

OF TAKING UP THE CROSS.

Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.
—LUKE XIV. 27.

THESE are the words of Christ. The occasion of them you may see, ver. 25. He seeing multitudes following him, takes occasion to tell them upon what terms they must follow him, if they would follow him to purpose. Lest any of them should deceive themselves, and think that a bare outward profession of Christ would be sufficient, a safe, easy, external following him would serve their turn, he tells them what he did expect from every one that would be his follower and disciple. It was not so safe and easy a thing to be a Christian as they might suppose. It would cost them more than they did imagine. He deals plainly with them, and lets them know the worst of it. If they would be his disciples, his followers, Christians indeed, they must be so upon these and these terms, which he expresses in two propositions.

1. They must leave all for him. They could not follow him, unless they were content to forsake all to follow him, ver. 26. If any man seem willing to be a disciple of mine, he must have such an affection to me as to hate all other things for my sake, otherwise I will never own him, he is but a pretender ; he is not, he cannot be a Christian indeed.

But has Christ no disciples but such as these ? Are none Christians but upon these terms ? Alas ! who then is a Christian ? Who then can be saved ? Can none be disciples of Christ but those that will hate their dearest relations, their best worldly enjoyments, yea, their own lives, for Christ's sake ? Will he own none, will he admit none to follow him, but upon these terms ? Sure this is *εὐλόγος ὁ λόγος*, this is a hard saying indeed, who can bear it ?

Why, but thus it is, Christ will admit none to be his disciples, he will own none for Christians, upon other terms than he here expresses. Only you must not mistake. He requires not that you should hate these relations absolutely ; for that would be to contradict his own law, the law of God and nature, which requires natural affection. But this is it which he requires, you must hate them,

(1.) In effect. You must as freely part with them for Christ's sake, as if you did hate them. You must be as willing to relinquish them, when he requires it, as you are to part with a thing that you hate. You will part

with a hated thing freely, readily, cheerfully; even so must you part with your relations, enjoyments, and life too, not out of hatred to them, but leave them all as readily, when Christ calls, as if you did hate them. To hate them here, is freely to forsake them for Christ's sake. And so it is expressed, Mat. xix. 29. Part with them as freely for Christ, that the world may judge you do hate them, because you quit them so easily, without murmuring, repining, reluctance.

(2.) Comparatively. You must love Christ more than all these, more than the dearest of these, and shew you do so indeed by quitting all of them, rather than forsake, or dishonour, or displease Christ. If you do not, you love these more than Christ: Mat. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' And to love anything more than Christ, is to hate him. A less degree of love is called hatred in Scripture, Gen. xxix. 80, 81. Because he loved Leah less than Rachel, he is said to hate her. Even as you may be said to hate your relations, enjoyments, lives, when you love them less than Christ, so much less as you will be content to part with them for his sake, whenever he requires it. And in this sense you must be able to hate them, or else you cannot be the disciples of Christ, or else you are not Christians; for upon these terms, and no other, will he own you for such.

The second proposition, wherein he expresses upon what terms we must be disciples, is in the text, ver. 27. It is not enough to part with all, but you must be willing to suffer all; to undergo sufferings not only privative, but positive: the cross includes the former, and something more. It signifies all afflictions for Christ's sake. It denotes all sufferings, calamities, torments, even those that are most ignominious and most grievous; in allusion to those sorrows and tortures which Christ on the cross suffered for his people. Whoever does not bear these, he is not, he cannot be, a disciple; i. e., he that does not actually bear the cross when it is laid upon him, or he that is not fully resolved to bear it, how heavy and grievous soever it may be, whenever it shall be laid upon him, he is not, he cannot be, a disciple of Christ.

A disciple, what is that? Why, he cannot be a Christian. A disciple and a Christian are all one, Acts xi. 26. A disciple of Christ is one that gives up himself to be wholly at Christ's disposing; to learn what he teacheth, to believe what he reveals, to do what he commands, to avoid what he forbids, to suffer what is inflicted by or for him, in expectation of that reward which he hath promised. Such a one is a disciple of Christ, and he, and none else, is a Christian. Such as these, who give up themselves to be taught and governed by Christ in all things, were at first called disciples, and afterwards at Antioch they were called Christians; they are two names of the same persons. Many descriptions you have of them in Scripture, and here you have them described by one of their essential properties. *Christiani sunt cruciani*, says Luther, Christians are cross-bearers. So they are always, though they be not always in a suffering condition; they ever bear the cross, either *quoad actum* or *quoad propositum*. It is in their hearts to bear the cross, whatever it be, whenever Christ shall require it; and they do actually bear it whenever they are called to it. They do not flinch from it, nor decline it, nor turn from it, by any indirect or unlawful course. They had rather lose all they have in the world, and suffer all that an enraged world can inflict on them, than deny any truth of Christ, or decline any way of Christ, or commit any sin against Christ. This is their temper, their practice, who are Christians.

And those who are otherwise disposed, let them call themselves what they will, they are not Christians. Nor can they be Christians upon any other terms. They have not given up themselves to him, they have no interest in him, they can have no benefit by him, they shall have no reward from him.

