plead for the support of his people's graces in the arms of his Father's love? Hath he not more encouragements to plead strongly for them since he sits upon a throne of grace, than when he suffered upon a cross by justice? He stood at his death as a guilty person charged with the guilt of others; but in heaven he pleads as a righteous advocate, freed from all that guilt which was then charged upon him. Hath he not more engagements? Shall not the esteem of his purchase, the value of his Father's gift, honour of his conquest, consent of his people, credit of his office, obedience to his Father's charge, elevated affection, delight in his people's graces, care of his image, relation of a husband, straitness of union; shall not all these inflame his

spirit with a zeal in his plea beyond the power of a control, were there a possibility of any?

(5.) His intercession now must be every jot as prevalent, if not more, than his prayer upon earth. If he prevailed at the tribunal of God's justice by his satisfaction, which was the sharpest conflict he could ever enter into, shall he not much more prevail at the throne of God's grace by his intercession? If his death were powerful to procure a perfect righteousness for our justification, his intercession will keep pace with it to apply that and perfect grace for our sanctification. Will not Christ be successful in one as well as the other, and as good at finishing the work in heaven as he was at finishing his work on earth, especially when his finishing his work on earth is the foundation of the continuance of that work of his intercession; being first a propitiation and then an advocate? It will certainly produce as perfect effects for the perfection of the weakest believer, as his death upon the cross did for his reconciliation, which is to 'present us holy, unblameable, and unproveable in God's sight,' Col. i. 22.

How strongly grounded his intercession in heaven is, and what arguments he doth use, see John xvii. 11, 12: 'And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 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.' I am no more in the world, corporally, but those are in the world. I shall leave those behind me in a world of temptation and misery. 'I come to thee.' I shall shortly ascend to thee. Now, 'Holy Father, keep through thy name,' &c. Here we have,

(1.) God's relation to himself, and to his people. Father, not My holy Father. The relation reaches not only to the intercessor, but the persons pleaded for. Christ in heaven pleads with God as a Father, our Father.

(2.) God's holiness. Holy Father; not merciful, powerful Father, or righteous Father, as afterwards. Grace is an image of God's holiness, and therefore is the most proper attribute of God to be used as an argument for the preservation of it.

(3.) The gift of God. Keep those whom thou hast given me, which he urgeth twice. Thou gavest them me to redeem and sanctify; not wholly to part with them, but to be presented to thee again in a better state. I had never had them but by thy donation. Thou didst not give them to me that they might perish, but that they might be kept. Keep, therefore, thy own gift, that they may be returned to thee in a better state. Thou gavest them me, and they are still thine. Neglect not thy own, because thou art immutable in thy counsel and affection.

(4.) The end why God gave them to Christ. That they may be one, as we are. "Ια, the causal particle, may refer either to διδωκας or τηγνον. If the end, Father, why thou didst give them to me, was that they might be one, as we are, keep them, therefore, till they attain this end in perfection, that thy aim may not be frustrated.

(5.) God's past preservation of them. I have kept them through thy name. Though I have been in the world with them, and have kept them, it was through thy strength; and in my present petition I desire no greater a strength than what already thou hast exerted for their preservation.

(6.) His own obedience to God. Those whom thou gavest me, I have kept. He lays a stress upon God's donation and his own faithfulness. I have been obedient to thee in the keeping of them, because they were thy gift. Wilt thou command me to keep that which thou thyself wilt neglect

and slight? Wilt thou be careless of that charge thou gavest me such strict orders to preserve? Shall my faithfulness to thee in that charge outstrip thy mercifulness to them and care of their standing?

(7.) The success of his care. None of them is lost. This charge thou gavest me, not to lose any. I have hitherto performed it. Not one son of election, but only that of perdition, which was given to me as my attendant, not my charge. The *but*, or *εἰ μὴ*, doth not weaken this assertion of Christ. As Camero and others observe, *εἰ μὴ* is not by way of exception, but opposition. He was not of the number of those given to Christ, but of another rank of society, as Gal. ii. 16, ‘A man is not justified, *εἰ μὴ*, but by the faith of Jesus Christ,’ where faith is set in opposition to works in justification; not at all by works, but only by faith. So Mat. xxiv. 36, ‘Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but, *εἰ μὴ*, my Father only.’ The Father is set in opposition to men and angels, not excepted as either man or angel. So Judas here is set in opposition to those that were given to Christ, not excepted as a lost part of that number. I have been the larger in it that it may serve for a little use of what hath been spoken. It will be a good pattern of prayer. Arguments may be fetched from those topics so far as will suit us to plead with God in our case, and there is scarce any of these considerations which have been delivered but may be turned into an argument in prayer.

Now sum up all this. Doth Christ plead for our standing in grace and progress in sanctification, and live for this end? Did he set Peter up as a pattern of what he would do in this case? Is the covenant kept firm by his mediation, and covenant-answers procured by his intercession? Is it appointed by God for this very end, viz., the blessedness of his people? Doth he present every man's case in particular, and intercede for his grace in particular, and what truth shall make impressions on him? Is there some reason to think he is more fervent in it now than he was upon the earth? To be sure, no less. Are the arguments he uses very strong? Then the standing even of the weakest grace is sure. Before that can fall, God must change his end in giving his Son a power to ask; Christ must leave pleading, or his arguments must lose their strength. But as Ambrose said to Monica concerning Austin, who remained in his natural condition notwithstanding his good education and his mother's prayers, It is impossible that a son of so many prayers should perish, so may I say of grace, It is impossible a child of so many, so fervent, so powerful intercessions, in all circumstances, can ever, either totally or finally, perish.

3. The Spirit is engaged in this business. The reason why God puts his Spirit into the heart is to preserve us from departing from him, Jer. xxxii. 40. As Christ was true and faithful to God in the end of his coming, so will the Spirit be faithful to God in the end of his being put into the heart. It is the same Spirit which, being upon Christ, enabled him to the performance of his charge, Isa. xi. 1, 2, and made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, to establish him in faithfulness and obedience to God in his mediatory work. The same Spirit is in us, to establish us in the fear of God, to keep that principle of God's fear put into our hearts alive. And as the Spirit performed his office fully upon the human nature of Christ, so it will not be deficient in us according to our measure. Consider the Spirit every way, and this work of preserving grace will appear to be his business. What Christ doth by his proxy may well be interpreted to be his own act.

(1.) His mission. If Christ were not to break the bruised reed, surely no messenger sent by him is to do it. ‘The Spirit is sent by the Father in his Son's name,’ John xiv. 26. He is sent ‘by Christ from the Father,’

John xv. 26; with his Father's consent and commission. There is a conjunct authority, sent by commission from both, sent to supply Christ's place upon earth. Christ's business in part was to keep his people, and he wanted one to do it after his departure; therefore prays his 'Father to keep them in his name,' John xvii. 11. In answer to this prayer, the Spirit is sent; therefore sent by the Father and Son in subserviency to this end of preserving his people, and comes himself with an intention to answer this end, and perform the covenant. If both concur in sending him, his mission must be in order to the fulfilling what was agreed upon by the three persons, and more particularly by the Father and Son in the mediatory covenant, for they would never send one that should go contrary to the covenant they were engaged in.

(2.) His titles. He is called

[1.] A Comforter: John xiv. 16, 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter.' The Comforter, *κατ' οὐρανούς*. Such another Comforter as I have been unto you, and in some respects better; a more spiritual Comforter. It was expedient that Christ should go away, that this Comforter might come: John xvi. 27, 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.' I tell you the truth; I must deal plainly with you; I have a great desire the Comforter should come, and if I go not away, he will not come; intimating thereby that it was a greater blessing to have the Comforter with them than Christ in person. What comfort could they have in this declaration, and what expediency in it, if the Spirit did not mind the same end in keeping and preserving us as Christ did? It had been no ways expedient. Better a thousand times Christ had never gone, and the Comforter never come, if it were not for the same end which Christ minded in the world. The ends of Christ were to give 'the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified,' Isa. lxi. 3. As this was the work of Christ, so this is the work of the Spirit as a comforter, to make the heart grow up in fruit to the glory of God.

[2.] An abiding Comforter: John xiv. 86, 'That he may abide with you for ever.' He must abide with us in the capacity wherein he is sent, *i. e.* as a comforter. His comfort would signify little if it did not meet with the main trouble which pesters us, *i. e.* the fear of miscarrying and not continuing to the end. Oh, I am afraid that this little spark may be quenched by the floods cast out of the dragon's mouth, that this little faith may be wounded to death by some strong temptations. I doubt it will quickly gasp its last. I have but a little oil in the cruse; it will soon be wasted, and I shall die. These kind of thoughts every believer hath more or less. The chosen vessel and the greatest instrument for God that ever was, found such fears clambering up in him: 1 Cor. ix. 27, 'I keep under my body, lest that by any means I myself should be a castaway.' The Spirit therefore must be a comforter to mate this grand trouble, and melt this gloomy cloud which doth so often darken the strong as well as the weak believer; and truly every one's experience can testify that when such thoughts do creep up, some hopes also start up with them from the Spirit, like a covenant rainbow with a shower; and one thing which, as a comforter, he is to convince the world of (and the best part of the world too, even those that are convinced of unbelief, sinfulness, and the necessity and sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ) is, that the prince of the world is judged and condemned, his works dissolved, and that he shall never more have power over believers to ruin them, John xvi. 11. He is to abide with us to that end and purpose

for which he came into our hearts, and that was to bring us to God ; therefore his abiding with us is to keep us with God. If our first conversion were the work of the Spirit, and our standing in it our own, we should be more beholding to ourselves than to the Spirit, because a good condition stable is a greater blessing than a good condition mutable. If the Spirit stand only as a careless spectator, to see how we would steer our course, without putting his hand to the helm, what good would his abiding with us do ? If a man have a great business to do, the presence of a multitude of men will do him no good unless he hath assistance from them. By the Spirit's abiding with us is meant, not the remaining of his person without his operations. As when God's promises to be present with us, he doth not mean his essential presence, for that cannot but be present, whether he promiseth it or no, but his gracious presence. The Spirit abides with believers not only in moving them, for so he abides with wicked men, but efficaciously moving, not only in their first conversion, but in their growth and progress.

The use is,

1. Matter of information ;
2. Of comfort ;
3. Of duty.

1. Information.

(1.) The doctrine of the possibility of a total and final apostasy of a regenerate man after grace infused is not according to truth. You see upon what pillars the doctrine we have asserted stands. Whence it follows that the contrary doctrine of the apostasy of a regenerate man is against the whole tenor of the covenant of grace, against the attributes of God engaged in it and about it, against the design of Christ, the mediator of it, against the charge committed to him, against the ends of the Spirit's mission and abiding with us.

The question then may be thus stated, whether that vital principle or habit of grace put into the heart by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost at the conversion of the soul be not perpetually preserved and cherished by the same Spirit, so that it never dies ; and that therefore a regenerate man, endued with this vital principle, neither can nor will, by reason of this implanted inworking of the Spirit, fall from faith and serve sin, so as to give himself up wholly to the commands of it. The question is not, whether we shall persevere if grace doth continue, as the contrary-minded assert, and accordingly gloss upon the scriptures alleged for it. Such a question would be ridiculous. It is as much as to ask whether a man shall live to-morrow if his life remain in him, or whether the sun shall shine to-morrow if its light continues ; and is as much as to say, a man shall persevere if he doth persevere. But whether the habit of grace, the fear of God, faith, the new creature, new man, or howsoever you will term it, be not so settled in the soul as that it shall never be totally removed. Some affirm that it may. Satan was of this persuasion (though he has since discovered himself more orthodox), when he tells God to his face, Job i. 8-11, 'Put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face ;' that smart afflictions would divest Job of that uprightness God so signally applauded in him, as a none-such in all the earth. The chief ground is, that they lay all, both conversion and preservation, upon the will of man, not grace.

I shall therefore lay down,

[1.] Some propositions for explaining it.

It is acknowledged that,

(1.) The operations of grace may be interrupted. As long as there are

two laws, one of sin in the members, another of grace in the mind ; as long as there are two principles in a grand contest, flesh and spirit ; as long as our knowledge is imperfect, and our love but of a weak growth, the operation of both cannot be perfecter than the nature of their principle. The vigour of our gracious actions is often enfeebled by the power of the flesh, that we do many times the evil we hate, and omit that good we love. And we cannot deny but that our acts flow oftener from a corrupt than a renewed principle ; yea, and those actions which flow from grace are so tinctured with the vapours of the other principle, that they seem to partake more of the impressions of the law of sin than of the law of the mind ; so that our perseverance is not to be measured by the constant temper of our actions, but from the permanency of the habit. The acts of grace may be suspended by the prevalency of some sinful distemper, as the operations of natural life are in an epileptic or apoplectic paroxysm. Hence it is that we find David so often praying for quickening grace, according to the promise, upon a sense of the flagging of his grace.

(2.) The comfort of our grace may be eclipsed. We may lose the sense of it without losing the substance. An actual communion may be lost, upon a sinful fall, till actual repentance, when the union is not unloosed. A benumbed member is knit to the body, though it hath not its wonted vigour and active heat. Mutual comfort may be suspended between man and wife, though the conjugal knot be not dissolved. Believers may be separated from Christ's smiles, but not from their relation to Christ and being in him. Comfortable interest may be interrupted, when radical interest receives no damage. A leper under the law was hindered of actual enjoyment of his house, but not deprived of his legal title to it.