So that you see the words contain the terms upon which you must be Christians, if you will be Christians indeed, and not in name, and show, and profession only. They afford us this

Obs. He that doth not, will not bear the cross, he is not, he cannot be, a Christian. He that is not ready to suffer for Christ, he is none of Christ's disciple. You cannot be Christians upon lower, upon easier terms, than bearing the cross, and undergoing sufferings for him. So Christ himself tells us over and over: Mat. x. 38, 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.' 'Not worthy of me,' i. e., he is not for my turn. If he pretend to be one of mine, he does but disparage me, he deals unworthily with me. It was never my intention, nor is it for my honour, to own any who are not content to undergo the sorest and heaviest afflictions and calamities for my sake. He speaks again, Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Let no man offer to follow me unless he be resolved to follow me in this posture, unless he will follow me under the cross. A third evangelist tells us the same thing: Mark viii. 34, 'Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' And once more we have it, Luke ix. 23. To follow Christ, and to be a disciple of Christ, is all one; for scholars or disciples do not go before, but follow their masters. And to be a Christian is all one as to be a follower of Christ. As the scholars or disciples of Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Paracelsus, are called their followers, so the disciples of Christ, or Christians, are the followers of Christ, those that follow his doctrine, and are as ready to follow him in his sufferings. And those that will be Christians indeed must thus follow him daily, take up the cross daily, always, continually, every day. But how can this be? (Let this be noted, lest any of you should think this truth unseasonable at this time.) How can the cross be taken up daily, since every day does not trouble us with the cross? The people of God have some *lucida intervalla*, some times of joy and peace. The rod of the wicked doth not always lie upon them. Though a great part of their voyage through the world be stormy and tempestuous, yet now and then they may have calm, and serene, and halcyonian times. This is true, and yet the cross must be taken up daily. It must be taken up actually every day when providence brings it to us. And those days of peace and security, when it is not brought to us, we cannot take it up actually indeed; but even every of those days must the cross be taken up in the preparation and disposition of the mind; it must be in your hearts to bear the cross every day, even when it is not actually laid upon you. So that this concerns you every day while you are in this world, if you be concerned every day to shew yourselves Christians.

Let me a little more particularly explain to you what is meant by the cross, and what by bearing of it.

1. The cross includes loss and damage, the greatest losses as well as the least; the loss of all outward things, as well as the loss of any. When Christ was nailed to the cross, he was bereaved of all, and fastened to it naked; he had not so much as his garments left; they who brought him to the cross divided these amongst them. He that is not willing to part

with all, to follow Christ, when he cannot fully and faithfully follow him without quitting all, he is not worthy of him, unworthy the name of a Christian.

He that is not content, when he is called to it, to be separated from nearest friends and dearest relations, to part with his country and habitation, to be stripped of his estate and outward accommodations, to be deprived of his liberty, and what else is dear to him in this world, he is not for Christ's turn, he cares for no such followers. The foregoing verse leads us to this particular: ver. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' He that is not content to follow Christ, so as to leave all these behind him, he does not follow him as a disciple, as a Christian; for he that is a Christian indeed, he loves Christ above all, but he that will not part with relations, estate, country, liberty, for Christ's sake, he loves them better than he loves Christ; for that a man loves most which he will least part with. He that will not part with them all rather than sin against Christ, has not the love of a disciple for Christ, and so is not indeed a Christian.

2. It speaks shame and reproach. It was *servile supplicium*, a base, ignominious suffering, to which none were exposed but the vilest of men. It was a suffering proper to slaves and fugitives; there was not the meanest freeman amongst the Romans but was above it. Hence shame and the cross are joined together, Heb. xii. 2. Hence that expression, Heb. xiii. 18, 'bearing his reproach,' i. e., bearing the cross. No coming to Christ but in this posture, when the Lord calls to it. He that is not content to bear the scorn and contempt of an insolent world; he that cannot be content to be jeered and derided, to be vilified and set at nought even by vile persons, to be abused and reviled, even for doing good to those that so abuse him, to be made the scorn of men, and reproach of the people, as Christ was, to be counted as the filth and off-scouring of all things, *αποβλήματα* and *αποκαθήματα*, as the apostles were; he that cannot, will not digest this when he meets with it in the world for Christ's sake, he is not fit to be a disciple of Christ; for we cannot be his disciples upon other terms.

8. It imports pain and torture. The cross was a most grievous and painful suffering. Ansonius calls it *pena extremum*, the extremity of torture. And Cicero, *crudelissimum teterrimumque supplicium*, the most cruel and horrid suffering. If you be not content to bear the hatred and cruelty of an enraged world, to endure any pains and tortures, the most exquisite torments that the malice of man can invent, or their cruelty execute, rather than deny Christ or his truth, rather than leave his ways and worship, never think of being Christians, never take on you the name of his followers, you cannot be his disciples upon other or easier terms. When Ignatius was going to be exposed to the fury of wild beasts for the name of Christ, he cries, *νῦν ἀρχομαι μαθητῆς ἰῆναι*, Now I begin to be a disciple.

4. It imports death itself. The cross was *ultimum supplicium*, the last thing that could be suffered. Cruelty was herein terminated, and could go no further, at least to the sense of the sufferer. It was the worst kind of death. *Illa morte nihil pejus inter omnium mortium genera*. Of all kinds of death there was none worse than this: Phil. ii. 8, 'That humbled himself to the death of the cross.' To no less than death, and the worst kind of death. If you be not willing to die for Christ, and to die the worst kind of death, to drink up this cup, and to be baptized with this baptism when his cause, and honour, and interest requires it; to drink up the cup of

death, and to be baptized in your own blood, rather than be disobedient or unfaithful to him; if your hearts cannot say as the apostle, 'Neither count I my life dear, that I may win Christ.' Acts xx. 24; I am not only ready to be bound, but, Acts xxiv. 18, to die, whenever and wherever he shall require it; not only ready to sacrifice my name and reputation, but my person for Christ; not only ready to suffer some pain and torment, but to suffer death, rather than the honour, and truths, and worship of Christ should suffer by me; not only ready to part with relations, liberty, country, enjoyments, but to part with my life whenever he calls for it;—if this be not the resolution of your hearts, you are not his disciples; for this he requires of all, ver. 26, 'He that does not hate his life,' i. e., is not as free to part with it for Christ as if he hated it, he loves his life more than Christ; and he will never count them Christians, whatever they may count themselves, who love anything, though it be life itself, more than him, or equally with him.

Thus you see what the cross is. Let us inquire what it is to bear it. Bearing the cross supposes or includes these four things:

1. You must make account of it. If you will follow Christ indeed, make account you will meet with the cross. This Christ presseth and illustrates by two similitudes in the verses following the text, from 28 to 34. To taking upon you the profession of Christ, without casting up what it is like to cost, that which is like to prove both shameful and dangerous in the issue. If you make account of better fare in following Christ than you are like to meet with, you will go near to repent your bargain, to tuck about to save yourselves, and so come off with shame and ruin in the issue; and make it appear that whatever you did profess, you were never Christians in reality.

Sit down, then, and cast up what it is like to cost you. If you will give up yourselves to Christ entirely, to follow him in all his ways seriously, and closely, and faithfully, you are like to meet with all the hatred, and opposition, and hard usage that he expected from the implacable enmity of hell and the world. I must look to meet with many a bitter taunt and jeer. I am like to be hated, scorned, reviled, and reproached, and trampled on in the world. I may have trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. It may cost me the loss of all that is dear to me in the world, relations, liberty, country, estate, yea, life and all. You must make account of this beforehand, if you mean to be Christians indeed. And then see what your hearts say to it. Can you endure this, or can you not? If not, your profession of Christ is vain. If you promise yourselves ease, safety, respect, plenty, and a quiet enjoyment of what is grateful to the flesh, and think the cross will not come near you, or at least fall so heavy on you, but you may be able by one shift or other to avoid it well enough; if this be your temper, though you may make fair shows, you are never like to hold out, and so had better never pretend to be Christians. He is far from following Christ under the cross, who does not so much as make account of it.

2. A resolution to bear the cross, whatever it be, how heavy, or grievous, or tedious soever it may prove; a firm, and hearty, and settled resolution to bear it, is a virtual bearing of it beforehand, ver. 33. Whosoever he be that is not resolved to part with all that is dear to him, to undergo all that is grievous to him, rather than flinch from Christ his cause, truth, worship, interest, whatever he seem to be, he is no disciple indeed; he is far from bearing the cross as becomes a follower of Christ, who is not yet come to

a point so as so resolve to bear it without dispute, doubting, or hesitation, whatever come of it.

When the account is cast up, this and this it will cost thee, this and this thou must part with, these and these things thou must suffer, if thou wilt be Christ's disciple; and then the question is put, Wilt thou give up thyself to him on these terms? Wilt thou take him for better and worse? Wilt thou follow him through good report and evil report? Wilt thou make after him, though stripped, and wounded, and overwhelmed with shame and reproach? Wilt thou follow him through fire and water, yea, through the valley of the shadow of death? Wilt thou follow him alone, though all forsake thee, though no friends or relations may accompany thee? When the question is put, he that is a Christian indeed will resolve on it fully and freely. *In re tam necessaria non est deliberandum.* I need not take time to think upon this; I am at a point; I will follow Christ whatever befall me, though my way lie through poverty, and banishment, and prisons, and solitude, and pains, and tortures, and scorn, and contempt, or death itself. I will never leave him, I will never turn aside from him, let Satan and the world do their worst. He resolves to follow him as Ruth did Naomi, when her mother-in-law tried to divert her by so many arguments, and such as prevailed with her sister to turn back, Ruth i. 16-18. She was stedfastly minded to cleave to her in her poor, forlorn, desolate condition. Such a resolution is, by interpretation, a bearing the cross before it come. So Abraham is said to offer up his son Isaac, though he was not actually sacrificed, Heb. xi, 17, because he did fully purpose and resolve to do it; it was in his heart to do it. Though he was not sacrificed upon the altar, yet he was already offered up in his heart. To be fully, heartily resolved to bear it, is a kind of bearing it before it comes. And in this sense there may be many martyrs who never suffered death for Christ. If they be so resolved to die for Christ as nothing hinders but want of opportunity, they are martyrs in heart, though not in act; the Lord accepts the will for the deed in such cases. When the mind is so resolved on it as nothing hinders the deed but want of a call or an occasion, the Lord looks on it as if it were done. A disciple thus resolved to bear the cross, will be accepted as one that bears it, though it be not actually laid on him. But he that is not come up to this full and sincere resolution to part with all, to suffer all for Christ, he is not so much as a Christian intentionally; he is not, he does not intend to be, a disciple of Christ, whatever he may pretend to.

8. You must be always ready for the cross, always preparing for it, whether it seem near, or whether it seem further off. One paraphraseth the words thus, 'Whosoever doth not come to me with a preparation of mind to suffer anything rather than part with me, he is not for my turn.'

This is to bear the cross daily, as Christ requires, Luke ix. Though every day do not afford a cross, yet every day we bear the cross by daily preparing for it, 1 Cor. xv. 81. I protest by that which I take most joy in of anything in the world, viz., my fidelity to Christ; which appeared not only in that he every day ran the hazard of death for Christ, but in that he was every day ready to die, 2 Tim. iv. 6. *ἰγὼ γὰρ ἤδη σπένδομαι*, I am now offered up. He speaks of it as done, not only because it was near, but because he had made himself ready to be sacrificed for Christ whenever he should call him to it. Gen. xxii. 9, 10, Abraham was prepared, had made all things ready to sacrifice his son, and therefore, though he was hindered from doing of it, yet the Lord accepted of it, and spoke of it as done, ver. 16; James ii. 21.

Even when the cross seems far off, much more when it is in view, you must be preparing for it, if you be Christians indeed; and the Lord will take your readiness to bear it for a bearing of it, when he sees good to prevent it. A man that is ingenuous, if his friend have made all things ready to entertain him, though he come not, will take it as kindly as if he had partaken of the entertainment. Christ will resent your faithfulness to him, as if you were always bearing the cross for his sake, if you be always preparing for it. If you be still loosening your hearts more and more from the world, your relations and enjoyments; if you be still dragging the flesh, with its affections and lusts, unto the cross; still fortifying your souls against a day of trial; still crucifying the world, and crossing your carnal and worldly inclinations; it may be the cross you expect will not be laid upon you, but whether it be or no, you shall not lose the reward of those who are faithful in bearing it, because you are as ready to do it as those that are actually under it. Christ looks on you as taking up the cross, because you are so ready to take it up; whereas those who mind it not, prepare not for it, put the thoughts of it far from them, they are so far from bearing the cross before it come, as they are never like to touch it (though it may be heavy on them) as becomes the followers of Christ. They are like to deal unworthily with him.