(3.) Relative grace cannot be lost. Every regenerate man being the son of God by a double title, that of regeneration and adoption, can never cease to be his son. The relation of a son to a father is indissoluble. It can never be that he that is once a son can become no son ; the relation is firm, though the affection may be on both sides extinguished. The relation we have to God as his children, is knit with that other of heirs. The apostle made no doubt of the truth of that consequence : Rom. viii. 17, 'If children, then heirs, and heirs of God.' And he was afterwards of the same mind : Gal. iv. 7, 'And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.' If it be objected, True, unless a believer disinherits himself by an undutiful and contemptuous carriage. But he cannot, unless he should cease to be a creature ; for the same apostle doth as positively affirm in a triumphant manner, that no other creature, under which believers themselves are comprehended, can separate from the love of God : Rom. viii. 38, 39, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, &c., nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' And the other apostle comes in as a witness, that a son of God, so born, can never be guilty of such a contemptuous carriage habitually as may end in a disinheriting of him, because the seed of God, whereby he was born, remains in him as the bond of his relation : 1 John iii. 9, 'His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' His being born of God is the rock against the flood of sin, because he is born of God, and makes it eternally true that such an one is the son of God. Who ever did, or ever will, hear of a son of God by those two titles in hell ? It seems not congruous to divine wisdom to make any his heirs that he saw he should disinherit. No wise man would do so, if he were conscious of all future events, and did sincerely adopt a person. And shall the all-wise God be represented weaker than man ?

(4.) The habit of inherent grace cannot be lost. A believer hath eternal life in actual possession in the seed, and in reversion in the harvest, John vi. 54. It is plain : 1 Peter i. 23, ‘ Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever.’ It is called an incorruptible seed in opposition to corruptible, both in its own nature and the effects produced by it. But this seed of the word being incorruptible, raises effects according to its nature. The antithesis is express : we are not born of corruptible seed, which is of a perishing nature, but of an incorruptible seed. The seed of our regeneration is incorruptible ; the word, the instrument, is unchangeable ; the Spirit, the efficient cause which manages the word, and thereby infuseth the seed, abides for ever. All these causes agreeing in one attribute of incorruptible, must needs produce an effect suitable to the nature of them. It is indemonstrable that so many incorruptible causes should centre in a corruptible effect, and be combined together to produce an ephemeron, a thing that may have no longer life, according to this opinion, than the day it is born in. Further, the connection of those words with those ver. 17, &c., import as much. He exhorts them to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, not servile, but filial : ver. 17, ‘ Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things.’ Be encouraged to all holy and humble obedience, since you are fully assured of your perfect redemption, &c. As the blood of Christ doth not purchase a corruptible redemption, so neither doth the grace of Christ work a corruptible regeneration. As the blood of Christ was incorruptible blood, by virtue of the hypostatical union, and in regard of the efficacy of it to our redemption, so is grace an incorruptible seed, by reason of the believer’s union with the Son of God, its production by the Spirit of God, and in regard of that incorruptible word whereby it is both begotten and maintained in us. The habit of grace attends the soul to heaven, and for ever. The vital principle was not extinct in David by his gross fall, since we find him not praying for salvation, but the joy of it ; not praying for the giving the Spirit, but not taking it away from him, which he had by his sin deserved to be deprived of : Ps. li. 11, 12, ‘ Take not thy Holy Spirit from me : restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.’ And also for greater degrees of sanctification, and cleansing his heart from its filthiness and falseness. Grace may indeed, like the sun, be under an eclipse, but its internal light and heat cannot expire.

(5.) Though grace be oppressed, yet it will recover itself. It is indeed sometimes overtopped by temptation (as a fountain which, being overflowed by the torrent of a neighbouring river, is covered while the flood lasts, that a man knows not where to find it ; but, after those great waters are slid away, the fountain bubbles up as clearly as before), yet it works all that while under that oppression, though not perceived. It will rise again by virtue of a believer’s union with Christ. As a bough bent down by force, yet by virtue of its union to the body of the tree, will return to its former posture when the force is removed. The sap in the root of a tree, which the coldness of the season hath stripped of its leaves, will, upon the return of the sun, disperse itself, and, as it were, meet it in the utmost branches, and renew its old acquaintance with it. Shall the divine nature in the soul be outstripped by mere nature in the plants ? Grace can never be so blown out, but there will be some smoke, some spark, whereby it may be re-kindled. The smoking snuff of Peter’s grace was lighted again by a sudden look of his Master. Yea, it may, by a secret influence of the Spirit, gather strength to act more vigorously after its emerging from under the present oppression, like the sun, more warm in its beams after it hath been obscured by fogs.

Peter's love was more vigorous after his recovery. Christ implied it, when he acquainted him with his danger, that he who had not strength to keep his faith from falling, should, after his rising, have strength both for himself and his brethren : Luke xxii. 32, ' When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.'

[2.] Let us see what inconveniences and reflections upon God do follow from their doctrine. Their denial of this truth is grounded upon their denial of election, and on the supposed resistibility of grace, by the will of man.

(1.) It evacuates all the promises of God, and concludes them to be empty, vain things, as if they were made by God in mockery, and to sport himself in deceiving his creature.

[1.] It frustrates the glory he designs by the promises. Doth God promise his presence with the church to the end of the world ? and doth it consist with infinite wisdom to make an absolute promise concerning an uncertainty ? It is possible, according to this doctrine, that God might not have so much as one sincere worshipper, one faithful servant, in the whole earth ; not one immediately capable of his gracious presence. What would become of the glory he intended to himself by all the promises of redemption and sanctification, and those praises and admirations he expects from men, when, according to this doctrine, it is possible there might not be one to give him the glory due to his name, if it were left to their natural wills, whether they would receive the grace offered them, or continue in it if they do receive it ? For if one saint may fall away, notwithstanding the covenant of grace, the truth of God, and the strength of Christ, why may not another, and a third, till there be not the appearance of one sincere Christian ? What certainty then had there been of a church in the world for God to be present with ? What certainty of any admirer of his grace to eternity ? Nay, what certainty that any would have received it, had it been left wholly to their natural wills ? The Scripture intimates otherwise by representing man to us as dead in sin and enmity against God, one that cannot receive the things of God, &c. May a man be said sincerely to worship God one hour that doth cast dirt upon him the next, as the peasants in Germany deal with their St Urban, the patron of their vines ? Is that a worship intended by his promises, that might not endure the space of one minute, but be succeeded by the grossest despites and rebellions ? Is that fear put into the heart, that they might never depart from him, of no greater prevalency than to come to so sudden a period, and produce no better effects ? Is so slight, so short-lived a worship, fit for the great God by so many declarations in Scripture to promise himself from his creature ? No better it would be if it were left only to the creature's corrupt will, and the management of that natural enmity which is in the heart. Is the holiest soul in the world, without assisting and preventing grace, so sure of the immoveableness of his own will, among so many blustering storms and temptations, or flesh-pleasing snares and allurements ?

[2.] It frustrates the promises made to Christ. Is it consistent with the faithfulness of God to be careless of all the agonies, groans, and blood of his Son ? Our Saviour might have bled and died, and not seen one grain of seed, but lost all the travail of his soul, if this doctrine be true. Will God, according to these men's fancies, make no greater account of his oath ? Ps. lxxxix. 33-36, ' My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips,'—that the seed of his servant David, the Messiah, as the Jews understand it, should endure for ever, and his loving-kindness he would not

utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. This, though sworn but once by his holiness, is enough for an eternal obligation upon God, and a perpetual ground of faith to us. 'The pleasure of the Lord' was promised, to 'prosper in his hand,' Isa. liii. 10; it was to 'break through'* all opposition, and overcome all invaders. Is it a way to glorify his faithfulness to Christ, to take the pleasure, the object of his pleasure, the fruit of his death, out of the hands of Christ, and put it into the hands of free will? The promise is, that his pleasure should prosper in his hand,—not in our hands, not in the hands of natural will.

[3.] It frustrates the comfort of the promises to us. Doth not this doctrine give the lie to that blessed apostle, who was wiser in the mysteries of the gospel than the whole world besides? Doth it not accuse him of arrogance, when by a divine inspiration he confidently persuades himself and all other believers that neither 'angels, nor principalities,' &c., 'should separate them from the love of God'? Rom. viii. 38, 39. Doth God in the Scripture pronounce those actually blessed that put their trust in Christ, the Messiah? Ps. ii. 12, 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.' How can it deserve the name of blessedness, and in all of them too, if the faith of any one that sincerely believes in him could be totally and finally lost? Could they be blessed even while they have faith, since the comfort and happiness of any particular act of faith would be overwhelmed by the tormenting fears of the possibility and probability of their losing the habits of it? It is not only probable, but certain, to be lost, if its preservation depended upon no other hand but the slight hold of our own will. Adam in innocence fell under a covenant of works; and we should as soon lose our habitual grace under a covenant of grace, did not our stability depend upon a supernatural and divine power promised in it. This doctrine therefore wipes off all the oil of gladness from believers' hearts; and, contrary to Christ's commission, clothes them with the spirit of heaviness instead of the garments of praise.

(2.) It darkens the love of God. Are the products of infinite love so light as these men would make them? Is not his love as immutable as himself? Can there be decays in an eternal and unchangeable affection? Can any emergencies be unknown from eternity to his omniscience? How then can the fountain of kindness be frozen in his breast? Shall not that everlasting love, which was the only motive to draw the believer at the first conversion to him, be as strong an argument to him to preserve the believer with him? Jer. xxxi. 3, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' It was love in the choice; but by the expression *loving-kindness*, it seems to be increased in the execution. What is it then that should make it run as fast backward till it dissolve into disaffection? Was there a love of benevolence towards them in appointing them to be heirs of salvation, when they lay like swine in the confused mass and mire of the corrupt world? And is there not a love of complacency in them, since he hath pardoned them according to the riches of his grace, renewed them by the power of his word, and sealed them by the Holy Spirit of promise? Is it likely this everlasting love should sink into hatred, and the glorious fruits of it be dashed in pieces at one blow by a sudden change? To what purpose did he lay the first stone of thy redemption, and bring the blood of his Son and thy soul to kiss each other? Was it not that he might be your God in covenant with you? It was so in the type, the deliverance from Egypt: Lev. xxvi. 45, 'Whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt, that I might be their God.' Much more in the antitype, the deliverance from Satan. Could the kindness of God be so illustrious if it did not make the

* פְּרֻמֵּפֶר perrumpere.

permanency of his gifts a great part of the benefit of them? Can these men then fancy infinite tenderness so unconcerned as to let the apple of his eye be plucked out, as to be a careless spectator of the pillage of his jewels by the powers of hell, to have the delight of his soul (if I may so speak) tossed like a tennis-ball between himself and the devil? Which must be the consequence of this doctrine, if a renewed man be at one time in the hands of God, and presently after in the hands of the devil. Is this easy parting with them like the affection of a mother to her sucking infant? How much less suitable is it to the kindness of God, which infinitely surmounts the other!

(3.) It disgraceth his wisdom and power. Doth this doctrine support the honour of God's wisdom, in contriving ways so admirable for the restoration of his creature, that may be lost in a moment? Is it congruous to infinite wisdom, set on work in man's recovery, to make a covenant that should be more uncertain than the former? Which should be if it depended only upon the volatile and inconstant temper of the creature's corrupt will for the making it good. The former was less likely to be violated by a nature filled with integrity, than this by a nature stuffed with iniquity. Is it consistent with the honour of this attribute, to have his wonderful designs, wherein he intended to make known his manifold wisdom, puffed away by a breath of sin and Satan? Was God subject to error or ignorance in not foreseeing what events might happen before he obliged himself by promise; or to dissimulation if he did not foresee, and notwithstanding all these contrivances and preparations, not absolutely intend, the salvation of any one man, but leave it to themselves whether they would be saved or no? It disgraceth his power. Where can any safety be expected if not in our Redeemer's hand? Shall his power be beaten out of breath by the wrestling of the devil? None, say these men, shall pluck them out of God's hand while they remain there, but they may depart themselves; as though that promise, John x. 28, did not provide against their inward corruption as well as external violence. But the promise is exclusive of all ways of destruction: 'They shall not perish,' *οὐ μὴ ἀπόλωνται*, two negatives to strengthen it, according to the custom of the Greeks. And it is not, as it is translated, *no man*, but *οὐχὶ ἀπάλλει τις*, *not any one*. If they depart, they perish; but because they shall not perish, against which the promise secures them, therefore they shall not depart. If they may be overcome against the will of God, and against his promise, it may be inferred that the devil is superior to God, and that God hath not power, or wants will, to make good his promise of perseverance to them. As there never was, so there never will be, any violation of his faithfulness, or breach made upon his power. Had God let them lie in their sins, no objection could be made; but since by such an admirable power he had snatched them from the clutches of the prince of darkness, doth it consist with his wisdom or goodness to throw them away, or to let them fall out of his hands into the power of their old oppressor?

(4.) It sets God at great uncertainties as to the object of his love. If a renewed man be discarded from God's favour, and lose the habit of grace because he commits a sin which deserves death, he would upon every sin be cashiered, because every sin deserves death by the rigour of the law, Rom. vi. 23; and the whole life of a Christian would be nothing else but an interchange of friend and enemy, son and no son. Nay, there could not be a moment fixed, wherein it could be said of any godly man in this life, that he were in God's favour, and had the habit of grace, because there is not a moment but man is guilty of some sin or other, of infirmity at least. If it be said, it is meant only of those sins that waste the conscience; these, we say, cannot live in the constant practice of a regenerate man. But suppose

he be overtaken, is he then cast out of favour, *i. e.* out of God's everlasting love? I would demand, if he be, what brings him in again? Good works afterwards? Alas! there is not one of them but is mixed with that which deserves eternal death. Can they bring us into favour, which need something themselves to make them accepted? Can a menstrual rag look so amiable in the eyes of God, as to introduce us into a forfeited favour? Is it our Saviour's merit? That is as sufficient to keep our knot with God indissoluble, as it is upon every breach to renew it; for the merit of Christ is greater than the demerit of sin. If every act of unbelief did destroy faith, might it not be destroyed and revived an hundred times a-day? For what is the course of the best Christian, but a mixture of faith and unbelief? It is true the bent of the heart stands right in faith; but there are frequent starts of unbelief. Now, according to this doctrine, there would be so many blottings out, and so many writings again of their names in the book of life every day. A man may be, in their sense, in God's favour, and out of it, many times in a day; one moment in a state of salvation, the next in a state of damnation; and so run in a circle from salvation to damnation all the year long. Is this uncertainty like the stability of mountains and hills, a greater than which God promises? Isa. liv. 10, 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.' God provided such a covenant of peace that might not be removed, that he might not be at such constant removes in his kindness as these men would make him. Is it not unworthy to make such a representation of the all-wise and immutable God, as if he were daily caressing his creatures, and daily repenting of those gifts of effectual calling, which the Scripture asserts to be without repentance? Rom. xi. 29. Repentance of any design is an effect of weakness of judgment as well as mutability of will.

(5.) It doth the rather set God at uncertainties, because it doth subject the grace of God to the will of man. It hangs the glory of God's grace, in all the motions of it, and the efficacy of the promise, upon the slipperiness of man's will and affections. It makes the omnipotent grace of God follow, not precede, the motions of men's will; to be the lacquey, not the leader, either in converting or preserving; which is at the best to make the glory of his grace as volatile as a feather, at the best sometimes up, sometimes down; the soul this moment embraced by God with the dearest affections, the next cast out as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, and the succeeding moment admitted to fresh communications; this hour the temple of the Holy Ghost, the next an habitation for dragons and satyrs, the will of man giving one time the key to the Spirit, the next time to the devil; one time as clean as a saint, another time as foul as a fallen angel. So that a Christian's life would be spent in nothing but ejectments and repossessions between God and the devil, and the grace of God beholding for its residence in the heart only to the humour of the will. Is it reasonable thus to subject the fruits of the great undertaking of Christ to the lottery of fancy, and to take the crown from the head of grace, to set upon the scalp of our corrupt will?

(6.) It frustrates the design and fruits of election. The seduction of believers by false prophets, with their train of great signs and wonders, which our Saviour concludes impossible,—Mat. xxiv. 24, 'There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch as, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect,'—is according to this doctrine very easy and natural. One start of the fancy completes it. The impossibility of their embracing, or at least persisting in damnable errors, is founded upon the eternal choice of them by God, and his decree for their

preservation. It was the entry of their names into the Lamb's book of life, that preserved his followers from the contagion in the universal apostasy of the Romish church : Rev. xiii. 8, ' All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb.' If believers could totally and finally fall away from Christ, why is it impossible for them to be deceived by damning errors, accompanied with such wonders, that might stupefy the reason of the wisest natural men, and the elect too, did not their election make it impossible ? ' The very elect.' But it is laid upon a higher score than their own wisdom, and depends upon that golden chain of electing love, which neither the wit of man, nor malice of devils, the terrors of afflictions, nor pleasures of temptations, are able to break, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

(7.) It frustrates the fruits of Christ's mediation and offices. Was it not the design of his coming, according to the ancient promise, that all nations should be blessed in him, in the seed of Abraham, which seed he was ? According to this doctrine it is uncertain at the best, whether any one person should be blessed by him or no. If the gates of hell could prevail against one real member of Christ, they might against a second and a third, till he should not have one member to enjoy a blessing by him. Grace infused is as the ' holy fire upon the altar, which descended from heaven,' Lev. vi. 12, 13. And as it was the priest's office, so it is the office of Christ the antitype, to feed it morning and evening by his Spirit, with fresh fuel for its continual support. According to this doctrine, the offices of Christ signify nothing but with the consent of the will of man. The death of Christ might be wholly an unprofitable sacrifice. The intercession of Christ in heaven would signify nothing, since they can persevere without him, and notwithstanding his intercession can fall away. This is to unpriest Christ, and destroy the end of his living for ever. His prophetical office fares no better, because they make the efficacy of it depend upon their will ; and the teaching of Christ, like the sibyls' writing upon leaves, may be blown away by the next wind. It robs Christ of the key of government, by making every man his own governor in this affair, and denying Christ the sovereign throne in the wills of men. His government would be exercised only in punishing, since none left wholly to themselves but would prove obstinate rebels. He might be a priest without a people to sacrifice for, an advocate without a client, a prophet without a disciple, and a king without a subject, and so be insignificant in the fruits of all his offices.

(8.) It disparageth the work of the Spirit. As if the Spirit of God did tincture the soul with so weak a colour as might be easily washed off by the next shower ; as if he did only strew, not sow the seed of grace, easily to be blown away by the next puff of wind or devoured by fowls. Are the divine image and workmanship of heaven, the products of infinite power, wisdom, and love, of so slight a make as the embracers of this doctrine would fancy ? Is the Spirit too weak to hold, or is he unwilling ? Would Christ ever send so uncertain a comforter as he would be unless he did abide with us ? Would Christ, after laying so strong and rich a foundation for the redemption of his people, send a deputy that should build so weakly and work so slightly upon it ? The Spirit was to glorify Christ, John xvi. 13. How ? Certainly, as ' Christ glorified the Father,' John xvii. 4. But Christ glorified the Father by finishing the work which was given him. Therefore the Spirit will glorify Christ in the same manner by finishing the work he is sent to do ; as the Father is not imperfect in his choice, nor Christ in his purchase ; so neither will the Spirit be imperfect in his conduct. The very end why God puts the Spirit into the heart, is to preserve the believer from going

back from God. What is called ‘putting the fear of the Lord into us, that we might not depart from him,’ Jer. xxii. 40, is called putting a new heart and a new spirit: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, ‘And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments and do them;’ and a putting his own Spirit within them to preserve and assist that new habitual grace, for it is to cause them to walk in his statutes. It is not only a cleansing them from their filthiness, and then leaving them to be their own guides, but it is a putting a contrary principle into them; and the end of putting this spirit into them, is that they ‘should live till they be placed in their own land, in the heavenly Canaan,’ Ezek. xxxvii. 14, and be settled there in the work of admiration, and blessing God for his faithfulness in performing this covenant; ‘then shall ye know,’ by a full experience, ‘that I the Lord have spoken, and performed it.’ I know some understand it of their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; but the words methinks seem to be of a higher import, and the deliverance from Babylon was typical of redemption by Christ, Jer. xxiii. 6–8, speaking of the days of the gospel, ‘The Lord lives that brought up the seed of Israel out of the north country.’ I leave you to judge; however take it as an allusion. The Spirit will be no more false to God in not answering the end of his being put into the heart, to cause us to walk in his statutes, than Christ was or can be false to God in not answering the end of his designation to the mediatory office. This doctrine doth quite subvert the end of the Spirit’s coming, and being put into the heart of a renewed man, and makes all its work a slight and superficial business.

For a close, then, of this. This doctrine stands firm, I hope. Though it be possible and probable, and I may say certain, that the habit of grace in a renewed man, considered abstractedly in itself without God’s powerful assistance, would fall, and be overwhelmed by the batteries of Satan and secret treacheries of the flesh, yet it is impossible it should wholly fall, being supported by God’s truth in his covenant, his power in the performance, held up by the intercession of Christ, and maintained by the inhabitation of the Spirit. Our wills are mutable, but God’s promise unchangeable; our strength is feeble, God’s power insuperable; our prayers impotent, Christ’s intercessions prevalent. Our sins do meritoriously expel it, but the grace of God through the merit of Christ doth efficiently preserve it. If therefore believers fall totally and finally, it must be by themselves, or by the industry of some external agent.

(1.) Not by themselves and their own wills. Not as considered in themselves, but as their wills are the proper subject and seat of this habitual grace. They are made ‘willing in the day of his power,’ Ps. cx. 3; and they are continued willing by the influence of the same power, for the day of his power endures for ever. They will not depart out of Christ’s hand, because it is the chief part of this grace to determine their wills, and to bring down every high imagination which might pervert their wills, to a subjection to Christ, and fix them upon God as the chief good, and last end. Hence being his sheep, and knowing him for their shepherd, they are said to hear his voice, and follow him; so that this perseverance is not a forced and constrained work. They cannot totally fall by their own wills, they are renewed and strengthened; nor by their own corruption, that is subdued and mortified by the Spirit of God, which is continually in arms against it; and if, when it was in its full strength, it could not hinder the power of God’s grace in conversion, surely when it is thus impaired, and only some relics of it (though, alas! too, too much) abiding, it can less resist the power of the same grace in our preservation.

Again, not by their own wills, for it is here that grace sets its throne, and establisheth the heart. Neither doth that life which is hid with Christ in God depend upon the levity of our wills; it being an abiding life, it hath an influence upon our wills to preserve them in a due bent, wherein they are set by the Spirit.

(2.) Not by any external agent.

[1.] Not by God. The counsel of his election stands firm, and they are heirs by an immutable covenant. Though God by reason of his omnipotent sovereignty might justifiably take grace away, and we deserve it, yet morally, in regard of the immutability of his righteousness and truth, he will not. Christ will not do it; he died to purchase it, and lives for ever to preserve it. The Spirit will not do it; the end of his coming and indwelling is to maintain it.

[2.] Not by the devil; for ‘he that is in us is greater’ and stronger ‘than he that is in the world,’ 1 John iv. 4, in all the allurements and affrightments of the world. Not by his temptations; they shall either be intercepted or resisted by an assisting grace stronger than their author’s malice: 1 Cor. x. 13, ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.’

[3.] Not by the world. If the God of the world cannot do it, the world itself shall not be able. Christ hath ‘conquered the world’ for us by his death, John xvi. 23, and hath given us ‘power to conquer it by our faith,’ 1 John v. 4.

Use 2. Matter of comfort.

This doctrine of the preservation of grace is the crown of glory, and sweetness of all other privileges. We should in the midst of regeneration, justification, adoption, droop and be Magor-missabibbs, tormented with fears of losing them. It is the assurance of this that makes believers come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Premise this I must; this comfort belongs only to those that have true grace; see therefore whether you can find any serving-work upon your hearts towards God, before you entitle yourselves to the comfort of this doctrine.

(1.) Our state by redemption and regeneration is better than Adam’s by creation, in respect of permanency, though not by present integrity. God keeps us safer in a state of imperfection, than Adam was in all his innocence. Adam had a better nature, and a stronger inherent power conferred upon him by creation; he was created after God’s image, but he defaced and lost it, and afterwards begat in his own likeness, not in the likeness of God, whereof he was stripped. He had a natural power, but no supernatural assistance. We have no natural power, but we have a supernatural help. Our supernatural assistance confers upon us a better state than his natural power did, or could do upon him. We are kept by the power of God to salvation, and he was to be kept by his own; he was to stand by the strength of nature, we by the strength of grace: Rom. v. 2, ‘Grace wherein you stand, through faith;’ 2 Cor. i. 24, ‘By faith you stand.’ Grace is as immutable as nature changeable. He was under the government of his own free will; it is our happiness to be under the conduct of the Son of God by his Spirit: Rom. viii. 14, ‘As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;’ and that by virtue of a charge, a privilege never allowed to Adam nor angels, who, being their own keepers, were soon their own destroyers. He had a natural power to stand, but without a will; we have a gracious power to will, and the act of perseverance conferred upon us. He had a power to stand, precepts to stand, promises to encourage him to stand,

but not one promise to secure him from falling ; we have both a supernatural help, and an immutable promise that the fear of God should be put into our hearts to this end, to preserve us from falling, Jer. xxxii. 42. By Christ we have not only words of grace to encourage us, but the power of grace to establish us ; not only precepts to persevere, but promises that we shall, otherwise the promise could be no surer than that annexed to the covenant of works. If the condition of it might be as easily lost as the condition of Adam's covenant, then would it lose its end, which was to ensure the promise or covenant to all the seed : Rom. iv. 16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace ; that the promise might be sure to all the seed.' Adam was under a mutable covenant, and we under an everlasting one. Adam had no reserve of nature to supply nature upon any defect ; we have out of Christ's fulness, grace for grace, John i. 16 ; grace for the supply of grace upon any emergency. The manner whereby we stand is different from the manner of his standing ; he stood in dependence on his original righteousness, which being once lost, all the original virtues depending on that were lost with it. Our state is secured in higher hands. Christ is made wisdom, &c. : 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ;' all which are dispensed to us in the streams, but reserved in him as the fountain. He is made all those to us, not we to ourselves. Adam's life was hid in himself ; ours with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. Our life is as secure in Christ's, as Christ's is secure in God. Christ's hand, and his Father's bosom, is not to be rifled by any power on earth. Heaven is no place to be pillaged by the serpent. Which state, then, is best ? Our nature is restored by the second Adam, fundamentally better ; not at present so bright as his, but more permanent. The mutability of the first Adam procured our misery ; the strength of the second preserves our security. So that a gracious man is better established in his little grace, by the power of God, than Adam in his flourishing integrity by the strength of his own will.

(2.) The state of a regenerate man is as secure as the state of the invisible church, and more firm than that of any particular visible church in the world. You stand upon as good terms as the whole assembly of the first-born, and upon a surer foundation than any particular church : Ps. cxxv. 1, 'They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever.' They shall be impregnable ; as stable as that mountain of the Lord's house which was to be established on the top of the mountain, Isa. ii. 2, alluding to that temple built upon mount Moriah, of a steep ascent, firmer than all the worldly powers and strongest monarchies, compared to mountains in Scriptures. Particular churches may fall. How is the glory of many of them vanished ! Particular believers shall not, because their standing is in Christ, by virtue of that covenant whereof Christ is mediator, and of that promise made to the whole body, wherein the interest of every member is included : Mat. xvi. 18, 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Neither the power nor policy of hell ; gates being the seats of judgment and magazines of arms. The visible church is only so by profession and privileges ; an invisible member is so by nature and union. Appearance will expire when nature shall abide. The mystical body of Christ, and every member of it, can no more die than the natural body of Christ can now, or any member of that. No member of Christ's fleshy body did or shall see corruption. The knot between the soul and the body is natural by the band of vital spirits ; the knot between a true member and Christ is supernatural. The second person in the Trinity, being united to the body of Christ, kept it from corruption. The third person in the

Trinity keeps the union between Christ and a mystical member from dissolving, which no particular church in the world, as a church, can lay claim to. Though Christ may discard a particular church, yet not a particular elect person, because of that agreement between his Father and himself concerning those given to him. But we read not of any whole nation or church in the world given to Christ as such, and in such a manner as a particular person is. There is a difference between God's electing a people to have the gospel preached, and his electing a person to have the gospel wrought in him. The standing of any particular church is not for itself, but for the elect in it. When God chooseth a nation to be under the preaching of the gospel, it is for the sakes of his elect ones sprinkled among them ; and that church stands as long as there are elect persons among them to be brought in. When the number is gathered into God's fold, the gospel is removed thence, because of the rejection of it by the rest. These two elections, of persons and matters,* the one to grace, and the other to the enjoyment of the ministry of the gospel, are mixed together by the apostle in his discourse, Rom. xi. Some places must be understood of the one, and some of the other. When the election is said to be void, it is meant of the election of a nation, as the Jews are called God's chosen people ; when it is said to stand, it is meant of the election of a person : as when we say, man is mortal, and man is immortal, it is in different senses, both true : mortal, according to his body ; immortal, in respect of his soul.