4. It speaks actual undergoing it when it is laid on us. The followers of Christ, whether the cross be far off, or whether it be near, they must make account of it, resolve on it, prepare for it. There is no bearing the cross without these; these are included, and are, as it were, some offers at it at a distance. But when the Lord brings it to us, we must actually take it up. He is no disciple for Christ that will not do it. He whose heart is so linked, glued to his relations and outward enjoyments, that he cannot tell how to part with them; who must have the flesh pleased and gratified in its inclinations and desires; who must have the ease, and plenty, and respect, and favour of the world; he is not of a temper fit for a Christian, he is not for Christ's turn. He will not own him for a disciple who will not endure the cross, whatever it be, when he is called to it. But when are we called to take up the cross? Why, when it cannot be avoided without sin, then are you clearly called to it. When you cannot shun the cross without dishonouring Christ, deserting his cause, or betraying his interest, or denying his truth, or declining his way, or transgressing his will one way or other, then are you called to shew yourselves disciples by taking up the cross. When this *dilemma* is before you, either you must suffer, or sin; if, then, you decline suffering, whatever it be, you are unworthy the name of Christians.

And so I have explained the object, and shewed what is meant by the cross; and the act, as to the substance of it, what is meant by bearing. Let me inquire a little into the manner: how does he who is a Christian bear the cross? He endeavours to bear it,

1. *Patiently.* That while the cross oppresses his outward man, he may possess his soul in patience. Not the patience of the Stoics, a senseless stupidity; nor the patience of the heathen, a mere yielding to necessity; but a due sense of the pressure, with a quiet submission to the hand of God, whoever be the instrument, without murmuring, repining, disquietment, or despondency. 'Good is the word of the Lord,' though that word bring a real cross. So the judgment submits, takes it kindly that it is no worse, Isa. xxxix. 9, accepting the punishment of their iniquity. So the will submits, as knowing it may be from sin, though it be for Christ too.

And the inward man being thus possessed does influence the outward, Lev. x. 8, Ps. xxxix. 9. This is to bear the cross, so as to come after Christ, to tread in his steps, to imitate him 'who was led as a lamb to the slaughter,' &c., 1 Peter ii. 21, 28.

He that follows Christ in bearing the cross will 'let patience have its perfect work,' James i. 4. The perfect work of patience is its most eminent act, i. e., a submissive but resolute perseverance, holding out, and bearing up, notwithstanding the sharpness, the tediousness, the variety of crosses and calamities. 'That you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing;' i. e., defective in no part, in no grace, which is requisite to a soul that is entirely Christian. It is a perfection of parts here spoken of. When a Christian has all the graces of the Spirit in exercise, he has all the parts of a Christian; and having all his parts, he is entire, and so is wanting in nothing necessary to his Christian constitution. But if patience be wanting, he wants a necessary, an essential part, and so is not entire and complete. And therefore as you have other graces, so be sure you get also the grace of patience. This is essential to a disciple of Christ. If this be not exercised under the cross, you bear it not as Christians, you do not come after Christ in bearing it. Patience is the noblest piece of valour; that which those who have been most cried up for their valour in the world have not attained to; they were indeed daring rather than valiant. True valour appears more in bearing pressures and sufferings without disturbance, than in attempting dangers or encountering difficulties. The world places valour in a resolute attempting of dangers, the Scripture places valour in patient enduring of sufferings. 2 Tim. ii. 18, *κακοπάθειον*. Endure patiently the cross, so shalt thou shew thyself an excellent soldier: *ὡς καλὸς στρατιώτης*. He is a good soldier that will follow his leader close, whatever come of it. So doth he follow Christ who runs after him with patience, Heb. xii. 1, 2. He that endures the cross with patience, runs after Christ, follows him closely.

2. He endeavours to bears it *cheerfully*. That which is bearing the cross here is taking up the cross, chap. ix. Now, to take up the cross, imports not only a patient bearing of it when it is laid upon us, but also a ready and voluntary undergoing it. Christ bore his cross willingly; Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear that cross. Christ would have us come after him, imitate him, bear it as he did. It should not be a forced, but a voluntary act. Not that we are to pull crosses upon ourselves, as some of the primitive martyrs did—whom yet we should not censure, because we know not by what spirit they were acted—but we should cheerfully undergo it, when the Lord imposeth it. When the honour and interest of Christ requires it, we should take up the cross as we would take up a crown. We should receive it as a gift: 'To you it is given.' We should meet it with joy, look on it as our glory, Gal. That cross may denote not only the sufferings which Christ endured for him, but also those sufferings which he endured for Christ; for in these he gloried, Rom. v. 8, 2 Cor. vii. 4, *ὑπερπερισσύνουμαι*. He was more than full, he did more than overflow with joy; it did run over into glorying in all his tribulations. We may glory in them as in a triumph, the greatest occasion of joy and glorying in this world, Rom. viii. 37. We may glory in them as our happiness, a greater happiness than all the victories and triumphs in the world can afford us, being the beginnings and pledges of an eternal triumph in heaven, Mat. v. When those who suffer for Christ sink into sorrow, dejection, despondency under the cross, they deal unworthily

with Christ, they shew themselves no way worthy to bear his name, Mat. x. 88.

8. He endeavours to bear it *fruitfully*. The cross is dry wood, and so was Aaron's rod; but as that blossomed, so does this bring forth fruit, when improved, Heb. xii. 11. It is no miracle for honey to be found in the carcase of this lion; the goodness of God has made it ordinary, the promise of God gives assurance of it; and this puts the followers of Christ upon seeking the sweet fruits of peace and holiness in the bowels of devouring calamities: to get spiritual gain and advantage by outward loss; to grow richer unto God by worldly impoverishment; to converse more with God when separated from friends and relations; to value more the love of Christ when they smart by the world's hatred; to partake more of holiness when he partakes less of the ease, peace, plenty of the world; to make use of the cross for the crucifying of the flesh; to make sin more hateful and dreadful, the conscience more tender, the world less tempting, more contemptible, grace more active and lively, the word more sweet and effectual, prayer more fervent and affectionate, the appearing of Christ more lovely and desirable, the conversation more heavenly. To bear the cross as a disciple of Christ, is to bring forth more fruit in bearing of it.

So much for explication; we shall confirm this truth by these three propositions:

I. The cross is the ordinary lot of Christians.

II. A Christian cannot ordinarily avoid the cross without sinning against Christ.

III. He that will ordinarily sin against Christ to avoid the cross, cannot be a Christian. This being proved, it will appear an evident truth, that he that doth not, will not, bear the cross, is not, cannot be a Christian.

I. For the first, the cross is ordinarily the lot of Christians. The cross is so inseparable from a Christian, as he seems to be nailed to it, Ps. xxxiv. 19, John xvi. 33, Acts xiv. 22, Mat. x. 84. So it was under the Old Testament. The prophets and people of God had not troubles and persecutions only from the heathen—the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians—but from those who professed themselves to be of the church, Mat. xxiii. 81, 84, Acts vii. 51, 52. And so it hath been under the New Testament, not only in the time of Christ and the apostles and primitive Christians, but in all ages. Search the records of all times, and you shall find that persecution and troubles have always attended the people of God. And so it will be while there is rage and malice in Satan, and enmity in the world, and necessity even from the sufferers that it should be so.

The first three hundred years after Christ, to go no higher, are divided into ten persecutions. It was no less than death to bear the name of a Christian. And though there were some *lucida intervalla*, some breathing times, yet were they usually short, always uncertain; they had rather some truce than any firm peace, and the longer respite they had, the more grievous was the cross when it came. Witness the last of those ten persecutions, which succeeded an intermission of about forty years; but was so cruel when it came, that lasting ten years, there was in thirty days no less than seventeen thousand put to death for the name of Christ. So for the three first ages, the Christians were seldom from under the cross.

The fourth century is accounted more peaceable and favourable to the Christian name, Constantine the emperor being a Christian. Yet were not

the people of Christ free from the cross all his time, much less in the time of his successors. In the beginning of his reign they suffered grievous things from Maxentius, Maximinus, and Licinius, who of a professor turned a persecutor, alleging the Christians prayed for Constantine and not for him. And in the latter end of his reign, great troubles were raised by the Arians; so that Eustathius, Athanasius, and others suffered persecution even to banishment in the time of Constantine.

After his decease, his son Constantius, seduced by the Arians, persecutes the orthodox Christians; and therein survived his brethren, who were of a better temper.

After him the apostate Julian shewed all the enmity to the Christian name that his subtilty could devise, and sought to root it out by fraud, which he saw had been in vain attempted by force.

After him, Valens opposes them as much in the east as Valentinian favoured them in the west. And so far did violence prevail in that and the other Arian persecutions, that the sincere professors of Christ were driven from the public meetings into dens, and caves, and solitudes. *Num si alicubi sunt pii, &c.* If there be any that are godly, says Athanasius, and affectionate to Christ, they are hid with Elias the prophet; they secure themselves in dens and caves, *in cavernas et speluncas terre se abscondunt*; or they continued wandering about in exile and solitude, *aut in solitudine oberrantes commorantur*. So Hilary complains, and Augustine after him: *qui erant firmiores reliquis*, those that were steadfast and faithful; *illi partim pro fide fortiter exulabant, partim toto orbe latitabant*; they were either banished or hid themselves, and that was their condition through the whole world. So heavy did the cross lie upon the people of Christ, in the fourth age, which seemed to promise the greatest freedom from it. It is almost incredible, which the ancients affirm of those times, that there were scarce five pastors left in the whole world that were true Christians, truly Christian; and those in banishment too, and the church laid thus desolate by those who professed themselves to be of the church.

In the fifth and sixth ages the Goths, and other barbarous nations in the west, the Vandals in the south, the Persians in the east, made havoc of the church.

And in the seventh, Mahomet riseth in the east, and Antichrist appears in the west, under which character Gregory, a pope himself, describes Antichrist; and these have made it their business in the following ages, that the faithful followers of Christ should be always under the cross.

Thus it has been, and thus it will be. And the reasons of it are evident.

¶ [1. The malice of Satan, who knowing himself to be cast off by God, he hates God with an implacable hatred; and since the Lord is above the reach of his malice, he falls upon those who are dearest to him, the people of God. Christ having excluded those apostate spirits from any benefit of his redemption, they are filled with rage against him, but being not able to reach the head, they let out their rage upon his members: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' His commission, or rather permission, is no larger, and he will not fail to go as far as he can; he will be always bruising the heel, since the head is above him. It is his business to multiply crosses, and to make them as heavy and piercing as may be. All his fury, for which he is called a lion, and all his subtilty, for which he is called a serpent, will be employed

to this purpose, 1 Peter v. 8. He is watchful upon all occasions to let out his wrath upon the woman, Rev. xii. 4. He would have stifled Christianity in the birth, but being then prevented, he makes another attempt, ver. 18. And when this succeeds not, he will cross her another way, ver. 15. He pours whole floods of calamities upon her. And when these do not the execution he desires, yet he desists not, his wrath still boils up, ver. 17.

2. The enmity of the world. The world will be sure to cross, to afflict and persecute what it hates; and the disciples of Christ are hated by the world, John xv. 19. Not only that part of the world, which evidently lies in wickedness, but the more refined part of it, which dresses up itself in a form of godliness. Those who have no more but the form, hate those that have the power, because this is a real reproof and conviction of the vanity and insufficiency of outward forms, how specious soever; and that which detects them is hated by them, 1 John v. 19. Open wickedness makes open war with the people of Christ, but the form of godliness will not persecute the power of it openly, but under some disguise or other, which may afford some plausible excuse for its hatred and violence. But enmity there is in all the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. And this enmity will find vent one way or other; sometimes openly, so as the devil may be plainly seen in it; sometimes covertly and subtilly, so as Satan conceals himself, as he did in the form of a serpent, and acts in the shape and form of innocent creatures. But however it act, the tendency of it is to keep the people of Christ always under the cross.