(3.) Comfort against the weakness of grace. This is the proper comfort of this doctrine. It is, and ought to be, a matter of trouble that our grace is so weak ; it should not be a matter of murmuring and despondency. We have reason to mourn that our graces are not strong ; we have reason to rejoice that we have any at all. Little grace is enrolled in heaven. Not a weak member of the invisible church, but hath his name written there, Heb. x. 23. How glimmering was the disciples' faith, yet our Saviour bids them, in all that weakness, 'Rejoice that their names were written in heaven,' Luke x. 20. Could their names have been blotted out again, the joy he exhorts them to could not have dwelt with such a ground of fear. As the least sin beloved brings us into alliance with the devil, so the least grace cherished entitles us to the family of God ; for it is but a rough draught with blots, of what God had fairly drawn in the glorified saints. The weakest grace gives a deadly wound to sin, and a sure, though not so highly comfortable a title to so abundant an entrance into heaven as a stronger. Do not therefore seek your torment, where you should find your comfort.

[1.] The foundation of weak grace, and the hopes of it, is strong. Every new creature hath not an equal strength, but every one hath an equal interest in the covenant, and as sure a ground of hope, as the highest. The design of God was to make the new covenant secure from the violations of the creature : Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, which my covenant they brake, though I was an husband to them.' He would make a covenant stronger than to be broken by them. That covenant was perpetual, in regard of God, for he continued a husband to them, and did nothing to dissolve the knot. This is not to be broken by a person in covenant. If it could be broken, it would be the same with the other covenant, though not in terms, yet in the issue. Now true grace depends upon this covenant : ver. 23, 'I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' Besides, this covenant and the blessings of it are settled upon

* Qu. 'nations'?—ED.

believers, and every one of them, as an inheritance : Isa. liv. 9, 10, ‘ I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee : for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall never depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee ;’ and that by oath. It could not have been made over in surer terms. Mountains, the stablest parts of the creation, that cannot be blown away by storms, shall depart at the end of the world, this covenant shall not. It proceeds not only from love, but kindness, which is love spread with a choicer affection. It is a covenant of peace, wherein their reconciliation with God, and the blessings following from it, are settled upon them, and that as an heritage : ver. 17, ‘ This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord ;’ and lest they should fall, or lose their righteousness, the latter clause secures them, ‘ and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. Whether you understand it of the righteousness of justification or sanctification, it amounts to the same thing. This is the sure mercies of David. So that thou hangest upon a covenant settled fast by the promise and oath of God, and cemented in every part by the Mediator’s blood. God never yet broke his word. It depends upon promise ; eternal life was promised before the foundation of the world : Titus i. 2, ‘ In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.’ To whom ? To Christ, and in him to all the elect, of what size or stature soever, babes as well as strong men. God had time to consider all that unconceivable eternity before Christ came, and yet he never repented of this promise of eternal life, because he cannot lie, which the apostle lays an emphasis upon. When Christ came, all his actions and speeches upon record were pursuant to the confirmation of this promise. The Lamb, in whose bosom you are carried, was slain from the foundation of the world in the decree of God, and voluntary designation of himself. Was there not a long time to consider ? and did he not repent of it all that time ? and will he now, since he has paid all the price for your grace, and the continuance of it ? Can a little time, sixteen hundred years since Christ was in the flesh, make any alteration in God’s counsel and Christ’s design, which eternity could not ? Besides, the root is strong though the branch be weak ; buds draw sap from the root, as well as the forwarder fruit. The least splinter of wood in a tree is a part of the tree. The least atom, though never so small, is a part of the world. Every one in Christ is a part of Christ, and hath a share in the promise made to him. Is there any distinction or difference made in the covenant between weak and strong ? The babe in Christ is as well within the verge of it, as the most compact Christian. Never then sadden your souls if you find true grace in yourselves, when you are within the arms of an everlasting covenant. The grace which lies smoking in the chaff hath fire in it, as well as that which flames.

[2.] All grace, now triumphant, was weak at first. The highest began in a seed, a little seed. The waters of the sanctuary, whereby the propagation of the gospel in the world, and the operation of it in the heart, is figured ; I say, those waters which will perfectly purify the soul, did at first reach but to the ankles, Ezek. xlvii. 3–5, after that to the loins, and afterwards arise to the height of waters to swim in. Till you read of any grace in Scripture without its mixtures, do not despont. Moses had his encomium of God’s familiar, yet though he struck the rock through faith, he struck twice through unbelief, when indeed he was only to speak, not strike, Numb. xx. 8, 11, which God interprets unbelief, ver. 12. Abraham, who is honoured with the noble title of father of the faithful, had a distrust of God’s promise : Gen. xii. 2, 3, ‘ I will make of thee a great nation, I will bless thee ;

I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee ;' therefore he deals with his wife to call herself his sister for fear of his life in Pharaoh's court, Gen. xii. 12 ; and after much more experience of God's truth, in the court of Abimelech, Gen. xx. 11.

[3.] Your stock is sure. Your grace is weak, but the stock in Christ's hands for supply is full. He keeps it in his own hands. He knows our necessity better than we do, and measures supplies by his own wisdom, not by our desires ; for 'he feeds them with judgment,' Ezek. xxxiv. 16, *i.e.* he will govern them wisely ; for so that place may be understood. It is our happiness that, though we have little in possession, we have much for our necessity. It is our happiness that it is laid so high that we cannot reach it but by faith, that we have it not in our hands to squander it away. Were it in our own hands, it would quickly be out of them, and we not have a mite left. The covenant with us was founded upon that made with Christ : Isa. lix. 21, 'This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord ; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' 'This is my covenant with them,' *i.e.* made with us in Christ. 'My Spirit that is upon thee,' &c. As long as Christ hath the Spirit by virtue of that everlasting mediatory covenant, so long shall the Spirit, and the fruits and power of the gospel, be in the hearts of his people. 'The words in the mouth of his seed' depend upon 'the word put into his mouth,' and 'the Spirit put upon him.' The covenant was made with Christ, not for himself, but for his seed, and his seed's seed ; made with them, but founded upon him. It was for their sakes the Spirit was put upon him, for their sakes that words were put into his mouth ; for their sakes for whom he sanctified himself, John xvii., even for the sakes of those weak disciples he then prayed for. The words put into his mouth were not bare words, but attended with spirit ; not mere professions, but operative. And this was to abide upon him for them henceforth and for ever ; for he calls it a covenant with them, yet turns and speaks to one person. It must, therefore, be for them that this person is endowed with the Spirit ; otherwise it was not a covenant with them.

[4.] Christ's charge extends to this weak grace. It was for this reason he hath the order given him in the text by his Father ; not for the standing reed, or flaming flax, though that is included. The weakest is here committed to him, and therefore is as much under his care. To what purpose hath Christ this order, if the weakness of grace were a ground of despondency ? It is a ground of humiliation, but not of distrust. The gardener that regards all his ground, watcheth over the tenderest plants. Our keeper riseth early to look after the tender grapes and pomegranate buds, Cant. vii. 12. That which is feeble is as much under his conduct as that which is vigorous. He was ordered to be a shepherd, whose office is to attend the weak motions of the new fallen lambs. His bosom is appointed a place for them. He gathereth them by his arms, *i.e.* converts them by his power, and was to carry them in his bosom : Isa. xl. 11, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.' If you can go, he is to guide you gently ; if you cannot, he is to bear you tenderly, not on his shoulders, merely by strength, but in his bosom, with a tender affection. He is not only the shepherd, but bishop of our souls, 1 Peter ii. 25 ; and our conversion to him makes us part of his diocese : ' You are returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.' In all your weakness, he was ordained by God for your help : Ps. lxxxix. 19, he 'laid help upon one that is mighty ;'

mighty to preserve his power, and mighty to use it. Help supposeth persons most in need of it, as the objects to whom it is to be afforded. Every new creature hath not an equal strength, but they have an equal interest in the Redeemer's death and merit; and the weakest may seem more under his care than the strongest, because they stand more in need of that office which he is entrusted with and delights to exercise.

[5.] He delights in this charge. It was his delight to do the will of God; yea, and his meat and drink to cherish the beginnings of grace in the Samaritan woman, John iv. 34, because it was his Father's work. Surely it was no small part of the joy set before him, that upon his dying he was to be invested with a power to perform his Father's charge. He will not therefore refuse to embrace the feeblest saint. He knew how well the soul of his Father was pleased with his undertaking this care of the smoking flax, as the words intimate: Mat. xii. 18, 'My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased;' pleased with that which Christ was to do, whereof that in the text is a part. God takes particular notice of the beginnings of grace, and Christ's affection runs in the same channel with his Father's; yea, he regards the very trembling degrees of it. He overlooks all the philosophers of Athens, who boasted themselves to be the grandees in learning, and records only two new converts, Acts xvii. 34: Dionysius, who for all his ability and justice in judging controversies, had never had his name set down there but for his faith, and Damaris, a woman. He joins a woman with a judge, to shew that he takes notice of the weakest faith, as well as that which is joined with the strongest parts. This great man is mentioned only upon the account of his faith. See also how he overlooks the infirmities of Job: Job ii. 3, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job?' though he knew them as well as his graces, and doth not only approve of him and defend him, but makes his boast of him. He makes a public proclamation with joy in the very teeth of the devil, though he had so many pure angels about him, that one would think he should have spoken of with applause, as well as of a poor mortal. Was Job's grace very strong? What means, then, that multitude of impatient expressions scattered in the book?

[6.] He will therefore be faithful in it. His faithfulness is more illustrious in regarding the more troublesome parts of his charge, as the fidelity of a friend or servant is more evidenced by the difficulty than facility of his trust. When he knew how weak we are, and how apt to swerve, had he not been resolved to relieve us, he had never sent his Spirit to abide with us for such an end. The apostle assures us that the care lies upon him still to confirm us to the end: 1 Cor. i. 8, 'Who shall also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus:' in the day, not before; expect not grace to be triumphant till then. Wherein the faithfulness of God also bears a part, ver. 9; and surely those Corinthians were none of the strongest, when the apostle doubts whether he should write to them as spiritual or as unto carnal. The weakest is his seed, and he will not lose it. You cannot value your security more than Christ values the honour of his office; and it being his Father's pleasure that he should exercise it, it doth more affect him than the desires of your security can affect you. Suppose he himself had no love to grace, yet you cannot doubt but that he hath so much respect to his Father as not to displease him by a neglect of that which he solemnly committed to him as a pledge of his affection, and a testimony of his confidence in him. He will also be faithful to his own glory; but the 'fulfilling of the work of faith with power' is for the glory of his name, 2 Thes. i. 11, 12. It is one part of the glory he reserves to himself, to be admired not only by them that believe, but in them at the last day, ver. 10;

admired in the admirable conduct of their faith through all weaknesses and difficulties.

[7.] He has given evidences of this faithfulness. He never yet put out a dim candle that was lighted at the Sun of righteousness.

(1.) It was his course in the world. He found some smoking flax in the ruler : John iv. 47-49, ‘Come down and heal my son; come down ere my child die.’ He thought Christ could cure his son. There was some fire of faith, but not unless he came to his house, and that before he died too, as if Christ could not recover him by a word, and could not restore him after his breath was expired. Christ, according to his office of not quenching smoking flax, complies with him ; so Mat. vii. 32. Their faith thought Christ could cure their friends, but not unless he laid his hands upon them, yet he grants their requests. He easily complies with a weak faith, when he loves to put a strong one to its shifts ; as he did in the repulse he gave to the woman of Canaan, whose faith afterwards he applauds with admiration, ‘O woman, great is thy faith !’

(2.) It was his disposition after his resurrection, Luke xxiv. 13. He meets with two disciples going to Emmaus, who seem to have thrown away all their faith and hope in him, and to be upon the brink of the sin against the Holy Ghost : ver. 21, ‘We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel.’ The next words in course were like to have been, But we think him an imposter. But doth Christ with indignation cast them off, as though he would have no more to do with them ? No ; he takes pains to enliven their faith, and takes occasion from their weakness to renew their strength ; and that in so eminent a manner, that it seems to be one of the most excellent sermons that ever he preached, a comment upon the whole Scripture concerning himself, ver. 27. Beginning at Moses, he went through all the prophets, and expounded all the Scriptures concerning himself. He filled their heads with knowledge, and inspired their hearts with life.

(3.) After his ascension too. He takes notice of a little strength in Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 8, and opens a door for it that no man can shut. Well, did our Redeemer ever yet disappoint a trembling faith, or let a limping grace go from him without a blessing ? It is too late surely for him to begin now at the close of all things, when the world is almost at an end.