8. There is a necessity of the cross upon a manifold account.

(1.) To distinguish true disciples from hypocrites and pretenders. When Christ may be professed and followed with ease, and safety, and credit, multitudes will follow him, even many will profess him, whose hearts are not with him. But when the cross comes, that makes a distinction. When it comes to this, if you will stick to the truth of Christ, if you will worship him according to his own rule, if you will be true to your engagements, the cross will be upon you; you are sure to suffer for it; you cannot escape hatred, reproach, poverty, imprisonment, exile, or death itself. Will you be at such cost and hazard for a small truth, a rite, a circumstance, a disputable point? No; this is counted folly with those who are wiser for the world than for their soul. Here the formal professor, how forward soever he was before, plucks in his horns. Now will it appear who are really for Christ, and who are but pretenders, Mat. xiii. 20, 21. Before the storm, the chaff and the corn lie together in one heap, but when the wind riseth it blows away *paleas levis fidei*, the chaff, and makes the heap less in the garner.

The cross is expressed by a fiery trial. Now it is the property of fire and heat, *segregare heterogenea*, to separate those things which, though they be of differing natures, yet are congealed together in one heap; but when the heat comes, that dissolves and separates them. This is the property of the cross. It separates false-hearted professors from faithful Christians, and makes it appear they are of different natures and tempers, though before the trial they lay together in one lump. As the apostle says of heresies, 1 Cor. xi. 19, 'There must be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest.'

(2.) To try his disciples, that he may have an experiment of their affection and faithfulness to him: 'Who is on my side? Who?' says Jehu, 2 Kings ix. 38. So says Christ, when he brings out the cross; let

me now see who is for me, let me see who it is that will bear the cross for me. The sharper, the heavier, the more grievous it is, the more love will he shew that takes it up cheerfully for my name's sake; the more faithfulness will he shew that will continue under it, that will not use shifts, and excuses, and distinctions, and pretences, to keep it off, or throw it off, when the interest of my truth, and worship, and honour requires him to bear it. You profess you love Christ above all, that you love him more than father, and mother, and wife, houses, ease, plenty, life; well, but how shall it be known that you have such an affection for him indeed? Why, hereby shall it be known that you love him more than all, if you will part with any of these, with all of these, for his sake. That is the clearest way to decide the question, and to give Christ, and the world, and your own consciences a convincing evidence, that you have such a transcendent affection for Christ. 'Lovest thou me more than these?' says Christ to Peter. So he asks you in the day of trial, Lovest thou me more than these? Every one will be ready to answer, Yes, God forbid but I should love Christ more than all the world. Oh but the heart is deceitful, how shall this be discovered? Why, Christ has a trial for you; when the cross comes, he brings you to the test. You have often said you love me so and so, let me now see it; I shall now perceive what is in your hearts. If you love me more than relations, come follow me into exile or solitude, and leave them all behind you. If you love me more than riches, be content with want and poverty for my sake. This and this you must do, or else you are like to be ruined and undone in the world, and this you cannot do without offending me. Now shall I see whether you love me better than your estates. If you love me more than liberty, you will freely go to prison for me; if you love me more than life, you will freely die for me, when you cannot have liberty or life but upon such terms as will dishonour me. Hereby it will be known whether you love Christ indeed, or whether you do but talk of it. The cross is to try your sincerity, faithfulness, affection, it is needful upon this account, Dan. xi. 85, Rev. ii. 10. That is true love indeed, which all the waters will not quench.

(8.) For the advantage of grace. A Christian is not complete unless he have on his whole armour; and it is the cross puts us upon putting of it on; it would lie rusting by us, if we were not roused to the use of it by the frequent approaches of the cross. We should be at a loss as to suffering graces, and a great part of the whole armour is wanting, we are far from being complete and entire when these graces are to seek. Samson roused up himself when he heard that the Philistines were upon him. The soul would grow drowsy, and grace would lose it strength for want of use, were we not awakened by the cross. Grace gets or loses as it is more or less exercised. 'To him that hath shall be given,' &c. We have no more grace, in effect, than what we use, and the more we use the more we shall have. He that is much in the exercise of what he hath, be it little or much at first, he shall have abundance in a little time. Nothing more strengthens and increases holiness than the frequent exercise of it, and the cross calls it forth into exercise in all the means of grace. What a difference is there betwixt the prayers of one at ease, and the prayers of one under the cross? Isa. xxvi. 16. The soul is melted and runs forth in every such prayer. And the word makes a far greater impression upon a soul under trouble, it has more sweetness, and power, and efficacy.

It is not out of love to our souls that we are so much in love with outward prosperity; it is hard and rare for the soul to prosper in such a con-

dition. It does so much befriend our corruption, and yields it such advantages, that grace would be borne down and overpowered thereby, did not the Lord prevent it by frequent mixtures of the cross. The heart would be overgrown with weeds were it not often ploughed up by sufferings. And hence is it that men are suffered to make long furrows upon the backs of his people. Those crosses which seem to threaten our ruin do often prevent our ruin ; so that one may say of the cross, as Themistocles in his banishment, *Perissem nisi perissem*, I had been undone unless they had undone me. It had fared ill with my soul if I had fared better in the world.

(4.) To take us off from the world. The cross embitters the world to us, and confutes those vain conceits which make us fond of it. The vizard falls off by which it had deluded us, and now we may perceive what an impostor it was, when, for all its fair promises, we meet with nothing but vanity, and enmity, and vexation, and hard usage. And will it not seem lovely ? Or can we doat on it any longer ? The cross lets us not only see, but feel what the world is. When we find that while we are in it our souls are amongst lions, and we dwell with briars and thorns, which tear away what we have from us, and pierce us besides, how can we be in love with it any longer ? Those, Heb. xi. 37, 38, ' who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth ; who wandered in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; ' I warrant they were as willing to be rid of the world as the world was to be rid of them. The cross is the best instrument to crucify the world, Gal. vi. 14. The crosses that we meet with from the world may be made use of for the crucifying of the world itself. It would go near to ruin us if the cross did not help us against it. If we were not emptied from vessel to vessel, our hearts would settle here upon the lees.

(5.) To tame the flesh, and keep it under, which otherwise would grow headstrong, and bear down all the restraints of grace, and hurry us into carnal excess : John xv., ' Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it.' He lops off the luxuriancies of natural corruption. And how is this done ? Why, a sharp cross will be effectual to do it, when the Lord takes it into his hand and useth it for this purpose ! Isa. xxvii. 9, Nothing will better hinder corruption from taking its course than a hedge of thorns, Hos. ii. 6. A condition of ease, and peace, and plenty in the world cherishes our lusts ; it thrives best when we thrive most in the world. There would be no dealing with it were it not curbed, and taken down by the cross ; it then pines away and languishes when it is fastened with us to the cross.

(6.) To endure heaven to us. The ark was more acceptable to Noah's dove, when she found no rest to the soles of her feet on the face of the earth. The thoughts of the promised kingdom were sweeter to David when he was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. Canaan was more acceptable to the children of Israel when their burdens, oppressions, and sufferings increased in Egypt. There remains a rest for the people of God : with what joy will they think of that, when they find no rest here below ! How sweet will the thoughts of that eternal rest be to those who are still labouring under the cross ; how sweet will it be to think of a day of redemption for those who are still oppressed with the hatred and malice and insolence of the world, Rom. viii. 23. How sweet will those days of refreshment from the presence of the Lord be to them who are vexed, and troubled, and harassed here below ! how sweet the thoughts of approaching glory to those who are here reviled, and abused, and covered with shame and

reproach! how sweet the thoughts of an eternal triumph to those who are still conflicting under the cross! 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. A sharp sight of afflictions is an effectual means to make us in love with the appearing of Christ; whereas when all things succeed with us in the world as we desire, heaven is neglected, the thoughts of it are not so sweet, our desires after it are more faint and cold, we are apt to forget that we are pilgrims and strangers here below.

II. Proposition. The cross cannot ordinarily be avoided without sinning against Christ: 2 Tim. iii. 12, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' He must suffer, even when the times are peaceable, as well as when they are troublesome. He will suffer persecution, either of the hand, or of the tongue, or of the heart; he will be hated if he be not reproached; he will be reproached if he be not smitten; he will be smitten if he be not slain. He is sure of it if he will live godly. Indeed, if he will comply, or dissemble, or swim with the stream, or soothe men in their sinful humours, or stretch his confidence to serve his worldly interests, he may shift it off; but if he will live godly in Christ Jesus, if live like a Christian, he shall suffer persecution.

III. Proposition. Those that will sin ordinarily, to avoid the cross, they are no Christians. I say not he that does at any time sin, for we see Peter did it, but it was against his resolution, and upon surprisal; and he recovered himself by a quick and deep repentance, and we hear no more of any such fall afterwards. But the case is otherwise with those who sin ordinarily to avoid sufferings; ordinarily, i.e. as often as temptation comes, whether it come frequently or seldom. Those that will sin, to avoid danger, as often as their relations, estates, or lives are in danger, they are no Christians; for to sin ordinarily is to commit sin. And he that commits sin is the servant of sin, not the servant of Christ, John viii. 34.

Those that will sin, rather than suffer, Christ renounceth them here, and he will do it solemnly hereafter. Though they may possess, and pretend to the name of Christ, he will have nothing to do with them; he will express himself ashamed of them, Mark viii. 3, Luke ix. 26, whether they be the words of faith or obedience. He that, to avoid shame or reproach from a wicked generation, forbears to give his testimony to any truth of Christ, or forbears to yield obedience to any command of Christ, Christ will be ashamed to own such a man for a Christian, he will renounce him as one that has no part in him, Math. x. 33; 2 Tim. ii. 12.

Christ is denied either when faith or obedience is denied. Faith is denied either expressly or tacitly: expressly when any truth of Christ is disclaimed, to avoid sufferings, when the party knows it to be a truth, and is called to bear witness to it; tacitly, when the truth is betrayed by our silence. So he denies Christ, says Fulgentius, *qui silendo non adstruit veritatem*, who, by holding his peace, does not assert the truth when his testimony is required. Christ is denied too when obedience is denied him: Tit. i. 16, they 'profess to know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient.' He that will disobey Christ ordinarily, rather than venture suffering for obeying him, he is no Christian; Christ will disown him. He looks upon such not as Christians, but as enemies, Phil. iii. 18. Many there are who bear the name of Christ and yet are of a most unchristian temper; such as will not suffer anything for Christ, will not stand by any truth or practice that may bring sufferings on them,

but will comply with Jews or Gentiles to avoid persecution. The Christians in the apostles' times were in danger of suffering, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles. Now, some that professed themselves to be Christians, but, indeed, preferred the accommodations of this life, ease, safety, credit, plenty, before Christ, rather than they would be exposed to sufferings, they did comply with both.

They complied with the Gentiles, to escape persecution from them, by sitting with them at their feasts in their temples, and there eating things sacrificed unto idols; pleading, this was a thing indifferent, *ἀδιαφορεῖν ἰδωλοθύτων*, as Eusebius tells us the Gnostics did.

They complied with the Jews, to avoid persecution from them, by being circumcised themselves, and urging others to be circumcised, Gal. vi. 12. And yet they made a fair show of a profession; but they would comply rather than suffer persecution. And for this they are branded by the apostle as false teachers, and false Christians, and, indeed, whatever they pretend, enemies to the cross of Christ. Those that will sin, though under never so fair and specious pretences, rather than suffer, rather than bear the cross, they are no Christians, Christ and his apostles disclaim them.