[8.] Therefore you may in the weakest state expect assistance. The weakest grace hath a throne of grace to supply it, a God of grace to delight in it, a Mediator of grace to influence it, a Spirit of grace to brood upon it. Though our grace be weak, yet the grace of all these are sufficient to preserve us. The weakest grace in Christ’s hand shall stand, when the strongest nature without his guard shall fail. It is not our hold of Christ so much preserves us, as Christ’s hold of us ; though the faith we hang by be a weak thread, yet Christ hath a strong hand. Had you the grace of a glorified saint, you could not maintain it without his help, and that is sufficient to conduct through the greatest storms into a safe harbour. The ‘preserved in Christ’ is the happy title of those that are sanctified by God the Father, as Jude speaks, ‘To them that are sanctified in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.’ His mercy is in the heavens ; his righteousness as the great mountain, stable ; his title issuing from thence is, the preserver of man and beast, Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6. And shall not that which is more valued by him than man and beast, that which is the cause of his keeping up the world, be preserved by him ? ‘Fear not, thou worm Jacob,’ Isa. xli. 14, ‘I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.’ What hath more need to fear than a worm, that is liable to be trod on by every passenger ? What hath more reason to fear than a creeping grace in

itself? Yet what hath less reason to be afraid, when backed by such a mighty power? It is a weakness, but fortified by an almighty strength; it hath a power which neither Adam with all his nature, nor the holy angels before their confirmation, were ever possessed of.

Well, then, the weaker thy grace the faster let thy dependence be on Christ, and then thou wilt be more secure by that exercise of faith than by the strongest grace without it. A small vessel, managed by a skilful pilot, may be preserved in a rough sea, when a stronger, left to itself, will dash in pieces.

(4.) Comfort against corruptions. Indwelling and easily besetting sin is that which makes a believer hang down his head. Oh this enemy within me that I cannot conquer! surely I shall one day die by the hand of Saul. It is our unbelief and the ignorance of the great transaction between God and Christ, and the tenor of the covenant of grace, which is the ground of all the practical doubts about this doctrine, as well as the notional disputes against it. Every member, though it hath boils and scabs, is as much a member of the body as the soundest, till it be cut off, and that it shall not hath been the design of the whole discourse to prove. Christ doth not cut it off, but heal it. Is it not a part of the covenant of grace to heal our backslidings? Hosea xiv. 4. When he finds a disease, he cures us by the application of his blood, for the end of his stripes was that we might be healed, Isa. liii. 5. And though God hath a piercing eye to see every sin, and the malignity of every circumstance, yet the motion of his eye that way is not to destroy, but to heal: Isa. lvii. 18, 19, 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him, though he walked frowardly.' We speak not now of a course of gross sins. No true believer can be guilty of that; there is a great difference between foul ing the feet in the mire, and a total wallowing in it like a swine with delight and pleasure.

Therefore consider that,

[1.] Christ's charge extends to this too. Is his charge not to break the bruised reed? He is by the same reason to provide against that which would break it. Is he not to quench the smoking flax? Then he is also to prevent the extinction of it by any other cause. The charge cannot be supposed only to tie his own hands from doing it. Such a comfort would be of a small value while we were endangered by powerful enemies. But this charge arms him with a commission, and lays a necessity upon him to prevent the breaking and quenching of it by any other hand, and therefore obligeth him to withstand that which is most able and most likely to do it, viz., indwelling sin. Though the devil be our great external enemy, yet this is our greatest internal, without whose assistance the keenest arrows of the devil would be shot at rovers, and be uncertain in their effects. Christ, therefore, undertaking the work, undertakes every part of the charge, and this among the rest. The conquest of this in the soul was the reason of the oblation of himself: Titus ii. 14, who gave himself for us, not only to redeem from iniquity, but to purify a people peculiar to himself. Is it agreeable to the wisdom of Christ to neglect the main end of his undertaking, which was 'to make an end of sin'? Dan. ii. 4. What end is there if it recover its loss, and regain its empire in a believing soul? It were in vain for him to go to heaven to prepare mansions for believers, and send his Spirit to prepare them for those mansions, if corruption should get a full head, which would incapacitate them for ever possessing those mansions. Would he be worthy of the name of Saviour, yea, and Salvation, a title God conferred upon him in the past ages, if he should not save those that have the mark of God upon them from that corruption, without which deliverance they could not enjoy

any real benefit of his purchased salvation? You have no reason to question his power, and as little to suspect his faithfulness. The distrust of either is an unworthy reflection upon that God that chose him for his work and upheld him in it. Infinite wisdom and immutable goodness would never have pitched upon a person, for the restoration of mankind, of a dubious fidelity. This were to disparage his wisdom, sully the glory of his mercy, and render the designs of his goodness insignificant. Shall not this great person be thought fit to be trusted by us against our enemies, when we have both his own word and his Father's for his willingness and ability, whom God thought fit to trust with a power against the greatest enemy he had in the world upon his own single promise? It is unworthy for us to nourish jealousies of so great a Redeemer, when God that sent him never had cause to have the least suspicion of him. Let me then beg this of any despondent soul, not to distrust the Redeemer's faithfulness, till you meet with a person of more unblemished fidelity to confide in.

[2.] He has an enmity against your corruptions. Sin hath done more wrong to God than ever it did to us. Can it be thought, then, that he should let so injurious an enemy reign in the hearts of any that love God, and are beloved by him. Your hatred against it cannot be so great as his, because you cannot arrive to an equality of holiness with him. The greater the holiness, the greater the hatred of anything contrary to it. Our high priest is 'holy, separate from sinners,' and therefore 'made higher than the heavens,' Heb. vii. 26. Separate from sin too, in all kinds of affection. Letting sin reign in them for whom he is a priest is inconsistent with the holiness of his office. Had he not had an indignation against sin, and a pity to the sinner, he would have spared both the trouble of coming and the pains of dying.

[3.] His residence in heaven is an evidence that this corruption shall be destroyed. The heavens must receive him till the time of the restitution of all things. Acts iii. 21, *'Αποκατάστασις, τελείωσις*; so Hesychius. Till the time of the perfection of all things. His being there is an evidence that things shall be restored to a perfect state. It was promised by God from the beginning of the world, all the prophecies were designed to declare it, that those things deformed by the devil should be restored to their primitive lustre. Things cannot be restored till sin be destroyed, grace fully completed, Satan put out of all dominion; in a word, all his enemies put under his feet. And we have the greatest assurance of this; for God hath repeated it again and again by all the prophets from the beginning of the world, as if God's thoughts run upon nothing else but this, and the spirit of prophecy was nothing else but 'the testimony of Jesus' (as indeed it is not, Rev. xix. 10), a witness of what Christ was to do. He hath the government to restore things. If everything is to be restored, believers certainly shall not be left out. It was his main design to expel unbelief and sin out of the hearts of his disciples by his gracious exhortations when he was in the world; much more will he do it by his power conferred upon him since his resurrection, and possessed by him upon his ascension. He sits king in heaven to restore this.

[4.] It is his glory to conquer them. The stronger our corruptions are, the firmer ground hath Christ to glorify his strength in our weakness. If they were not so strong and sin so foul, redemption would not appear so plenteous. His office is chiefly exercised about those. When those are fully conquered in all the elect, his office ceaseth, and the kingdom is to be resigned to the Father. Till then he is a shepherd, and in that respect his office is to find his sheep out when they wander, and bring them home. If

he came to seek that which was lost, it is no less for his honour to preserve that which he hath found. The choicer the thing, and the stronger the opposition, the more glory accrues to the preserver of it. Is it for his honour to begin a work in thee, and start back from it? Is it likely he would ever have struck a stroke at those hard hearts of ours, if he did not intend to make thorough work with them? He never yet did any work by halves, and shall he begin now?

[5.] It is already condemned by him. God condemned sin in the flesh by the sacrifice of Christ: Rom. viii. 3, ‘And for sin condemned sin in the flesh.’ As at his death there was a general condemnation of sin in its nature, so upon faith in this sacrifice, our faith in his blood, there is a particular condemnation of sin in its power, as an unrighteous thing, and not fit, by reason of its malignity, to have a standing there. He condemned it by his holiness in the law, by his justice in the death of Christ, and by his mercy in the renewing of thy nature, which is always accompanied with a condemnation, and in part an execution, of sin. When the guilt of thy sin was pardoned, the power of thy sin was condemned. As the pardon of the one will not be reversed, so neither shall the condemnation of the other. If it be condemned by our Saviour in his flesh, it will be conquered in us by his Spirit; for whatsoever was done by Christ as mediator in his person, was an evidence of what he would do by his Spirit in his members, according to their capacity. Hence they are said to be crucified, risen, ascended, and to sit in heavenly places with him, not only virtually in him as their head, but spiritually in themselves. Shall a dying, gasping sin overpower a living, thriving grace? Sin, therefore, shall be conquered. The Father, by his Spirit, will purge away the worms and suckers which may hinder the growth and ripening of the fruit: John xv. 2, ‘Every branch that bears fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.’ If a branch, though small, he will take care to remove the hindrance to its fruitfulness. God foresaw what infirmities thou wouldest have, before he gave Christ this commission; and Christ foresaw them before his acceptance of the charge. If their presence could not stop God in his gift, nor cool Christ in his acceptance, why should it now? But,

(1.) This conquest is by degrees. It is victory promised in the text; therefore a conflict is implied, and must be endured. Victory doth not attend the beginning of a war just at the heels. Some time must be allowed between the smoke and flame. Christ must not quench the smoke; but grace may smoke, and only smoke for a while. His charge is to keep that which is committed to him, not presently to overthrow its enemies. He will eye his authority and instructions, as he is God’s servant; for as he hath ‘received a commandment from his Father,’ John xiv. 31, so he acts. He will not perfect it in an instant, but at length he will. Light, and a fulness of it, is sown for the righteous. It is but sown; time must be allowed between that and the harvest. The new creation is no more than the old was, perfected at once. Can you expect your Saviour should make quicker work with you than with his disciples when he was upon the earth? It was his pleasure not to reduce them presently to a perfect state. Neither can we expect more than our Saviour prayed for, which was not that you should be without foils to your faith, but without the failing of your faith. He did not desire his Father presently to take them out of a world of sin, or sin presently from them, but to preserve them under it from being conquered by it. God works to will and to do, but of his own good pleasure; not as we please, but as himself pleaseth.

(2.) Yet while they do continue, the love of God to thee is not hindered

by them. The incorruptible seed, which is his own, will more prevail to draw out his love than thy infirmities to engage his hatred against thee. When Christ hung upon the cross, with all the sins of believers about him, God did not withdraw his love from him, because of that righteousness, holiness, and love to God found in him ; yet he withdrew his comfortable presence, to shew his hatred of sin. As God dealt with the head, so he will with the members. Especially if your hearts begin to hanker after any sin, though he hath engaged not to take away his loving-kindness from you, yet he may withdraw his comfort till you have repented of your sin. He may chastise you with rods, but will not suffer his faithfulness to fail. He will, as a mother, raise you when you fall, but whip you for falling, to cause you to take more heed. Christ seems to have had as much reason to cast off his disciples as ever he had to cast off any believing soul since. None could ever forsake him in such extremity as they did, for his person will never be in the like straits again. Yet, having once loved them, he loved them to the end, and after the end, after his resurrection, as appears by viewing the story. And it is to be observed, that though their unbelief, ignorance, and pride did often fume from them in the presence of their Master, yet Christ mentions none of them in his prayer to his Father ; only their grace : John xvii. 6-8, ‘ They have kept thy word ; they have believed that thou didst send me.’ They had indeed received the word of God, but it was lodged in souls very muddy.

(3.) While they do continue, God by his wisdom and grace draws profit to you from them. The very stirring of one sin is sometimes the ruin of another ; a gross sin sometimes is the occasional break-neck of spiritual pride. The high thoughts Peter had conceived of himself upon the confession of Christ, were not scattered till he had as shamefully denied him as before he had gloriously confessed him. The thorn in the flesh of that great apostle, whether it was an outward temptation or inward corruption, kept him upon his level, from being ‘ lifted up above measure.’ Thus doth Christ make good his charge by ordering things so by his wisdom, that that which would in itself quench the smoking flax is an occasional means to inflame it. The fogs, which threaten the choking the sun, make his heat more vigorous after the dispersion of those vapours. Neither can sin, because it hath no positive being, be excluded from the number of those things which, by the overruling grace of God, are ordered to our good, Rom. viii. 28, though it be not so in its own nature, since the penmen of Scripture spake not alway according to the rules and terms of philosophy.

For a close, therefore, of this. Perhaps it is our own fault that our corruptions are no more shattered. God hath given you success against some sin ; but have your hearts been as much elevated in praise for it, as they were before fervent in prayer ? If corruption gather strength, charge not God with want of love, but yourselves with want of thankfulness. Prayer procures mercy, but praise is a means to continue it. As we must depend upon his strength for a victory, so we must acknowledge his strength in our success, else he may withdraw his power, and our enemies may thereupon reassume new life, and assault us with a greater courage. Again, let not anything you have heard of the faithfulness and power of Christ make you neglect your duty. Let Asaph be your pattern, Ps. lxxiii., who, after a strong conflict with sin, had an assurance that God would guide him by his counsel to glory, ver. 24. This makes him not lazy, but quickens him into a resolve that it was good, and good for him too, ‘ to draw nigh to God,’ ver. 28. God is ready with his counsel to guide us, but we must be ready with our petitions.

Use 3. Matter of duty.

(1.) How should men labour to get into a state of grace! To get within the verge of Christ's commission, into such a security which may at last bring them to an eternal triumph over death and hell! Security of estate, and security of person and interest, is the main intendment of men in the world. But security of soul is least in men's thoughts. Should not this latter be as seriously minded? Were there a strong tower wherein they might be infallibly preserved in the time of hostile invasion, and be out of the reach of the enemy's battery, how greedy would men be to get under the shelter! Such a strong tower is the name of the Lord, and those that put their trust in him shall be safe both against open invasions and secret stratagems: Prov. xviii. 10, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe.' By the name of the Lord, the Jews understand in this place, and in many other, the Messiah appointed for the security of the righteous. Methinks every natural man should run with all haste into his closet, fall upon his knees, and not rise till he hath that grace which is by God's order the subject of Christ's tender care. Methinks he should cry and groan, sigh and pray, till he have at least some smoking flax. There is no medium; we must either be under the conduct of Christ, or the government of the devil. If we are in our natural state, we are not enrolled in Christ's family. There is nothing for Christ, but enough for the devil to make victorious. Smoking grace shall grow into a flame of love, and smoking sins into a flame of wrath. Smoking grace is under his care, and smoking sins under his vengeance. As at the last Christ shall come to be admired in all them that believe, *i.e.* in the conduct of them through grace to happiness, so he shall be admired too in the vengeance he shall take upon all them that obey not the gospel, 2 Thes. i. 8, 10.

(2.) Examine whether you have grace or no. It is not lost time to inquire whether you have this victorious principle. Put those questions to your souls: Have I a sincere resolution to discard my former sin? Do I most abhor my darling lusts? Is the burden of this body of death my greatest grief? Have I valuations of Christ above all the world? Would I rather be under the gracious government of Christ, than be the greatest prince in the world without it? Do I esteem God my chief good, and delight in spiritual converse with him, above thousands of gold and silver? Have I a relish of the things of God above all the pleasures of sense? Is the knowledge of God, and excitation of my affections towards him, my chief light? Try it by its activity. It is a true maxim, *Operari sequitur esse*, to be without operation is not to be. If there be not the operation, there is not the essence of grace. It is impossible so active a being as that should lie idle in the soul; there will be smoke, strong desires, ascents upwards, and aims at an heavenly region, though sometimes it be hindered in its direct ascent by the violence of the winds, as the smoke is. Every creature is active in that which concerns its welfare; grace therefore will be as active as any natural thing whatsoever, according to its degrees, because it is a divine communication, a participation of the divine nature. It being more noble, and of a choicer extraction, than any other creature, it will be more active to resist the invasions of the devil, and to move towards God as its chief end.

Only take these cautions:

[1.] Judge not of thy want of grace by the not acting of that grace which formerly was very vigorous. One grace may for a time cease to act so sensibly, to give way to the powerful operations of another. John Baptist did decrease, that Christ might increase. Graces have their particular seasons to traverse the stage of the soul; sometimes love, sometimes hope, sometimes

patience, humility, faith, and dependence, sometimes sorrow for sin, sometimes joy, &c.

[2.] Grace may be sometimes oppressed by a temptation, and so may cease a sensible acting, but it will recover itself by degrees.

[3.] If you find upon a diligent search that you have true grace, take heed of nourishing jealousies of God, and unbelieving doubts of the care of Christ over you. We indeed often have our fears of ourselves upon the clouding of our evidences; and when we have reason to question the truth of our grace, we have very good reason to question our standing also. Though we have a clear prospect of our grace, and know it to be true, yet there may be fears in us of what might have been, had we not this security in Christ's commission. As a man upon a high tower, though hemmed in with strong battlements, and sure that he cannot fall, yet when he looks down he cannot but have some horror and chillness in his blood at the apprehension of what might be if he had not that protection.* Neither do I discourage fears in ourselves, and fears of those things which may weaken our hopes of salvation, for those the apostle joins with a confidence in God: Philip. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do.' Fear yourselves, but have confidence in God, a believing fear without an unbelieving jealousy of God's neglect of you; for all doubts of the stability of the covenant, and the perpetual tenderness of God, are brats of a natural Pelagianism. Breathe not your unbelieving fears in the face of Christ; it is a wrong to his commission, a disparagement to his Father's wisdom, as if he had placed so great a trust in feeble hands, and a virtual accusing of God and Christ of the greatest falsity imaginable, whereby we make him more base and deceitful than the worst of men; an affronting the main tenor of the covenant of grace, and making the work of redemption to bear no better fruits than that of creation. How languishing will be our love to God, while we have unworthy suspicions of him, that he should love us this day, and be an enemy to us to-morrow! Can we love a man this day that we fear will the next be our deadly enemy? Let the time spent in such jealous thoughts and complaints of God be spent in duty. Would it not be a trouble to a loving husband to have his wife complain of her fears of his casting her off after the marriage-knot, and reiterated promises and assurances of his affection? Would she not better engage his affections by a performance of all offices of love and duty towards him?

[4.] Let not this doctrine encourage any remissness in our known duties. Let none encourage themselves to a freedom in sin, and presume upon God's preservation of them without the use of the means. No; the electing counsel upon which this victory is founded, chose us to the means as well as to the end. He that makes such a consequence, I doubt whether ever he was a Christian. I may safely say, that any person that hath a settled, resolved, and wilful remissness, never yet was in the covenant of grace, since that promiseth such a fear of God in the heart which is incompatible with a resolved laziness in duty. It is a new heart and a new spirit, not a lazy heart, that is the intendment of the covenant. The same will which is the seat of grace can never be the settled seat of the neglects of God. God hath promised a victory; but the very promise of victory implies a war, and commands as well as encourages a standing to our arms. Victories are never gained by sleep and laziness; camps may be beat up, and throats cut, if guards be neglected. He that is not under the influence of the doctrine of grace, never had the truth of habitual grace in him. He that hath not learned the lesson which the grace or gospel of God teacheth, to 'deny ungodliness and worldly

* Thes. Salm. de Persever.

lusts,' &c., Titus ii. 11, 12, was never any proficient in Christ's school, never had any work of grace. It is the nature of grace to be active. It is a divine principle, security a diabolical; darkness and light cannot blend together in intense degrees, Christ and Belial cannot shake friendly hands. Security is never the effect, but the disease, of grace, the death of holiness, and the life of sin. That grace which assures us to the end, will make us conscientious in the means to attain it. A partial security is also very dangerous in a Christian: it will kill our comfort, though it may not destroy our souls; it will impair the beauty of grace, though not its being. Would any but a madman under a distemper neglect the means to restore his healthfulness, because he were sure to live so long a time?

[5.] Admire the grace of God. How much are we beholding to the grace of God, which is at an hourly expense upon us! As his providence is called a continual creation by the efflux of his power, so our preservation in the new state is a continual regeneration by the influence of his grace. God, in giving thee grace, hath given thee more than if he had given thee all the glory of the world. All other things are managed only by a common providence, this is put more immediately under Christ's charge. By giving thee this, which is a peculiar part of his commission, he hath given thee such a guardian, such an advantage, which could never have been gained by a confluence of all the honours in the world. It is a standing miracle in the world, that all the floods of temptations should not be able to quench this little heavenly spark in the heart; that it should be preferred from being smothered by the steams of sin which arise in us; that a little smoking flax should smoke and burn in spite of all the buckets of water which are poured upon it. To see a rich jewel in a child's hand, with a troop of thieves about him snatching at it, and yet not able to plunder, would raise an astonishment both in the actors and spectators, and make them conclude an invisible strength that protects the child, and defeats the invaders. Thus God perfects his strength in our weakness, and ordains matter for praise in the mouths and hearts of babes and sucklings.

[6.] Acknowledge thy standing and thy present victories only to be by the grace of God. Give the grace of God its due praise. God hath fixed our standing in Christ, and entrusted and charged him with our preservation, that grace might triumph in the whole Christian pilgrimage, till we come to the land of rest; that nothing may be heard either in heaven or earth, but the acclamations of grace, grace. 'God put no trust in his saints,' Job xv. 15; in some other person therefore, as the head of them. The ground of our perseverance is not in ourselves then, since God puts no trust in us, but in another, in the mediator.

We cannot beat men too much off from themselves; and therefore to strengthen this, take these grounds:

(1.) Grace in its own nature is not immutable, nor independent. Immutability is not intrinsical to grace; neither is it, nor can it be, the essential property of any creature, though never so high. It is a natural perfection belonging only to God. The habit of grace is called an incorruptible seed; not that it is so in its own nature (for it is a creature, and therefore defective); for mutability is as much belonging to the essence of a creature, as immutability to the essence of God. As it is impossible God should be mutable, so it is impossible a creature should be in its own nature immutable; but grace is immortal in respect of that omnipotent power which doth attend the principle, and spreads its warm wings over it, as the Spirit over the world, to bring it to a perfect beauty and order out of the chaos. If grace did not depend upon God in its preservation, but were unchangeable in its

own nature, it might be counted as perfect as God, whose only prerogative it is to be independent and immutable in himself. The heathens could say, there was no *rò òv*, no *ens*, but God; in him we have our being, and in him only we have our firm and stable being.

(2.) The same power that doth create, is necessary to preserve. There is little difference between creation and conservation: the one gives *primo esse*, the other *porro esse*. The wisdom and power of God is as eminent in the preservation and government of the world, as in the rearing of it. We are no more able to preserve grace, than we are to create it. We cannot preserve our own thoughts, which are the natural products of our minds, much less so rich a treasure as grace, which is purely supernatural, and in the midst of so many pirates which endeavour to rob us of it. As the first habitual grace is by the operation of God's grace in us, so the daily preservation of it is by his assisting grace, which in a sweet way, and yet efficacious, keeps grace in its station, and carries on the soul to further degrees. As it is the preserving power of God maintains the world, so the auxiliary grace of God maintains grace, and all the exercises of it in the heart, which could not else be kept up by all the power of men's wit or will. As the influence of the sun is necessary to all natural productions, preservation and maturity of them, so is the influence of Christ necessary to all productions and preservations of grace. The righteousness whereby we are justified, and whence our habitual grace doth spring, is laid up in Christ, and our strength too: Isa. xlvi. 24, 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Righteousness to justify us, and strength to preserve us; and as he is our Redeemer, laying thereby the foundation of the new creation, so he is our strength whereby it is preserved: Ps. xix. 14, 'O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.' The former part of the psalm is by the apostle, in the Romans, applied to the times of the gospel. Our redemption and our strength, our righteousness imputed, our righteousness inherent, and our strength, are the effects of the same cause; so that we can no more be our own strength than be our own redeemers, nor be our own strength no more than our own righteousness. When Paul complains of his temptation, God answers him that his grace should be sufficient for him; not the habitual grace in Paul, but the assisting grace of God, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Hence it is that the saints in Scripture desire so often God to help them, which they need not, if their inherent grace were sufficient to preserve them.

(3.) The standing of those who are in their consummate state in glory, is only by grace as the chief cause. The good angels and blessed souls are confirmed in that state by a superabounding grace; for by nature they are mutable. Was it the contemplation of the face of God that kept the angels firm in that state? What is the reason some of the angels fell, who contemplated God's face at the creation as well as those that stood? Or is it that they see no good which they want, being advanced the highest of any creatures? Was not this the case of the fallen angels? What good did they want which was proper to a created state?* Besides, confirmation is *positivus effectus*, a positive effect, and therefore must have a positive cause, a privative cause not being sufficient to produce a positive effect. Or do the good angels and glorified saints continue firm to God, because they know that, if they sin, they should be eternally miserable? But this doth not become a blessed state, to avoid sin for fear of punishment, rather than love of righteousness. Besides, the happiness of heaven could not be eternal, nor the joy pure, that is mixed with those fears of falling and losing it. Or is it from an affection to the pleasure of the place? Such a self-principle

* Bradw. de Causa Dei. l. ii. c. xv.

becomes not the purity of that state. But though their inherent grace, the contemplation of God, and delight in him, may be some means of their standing, and methods God useth, yet those are not sufficient of themselves. It is God in his incomprehensible grace which preserves them. It is an excellent speech of a holy man of our neighbour nation: ‘I am sure if my feet were in heaven, and Christ should say, Defend thyself, I will hold thee no longer; I should go no farther, but presently fall down in many pieces of dead nature.’* If you could find one saint that in that place of glory ascribes the beginning or perfection of his salvation to himself, then glory in yourselves too. But not till then, and I am sure you never will.

(4.) If all this be true, much less can the best grace in this world preserve itself, because at best in itself it is weaker than its adversaries. No sooner is grace put into the heart, but all the powers of hell are in arms against it, and would murder the new-born heavenly nature. Now it being a creature weak and imperfect, it cannot be so powerful in operation, as to resist the force of a stronger being, and a subtle and insinuating adversary. Were there no devils to assault, I do not understand how this principle, so weak in itself, were able to make head against the deceitfulness of our own hearts. It is the Spirit steps in to quell those destroyers, and brood upon his own work in the soul. What! Was it Peter’s strength, or God’s grace in him, that made the difference between him and Judas, between Paul and the rest of the persecuting pharisees? It is from God’s faithfulness that we are established and kept from evil: 2 Thes. iii. 3, ‘But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from evil.’ If God, not ourselves; it is true we will, but God works that will in us. We work, but the grace of God works that work in us, and for us. If by grace we are what we are, it is by grace we do what we do, and that of God’s good pleasure, not our merit. Our sufficiency is of God, not of ourselves. Our fruitfulness depends upon our abiding in Christ. What can dust and ashes do against principalities and powers? What man is able, without the grace of God, to wrestle with an experienced devil? A smoking flax would quickly be blown out or expire after a little blaze, if God did not cherish it; a bruised reed would be trod in the dirt, if he did not secure it. A gracious man depends upon God, as the steel doth upon the loadstone in the air, which, if once separated, will be carried down with its own weight, and be reduced to a motion proper to its nature. If God should withdraw his grace from us, the grace in us would not preserve us from falling as low as hell; for of itself it is far more insufficient to preserve us, than the strength which angels and Adam had was to preserve them. We are preserved not by any inherent power in ourselves, but by the constant touches of God upon our wills, whereby he keeps our wills fixed to him.

Let not, then, our free will usurp the praise which is due only to God’s grace.

(1.) There is danger in it. To ascribe thy standing or victory to thyself, is an usher to some scurvy and deplorable fall. When we confide too much in ourselves, God leaves us to our own foolish confidence, to reduce us to our proper dependency on him. Peter’s boasting of the power of his own grace was a just cause of his being left to himself, that he might be sensible of his own weakness, and the true ground of his security. If we do fall, it is not for want of faithfulness in God, but for want of thankfulness in us.

(2.) It is our sin. So much as we ascribe anything to our own strength, so much we rob grace of its glory. We provoke the Lord to jealousy, who will not have the glory due to his name ascribed to the creature.

(3.) The contrary is our advantage. The acknowledgment of our depend-

* Rutherford’s Letters, p. 184.

ency on God is the way to be preserved ; the more we give God the glory of his grace, the more will he give us the comfort of it.

[7.] Let the falls of others that seem stronger than you make you more thankful, and more compassionate. If they make you more thankful, they will make you more compassionate. Though you may be engraven with more lively characters of God's image, and in an higher manner like to God, yet grace is to be acknowledged that kept temptations from overcoming you. Let not your pride, but your praise, take encouragement from thence. Think not yourselves better, because you are victorious while others are defeated, but God more gracious to you. The continuance of his assisting grace was the cause of your success, as the withdrawing of it was the cause of the other's defeat. If this too much natural corruption be indulged, it is a ground to fear we may shortly be his successors in the like fault, or a worse.

Be more compassionate to others : Gal. vi. 1, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness'; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Let the faults of others teach us to exercise the grace of humility in our hearts, and carriage towards them. Make not the breach wider by our censures, which is too wide already by Satan's power. Restore with meekness, not proud censoriousness ; by a dove-like meekness, like that of our Saviour ; the case may shortly be our own, and we may stand in need of his assistance for our restoration. To pity or help a gracious man in such a case, is to assist Christ in his charge, and be his seconds in his duel against the devil, and will be kindly accepted by him. God commanded in the law to help a beast, if they saw it in a ditch. It is unnatural to let an infant lie on the ground, and not lend a hand to lift it up ; much more to let an infant grace, the birth of God and charge of Christ, to lie grovelling in the earth by the power of sin.

[8.] Despise not therefore small grace in any. Is Christ to have a special regard to smoking flax and bruised reeds ? Is it fit we should be of a temper contrary to our Saviour in despising that which God hath ordered him to regard ? Must that be the object of our laughter, which is the object of Christ's tenderest care ? Is that to be the subject of our scorn, which is one of the chief parts of his commission to take care of ? Can he be thought to be regenerate, who is of a disposition so contrary to him who ought to be his pattern ? If God's soul be well-pleased with Christ's care of small grace, he must abominate any temper so opposite to his own and that of his Son. It is a pride and a scorn like to that of devils, not a spirit like that of God. As the least sin in others must not draw our affection, so the weakest grace in others must not lie under our contempt. Would you tread upon a diamond because it is little, or slight a star bigger than the whole earth, because it seems a little twinkling spark in your eye ? Let us look to it, then, that we disesteem not that in another which is of more worth than the whole mass of the ungracious world. It is a gallant disposition not to be offended with that smoke which doth not offend the Redeemer's eye.

[9.] Stand fast. Leave not off till you gain a full victory, till judgment be brought forth to victory. It is necessary. He that is not at last victorious was never any soldier under Christ's pay, or inspired with Christ's spirit. Men may think they stand fast, and are in a prosperous way to victory, when they are not : 1 Cor. x. 12, 'Wherefore, let him that thinks he stands fast take heed lest he fall.' There must, therefore, be much watchfulness and wariness used. Though this doctrine stands firm, yet such exhortations must be used. The word of Christ to Peter, that his faith should not fail, was as firm as a rock; yet, Mat. xxvi. 40, 41, 'He saith unto Peter, Watch and pray, that you enter not into a temptation ;' he stirs him

up particularly to his watchful guard, though there were two others besides that had not that assurance from his mouth, that their faith should not fail, as Peter had. Paul promiseth the Corinthians, in the name of God, 1 Cor. x. 13, 14, that God would not suffer them to be tempted above measure; must they therefore stand idle, and suffer themselves to be carried down the stream of a temptation, and leave God wholly to do his work? No; ver. 14, he draws an argument from this promise to exhort them to do their duty, ‘Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry;’ fly, not creep, not go, not walk. Promises are not to encourage our laziness, but quicken our industry. Let not the charge, then, brought against Ephraim fall upon us, that ‘our goodness is like a morning dew,’ Hosea vi. 4. When men begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, the end will be both dreadful and shameful. An eternal crown is entailed upon a constant faithfulness. Our running in a race near to the end will be insignificant, if then our antagonist get the start of us. It is by this constancy we come nearest the name of God, which is, ‘I am that I am,’ unchangeable in perfections, and immutable in goodness. Our actions should be suitable to the reward promised, which is not for a day or two, but for eternity. We must hold on and wrestle till we get the blessing. Without continuance, we lose our pains, and the fruit of them, our crown. Run not slowly; but that you may obtain, let your eye upon the crown; you will never else run swiftly, because not cheerfully. But, withal, means must be used to stand fast in grace and gain a victory.* God doth not preserve a Christian by force, or compel him to keep his standing, as he doth establish the earth, or the heavens; but by rational means, by promises and precepts suitable to the condition of a rational and voluntary agent, and proposing affective and alluring arguments to encourage him in his course; yet he leaves not the success barely to this, and the operation of our own wills, but attends it with the supernatural power of his Spirit, suitable to the manner of our first conversion, which was not by violence, but by the proposals of the gospel, and the salvation promised in it, wherein a secret power of the Spirit was exerted upon the heart, enlightening the mind, and inclining the will, and drawing it with the cords of a man in a way of love, to a compliance with the gospel promise. So, likewise, in the preservation and progress of grace, there is still a secret working of the Spirit of God with outward exhortations and admonitions to perseverance, thereby keeping up the new habit and new heart in us, quickening it by outward means and rational ways suited to the judgment and reason of the new creature; and thus keeping his hand upon the will, he moves it to such ends for which he first touched it, and draws it on from one degree unto another, till it comes to perfection.

Therefore we must not make use of this doctrine to neglect the means God hath appointed for the establishing and completing of grace; since God acts with us as rational creatures, we are not only passive but active subjects in this work. John assures the believers that the unction in them should preserve them from soul-destroying errors. There is this passive perseverance: 1 John ii. 27, ‘As it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.’ Must they therefore be careless? No; ver. 28, he backs it with duty on their parts, ‘Wherefore, my little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence;’ abide in him that certainly abides in you. There is scarce a promise in the whole book of God to encourage us, but is somewhere or other attended with a precept to quicken us.

Means.

(1.) Look well to sincerity. This is the blood and vital spirit which runs through the veins of every grace, without which it is not what it seems to

* Camero de Eccles. p. 227.

be. Faith is not faith unless it be unfeigned, and what may seem to be love is not so unless it be sincere. Sincerity is that principle in the heart which complies with the quickening grace of God, as the vital spirit in a plant doth with the beams of the sun, which doth not only make it stand, but grow against the injuries of the weather. It was God's manner long ago to have a special respect to sincerity: Job viii. 20, 'Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil-doer;' נָא בַּיְד יְהוָה מִנְחָה. He will, not despise or turn away himself. If a sincere man falls, he will reach out his hand to lift him up, as the antithesis manifests. The word being in the Hebrew, he will not take the evil-doer by the hand, נָא בַּיְד יְהוָה מִנְחָה, implying that he doth hold the other, and raise him up. It is our sincerity in withstanding the sins and temptations of the world, that the promise of perfect sanctification is made to: Rev. iii. 4, 5, 'Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white:' they shall be clothed in white. An allusion to the Jewish custom of admitting the priests into their office, by clothing them with white as a badge of their office and continuance in the priesthood. 'Job held fast his integrity,' Job ii. 3; and that was a means to preserve and recover him. Uncompounded things are least subject to putrefaction, whereas mixed bodies easily ferment and corrupt. Sincerity can never be feeble, because the spirit of power always attends it: 2 Tim. i. 7, 'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.' The apostle couples them both together. A single respect to Christ in the midst of shaking persecution, is both an evidence of the strong touch of the heart by the Spirit, and a preservative against apostasy; as the standing right of the needle in the compass, in the midst of the winds which toss the ship, manifests its powerful touch by the loadstone, and is a means to direct it in its course and preserve it from a wreck.

(2.) Get a stock of spiritual knowledge, and actuate it often. The grave, considering Christian will stand, when the hot-headed professor, like horses of the same temper, will jade and sink under the rider in a few miles. Men whose religion consists rather in a commotion of their passions than a judicious and considerate determination of their wills, will quickly flag; hot beginners are not durable; violent motions, either in naturals or morals, are not perpetual; get the experience of every truth you hear. Experimental knowledge is the true ballast of the soul, when mere sound and air is a rolling and moveable thing. Mere head professors are as light as a cork dancing upon every dash of water. An experimental taste of the grace of God, viz., that grace of Christ which produceth a coming to him, is a means to be built up a spiritual house: 1 Peter ii. 3-5, 'If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' It must be a taste, not only the hearing of a sound; it is not enough to be sound in judgment, but spiritual in taste, Col. i. 23. Skilful musicians, who understand the delicacy of the airs in a tune, will chain their ears to the sound, when an unskilful person will listen and stare a while, and run away. Our valuations of God are according to the degrees of our knowledge; and our cleavings to him, according to the degrees of our estimations of him. Actuate it often; let thy knowledge sink down to thy will, and lie ready by thee, to bring forth new and old upon any exigency. The forgetting the precepts and promises of God is the cause of fainting, Heb. xii. 5: 'Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy time and strength of salvation,' Isa. xxxiii. 6. As this makes the kingdom of Christ stable in the world, so it will the kingdom of grace in our souls. Get, therefore, and actuate a knowledge of the tenor of the covenant, the substance of the promises, the nature and ends of Christ's mediation: 'Be strong in the

grace that is in Christ,' 2 Tim. ii. 1, 3 ; have a right understanding of the covenant of grace which is manifested in and by Christ, of the stock of grace stored up in Christ. This will make you endure hardship as the soldiers of Christ ; this will make you high-spirited in the acting of your faith and pleas before God, without which both your faith and prayers will be very faint and languishing.

(3.) Rest not in small degrees of grace. It is true, weak grace will keep close to Christ ; Philadelphia with her little strength kept Christ's words, Rev. iii. 8 ; yet that pretended grace that always remains in the same posture, may well be suspected as a counterfeit. He that stands at a stay in what he supposeth to be grace, never had grace in truth. It is impossible anything should be without its essential properties, and it is an essential property of grace to grow ; it would not else be the seed of God and an immortal principle. He that hath grace, finds such a pleasure and excellency in it, that he can but have little acquiescence in himself without exercise of it. If you do not strengthen your grace, you will make way to strengthen your doubts. Though weak grace will carry a man to heaven, it will be just as a small and weak vessel surprised by a shattering storm, which, though it may get to the shore, yet with excessive hardships and fears ; such will sail through a stormy sea, and have a daily contest with stormy doubts ready to overset their hopes ; whereas a stout ship, well rigged, will play with the waves in the midst of a tempest, and at last pass through all difficulties, without many fears, into its haven. We are not perfect here. Perfection is a title peculiar to the blessed : Heb. xii. 23, 'The spirits of just men made perfect.' Yet we must press forward towards it, to attain the resurrection of the dead, Philip. ii. 11, *i.e.* such a perfection of holiness which shall be the state of glorified souls. When this is our mark, we shall have a further progress in the degrees of grace, and by that means be nearer to a complete victory. Though a man cannot reach the sun in shooting, yet if he aim at it, he shall mount his arrow higher than if he aimed at a shrub.

Well, then, let our aims be at the highest degrees. He is so far from gaining strength that doth not aspire to a further conquest, that he is in danger to be beaten out of what he hath, and lose the things which he hath wrought. To take up our rest beneath it, is a sign that neither the hatred of sin, our enemy, nor the love of God, our friend, were ever sincere and well rooted. Not to arrive to a complete victory is our weakness ; not to aspire to it is our sin ; for it answers not the design of Christ's coming, which was not only that we might have life spiritual and eternal, but an abounding life : John x. 10, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' Not a decreasing life, or one that stands at a stay.

(4.) Study much your exemplar and copy. That hope whereby we expect to become like Christ in an eternally happy state, must be formed by no lower copy than that of Christ himself : 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope, (*i.e.* to see him as he is) purifies himself, as he is pure ;' not as the saints are pure, as Abraham, Noah, Job, Daniel. He that steers himself only by the lower exemplars, will be more subject to imperfect draughts and failings than he that endeavours to form his soul and life according to the original. He that sets the best copy to imitate, will exceed others who propose lower patterns, though he may not yet come near the original. The apostle directs to study Christ much, who is the foundation of our standing : Heb. xii. 3, 'Consider him that endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds ;' consider him as the author and finisher of your faith ; consider him in his patience on the cross, despising the shame, and the success of his heroic temper, and this will in-

spire you with a holy courage under the contradictions of corruptions and temptations against your grace. This is our duty : Mat. v. 48, ‘ Be you therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ Christ himself commands it when he exhorts them to mount above publicans in their duty, and not to conform themselves to the low patterns of the world. Some translate it, *You shall be perfect*, enforcing thereby the strength of the command ; as men, when they would impose anything by the stress of their authority, say, *You shall* do such a thing, instead of saying, *Do* such a thing. Be as resolute and vigorous in all your duties to God, as he is in all his notes of mercy and goodness to you.

(5.) Be conscientious in the performance of holy duties. A fire which for a while shoots up to heaven will faint both in its heat and brightness, without fresh supplies of nourishing matter. Bring fresh wood to the altar morning and evening, as the priests were bound for the nourishment of the holy fire, Lev. v. 12. God in all his promises supposeth the use of means. When he promised Hezekiah his life for fifteen years, it cannot be supposed that he should live without eating and exercise. It is both our sin and misery to neglect the means. Therefore, let an holy and an humble spirit breathe in all our acts of worship. If we once become listless to duty, we shall quickly become lifeless in it. If we languish in our duties, we shall not long be lively in our graces. The loss of the stomach is a sign of the loss of health. If we would flourish, we must drink of those waters which spring up to everlasting life. If we desire our leaves should prosper, we should often plant ourselves by the rivers of waters ; we must be where the sun shines, the dews drop, and the Spirit blows. If you find yourselves growing into a slothful temper, check it betimes, and recall to your minds the pleasure you have had in your lively and warm converses with God in any duty, and how delightful afterwards both the beauty and comfort of your graces were. Liveliness in action is a sign of the continuance of health, and liveliness in duty an evidence of the continuance of grace. Let them all be performed in the strength of Christ. It is not means or ordinances bring judgment to victory, but Christ in them.

[1.] Attend upon the word and sacraments. As the word was the seed whence grace did spring, so it is the channel through which strength and nourishment is conveyed. It is the seed whereby we are begotten, 1 Peter i. 23, and the milk whereby we are nourished, 1 Pet. ii. 2. If the stomach to our spiritual food grow weak, the vigour of our grace will quickly begin to gasp.

[2.] Prayer. This is the chiefest duty, and that which makes all others more vigorous in their tendency to their end. Our Saviour breathes out strong cries, though he had the strongest assurances of a victorious success, Heb. v. 7. Promises of perseverance should be the guides of our prayers. We may pray most comfortably for that which we are sure to speed in. The Spirit which is sent to comfort us in our fears of miscarrying, is a spirit of supplication as well as a spirit of grace, Zech. xii. 10. Where it is most a spirit of grace, it will be also most a spirit of supplication. To talk of a gracious man that neglects prayer, is as great nonsense as to tell us of a living man that doth not breathe. We in all our distresses make our application to those that have power in their hands. It is God only draws us to Christ, and keeps us with him. It is Christ that is ordered to bring forth judgment unto victory. To him therefore we must be petitioners. He gives us first the grace of desire, that he may with the more honour confer the mercy he intends us. Our Saviour sets us a pattern in praying to the Father to preserve and keep us, John xvii. We must not therefore be negligent in our desires of it, or distrustful of the success, especially when we have encourage-

ments by Christ's petition for the same thing, who was never denied by his Father any request for his people. You have many arguments to use : Ps. lxviii. 28, 'Strengthen, O Lord, what thou hast wrought for us.' Let thy power preserve what thy power did work. It is as much to the glory of thy omnipotent love to second thy own work with thy own strength, as it was to begin it. To what purpose, O God, wert thou pleased to work it, if thou wilt not maintain it? The arguments of God's glory are most prevalent. They were so in the mouth of Moses. Plead the same believably, and thou wilt find the same success. It is for the glory of God you should be victorious : 'He which establisheth us with you is God,' 1 Cor. i. 21. Shall we think to stand without seeking to the author of our standing? And that you may pray boldly, believe it to be a thing belonging to you by virtue of Christ's purchase as well as your reconciliation and adoption. If you can but pray, you are sure to succeed in the conquest ; and you can never want pleas for standing till God cancel the bond of his everlasting covenant, and depose Christ from his office of an advocate. Plead these then. God cannot deny his own bond, nor resist the exercise of an office of his own erecting.

(6.) Exercise grace much. Graces, as soldiers, well exercised, are more fit to engage an invading enemy. Muster them up often, and see thy strength, but behold it with humility, prayer, and thankfulness. Living bodies grow stronger by moderate exercise, and many things grow rusty and unfit for want of use. Graces are compared to armour, Eph. vi., and armour is the better for use. Frequent blowing up this fire will make it stronger in itself, and more comfortable to us.

[1.] Faith. It was by faith that out of weakness the ancient worthies were made stronger, Heb. xi. 24. It was this made Abraham the father of the faithful, and it will make all the children mighty men of valour, Rom. iv. 24. It is a mighty expression, Ps. cxlvii. 11, 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him : in those that hope in his mercy ;' as if the delight and content of his being were maintained by this grace. He takes pleasure to relieve and pleasure to support them. Mercy cannot be so hard-hearted as to deny assistance to that faith that clings about it. Should God do so, he would cast off that pleasure. You can never offend him by the straitest clasping, or pain him by too close embraces. The faster you hold him, the less power will indwelling sin or watchful Satan have to drag you from him, for the more you hold him, the more he holds you. You do not only apprehend him, but are apprehended by him. A sling and stone, with faith in the name of the Lord, will be more successful to pierce the head of Goliath with his whole army of Philistines, than if you did march clothed with Saul's armour. Faith will do more than all the arms and ammunition of moral philosophy, so much furbished and trimmed up in our day. It is to faith all the victorious acts of a Christian, through the whole Scripture, are ascribed. Faith quencheth the fiery darts of the devil ; faith purifies the heart from inward corruptions ; faith wrestles with principalities and powers ; faith gets the victory over the world ; faith preserves us by engaging God's power for us ; and faith in all this contest never leaves us till it lands us in heaven. It is the prime piece in the Christian armour whereby we gain the victory, and therefore there is such an emphasis set upon it, as if though a man had all the rest and wanted this, he would be foundered in all his attempts : Eph. vi. 16, 'Above all taking the shield of faith ;' as if all other pieces, though very gallant and strong, were nothing to this to keep off the darts of the enemy. It is a grace worthy the exercise. Other graces may fail, and the soul recover ; but if faith fail, all is gone. The acting of all our graces

depends upon the strength and acting of our faith. The stronger our faith, the greater our stability; the weaker our faith, the more tottering our standing. If the soul could at the first go out to God in acts of faith, when its corruptions had the first blow given them, and found success, much more encouragement hath it to launch out to Christ and renew the same faith, since the wounds upon its lusts are both more numerous and deeper.

[2.] Patience. I mean not patience under afflictions, but a patient waiting; there is need of patience to uphold us in a course of obedience, and need of it also to strengthen our expectations of reward: Heb. x. 36, 'Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.' God in the course of his providence seems sometimes to turn the back of his promise upon us; there is need of a patient waiting, till it turn again and march towards us. He sometimes lets loose the devil upon us, and then we fear the waters will swallow up our souls, and that our spiritual enemies will utterly defeat us; there is need of patience, till God pulls back the chain whereby he holds our enemy. Christ accomplisheth the most glorious things by degrees; as he doth not give all grace in a moment, so he doth not perfect it in a moment. Patience must endure in the whole military exercise. We cannot lay it aside till we gain the victory. It is as necessary as faith, to entitle us to the inheritance of the promises of perseverance and victory: Heb. vi. 12, 'Through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Without it, we cannot believe in hope against hope; without it, we can never run our race, Heb. xii. 1.

[3.] Love. Love adds weight to the soul, and suffers not the affections easily to be divorced from the endeared object. The holy angels are fixed in their standing by grace as the principal cause, by the purity of their love as the internal principle. An intelligent and purified love will not forsake a choice object. The iron mixed with drossy particles runs not so quick, nor sticks so close to the loadstone, as the refined and best tempered steel. Men embrace not the truth as truth for want of faith, and they fall from it for want of love: 2 Thess. ii. 10, 'They receive not the love of the truth.' They receive the truth, but not the love of the truth. The purer our love, the faster we shall stick to that rock which is our strength. God is the strength of those that love him: Ps. xviii. 1, 'I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.'

[4.] Humility. God gives grace to the humble; then surely the greatest supplies of grace in our deepest exercises of humility. We should find the very workings of God's grace more powerful in us, in the very exercises of this grace. Christ finds those most strangers to him, that are most proud of themselves. He that is not sensible of his own weakness, is never like to have recourse to another for strength. To trust in our grace, is to make our grace a god, because the principal object of the creature's trust is God, and it belongs to him to be so as the highest good. Now to make our inherent grace the chief object of our trust, is to own it to be as good as God, and as sufficient as God to keep its standing. A conceit of our strength may make us seem bigger, but in reality it makes us weaker. All the humours in the soul run to the boil of pride. Fearfulness of ourselves is a good prologue to a firmness in God, it will make us more strongly lay hold of his power, and more earnestly plead his faithfulness. Exercise it most after the conquest of a temptation; then it is our time to take heed of spiritual pride, we may else overcome one temptation, and sink under another. Pride after a victory gives the enemy an opportunity of success, upon a new assault with a fresh recruit. Humility is as necessary to preserve us after a conquest, as faith was to arm and strengthen us for it.

(7.) Frequently renew settled and holy resolutions. A soldier unresoled to fight may easily be defeated. True and sharpened courage treads down those difficulties which would triumph over a cold and wavering spirit. Resolution in a weak man will perform more than strength in a coward. The weakness of our graces, the strength of our temptations, and the diligence of our spiritual enemies, require strong resolutions. We must be 'stedfast and unmoveable,' and this will make us 'abound in the work of the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58. Abundant exercise in God's work will strengthen the habit of grace, increase our skill in the contest, and make the victory more easy and pleasant to us. Let them be believing, humble resolutions in the strength of God's grace, with a jealousy of yourselves; not a vaunting resolution in the strength of your own wills, a fear of yourselves, but a confidence in God. David bound himself to God with a hearty vow, depending upon his strength : Ps. cxix. 106, 'I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' 'I have sworn,' &c., but not in his own strength, for, ver. 107, he desires God to quicken him, and to accept the 'free-will offering of his mouth,' ver. 108, *i.e.* the oath which proceeded from a free and resolved will. God will not slight, but strengthen the affectionate resolutions of his creature. We cannot keep ourselves from falling, if we first keep not our resolutions from flagging.

(8.) Look often back upon your state under convictions, and the first state of conversion. Measure your present complexion by your former temper. Cast up your accounts often, and see whether you thrive or decay, and renew your former dispositions. It is our Saviour's counsel : Rev. ii. 5, 'Remember from whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works;' which cannot be done without reflection upon thy wonted delight in God, thy desires for him, and the sweet communications dispensed by him. Inquire into the cause of thy decay. This is a necessary attendant upon this act of remembrance, for it is not a bare simple act of memory Christ commands, but a diligent inquisition by a practical remembrance. A timely observance of the cause of our loss, will prevent many future ones; without this act, the devil will creep in and finish his business before we are aware. It is a pleasure to reflect upon the time of danger wherein we have been, and to recount the methods God used in our delivery, and the resolutions we then entertained : Isa. xxxiii. 18, 'Thy heart shall meditate terror,' *i.e.* thou shalt consider what thy troubles were, what the frame of thy heart was, what terrors thou hadst in thy distress; for it is spoken of the gospel-times, when they shall 'see the King in his beauty.' So likewise it is useful to recall to our memory what desires, what fervency in prayer, what holy vows there were in and upon us, when we were under a wounded spirit, and act the same fervours over again. This would restore and inflame the heart more in duty, and enable thee for the contest, by calling into thy assistance the supplies of all the habitual grace thou hast had since those first heats. Remember then the strength of thy appetite to the word; how your zeal did glow, what sprightliness in your affections, with what devotion your prayers were winged, with what stoutness your faith did breathe, how high it did climb, with what detestation you entertained the motions to sin, with what courage you entered into the lists of temptations, how quick and nimble your obedience was, what a freshness and verdure was upon all your graces. Remember those, and do the same works.

(9.) Cherish any breathing of the Spirit. Man is unable to keep his knowledge and evangelical impressions upon himself without the Spirit : 2 Tim. i. 14, 'That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us.' If we cannot keep the knowledge and

form of sound words agreeable to that affection in man whereby he desires knowledge, much less can we preserve grace in us, which is more stomached by corrupted nature. Men have a natural desire to know, but no natural desire to be gracious. Christ promised the Spirit to abide with us, and shall we slight his harbingers which come to prepare the way for a more powerful residence? We can never prize the assistance of the Holy Ghost, if we neglect the auxiliary force he sends us. Those heavenly motions are the Spirit's orders. How can we expect to gain the victory, when we neglect the directions and conduct of our great general? Perseverance is no more to be ascribed to our own wills, than our first conversion. As without the Spirit we could never by the power of our own wills turn to God, so without the continuance of his efficacy, the will would never keep with God, but would start from him. We are forgetful creatures, therefore need a monitor; stupid creatures, therefore need a quickener. The main reason of our falls is a non-attendance to those motions; for we cannot ascribe them to the Spirit's carelessness, but our own. We cannot suppose him negligent in his office, but ourselves in our duty. Grace cannot live, if you neglect this oil put into the lamp to preserve it from expiring. The Spirit's motions are the physic he uses for the removal of that which endangers the health of our grace, and cordials to strengthen the languishing spiritual nature to a recovery of itself. Neglect him not, therefore, but when you find him turning his back, withdrawing his motions, and beginning to grieve, do what you can to delight him. Beg, pray, cry, with an holy imitation of David, 'Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me,' Ps. li. 11.

(10.) Take frequent views of glory. An heavenly conversation will quicken our graces, enliven our duties; while the vigour of both is kept up, the heart cannot flag in the ways of God. Can a man be lazy in a duty, when he considers he must pray, hear, meditate, walk for heaven? The heat of our graces will be more purer and more durable, when we approach nearest, and lie closest under the sunbeams. Glory in the eye will encourage grace in the heart, and quicken a resolution against temptations, and contempt of the foolish pleasures and enticements of the world, as the glory set before Christ made him despise the shame of the cross.

I might add more;—

(1.) Look to the first flagging of thy heart, thy first remissness in religious duties. Slothful proceedings become not fervent beginnings.

(2.) Be much in the duty of mortification. Shake off every weight, Heb. xii. 1, that may weaken thee in thy course. Those that are to run a race, or go to a battle, carry not burdens with them.

(3.) Entertain wise considerations of the worst that may happen in your Christian course. Prepare against the worst, though it may never come upon you. Consider the fury of persecutors, the diligence of the devil, the multitude of temptations, and what promises are suited to elevate you above them.

(4.) Remember the promise. This will stay us in our wavering: Heb. x. 23, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.'