Quest. What is it to suffer for Christ? How may I know that I suffer for him, that my suffering is the cross of Christ? The resolution of this is necessary, both for the comfort of the sufferers and for the explication of the doctrine. For the cross is properly a suffering for Christ; and, therefore, that we may know what the cross is here mentioned, and when we bear it, we must understand what it is to suffer for Christ. *Non pœna, sed causa facit martyrem.*

Ans. In general. The Scriptures describe this to us in several expressions. It is to suffer for the gospel, Mar. x. 29; 'for Christ' and 'for the gospel' are joined together as terms explaining one another. To suffer for the truths of the gospel, for the profession, the promoting, the maintaining of, adhering to the gospel, is to suffer for Christ.

It is to suffer for the kingdom of God, Luke xviii. 29. For acknowledging and promoting the kingdom of Christ inwardly or outwardly, in those ways and means whereby he exercises his regal office in his church under the gospel. It is to suffer for righteousness, Mat. v. 10. This is suffering for his name's sake, ver. 11; so 1 Pet. iii. 14; for doing that which is righteous; for obedience to any of Christ's commands, in observance of any law of God. It is to suffer for the discharging of a good conscience, 1 Pet. ii. 19. It is to suffer for well-doing, 1 Pet. iii. 17; explained by another expression, 1 Pet. iv. 19. To suffer according to the will of God, is to suffer for doing anything that he would have us do, whatever the will and judgment of men be concerning it.

Now these general grounds being laid down before us in Scripture, we may by the light and help thereof proceed to a more particular resolution of the question, and such as may tend more to remove the doubts and scruples whereby Satan has been wont (and will be ready) to rob sufferers of their comfort under the cross. We shall attempt this, 1, negatively; 2, positively. In the negative observe these rules:

1. It cannot be concluded that sufferings are not for God, because those who profess themselves to be the people of God are the instruments of them; or that it is not the cross of Christ which is borne, because it is laid on by those who profess Christ. Abel is called the protomartyr, the first sufferer for God; and he suffered by the hand of one who worshipped the same God, with the same kind of worship: both Abel and his persecutor

offered sacrifice. Isaac suffered by Ishmael, Gal. iv. 29; yet Ishmael was Abraham's son, and by him circumcised, and so admitted to the church and its privileges. Who were those that persecuted the prophets of old, but they who professed themselves to be the peculiar people, and true worshippers of the true God? Jerusalem, the chosen city, killed the prophets, and stoned God's messengers, Mat. xxiii. 37. Amongst this people, though there was no other people that owned the true God in the world, some persecutors were found in every generation. Even when they utterly disclaimed this, as thinking themselves far enough from being persecutors, yet then are they charged with this guilt by Christ himself, ver. 80, 81. Christ himself suffered by those who took themselves peculiarly to be the people of God. And since the profession of Christ became general, ordinarily a man's enemies are those of his own house. The bitterest persecutors are those of the same profession.

2. It cannot be concluded that sufferings are not for Christ, because those who inflict them will not acknowledge it; for they will always plead it is for evil-doing, though it be really for Christ and righteousness. If persecutors may state the cause of those whom they persecute, none amongst Christians will ever suffer for Christ; for though they love the thing, yet they hate the name of persecutor, and therefore will pretend always some other cause of their hatred and violence. They think themselves concerned, not to let it appear that they persecute any for Christ's sake, or for righteousness, or for the gospel, though that be the cause indeed.

As it is said of the heathens in primitive times, they covered the Christians with beasts' skins, so that the wild beasts, to whom they exposed them, might with more fury seize on them; so it is, and has been with persecutors in all ages. They shew the people of Christ in an odious habit, state their cause otherwise than it is, that so they may let out their malice and cruelty more freely upon them.

Thus Ahab persecuted Elijah, not for his faithfulness in reproving his wickedness, and calling back the people from their idolatry and apostasy to the sincere worship of God: no, that had been odious; but he falls upon him as a troubler of Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 17. He charges him as one that brought trouble upon the church and state, as one who dissuaded the people from the religion established, and so disturbed the peace of the land, Ezra iv. 12, Esth. iii. 8.

Thus Jeremiah was persecuted as a seditious preacher, an enemy to king and state, when, indeed, he sought to secure them from ruin, by bringing them back to God, from whom they had revolted, Jer. xxxvii. 12, 13, and xxxviii. 4. And upon such an account must Paul and Silas suffer, as disturbers of the peace, breakers of ancient customs, and opposers of Cæsar, as evil-doers, if their persecutors may be judges, Acts xvi. 20, and xvii. 6, 7.

Yea, Christ himself must suffer for sedition, and as an enemy to Cæsar, if Pilate and the Jews may state his cause. The Jews thus accuse him: Luke xxiii. 2, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, That he himself is Christ, a King.' And they cry out, John xix. 12, 'If thou let him go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.' And the cross was the punishment in use for that crime. *Authores seditionis aut tumultus, pro qualitatis dignitate, aut in crucem tollentur, &c.* But because he died the death of a seditious person, shall we judge he died for no better cause?

The primitive Christians were persecuted as incendiaries, enemies of the emperor and empire, *κατὰ-φύσιν αὐτῶν οὐσίονα διαύνα καὶ διδραμοδίους μίξιν*, as the French churches in those times complain (Euseb. lib. 5), accused of inhumanity and horrible uncleanness, as causes of all the evils that befell the empire : and, therefore, when any calamity befell them, they were wont to cry out, *Christianos ad leones* ; for this they must be cast to wild beasts, as though they suffered for no other cause, but as being causes of the world's calamities. No people ever suffered more clearly for Christ than the Christians in those times ; and yet their persecutors fasten on them for other causes of their sufferings.

8. It cannot be concluded that their sufferings are not for Christ, because their sins have provoked God to leave them to sufferings. Though sin should raise the storm, yet he who is ready, in that tempest, to have himself, and what is dear to him, cast overboard, rather than Christ should be further dishonoured, will not want the comfort and honour of suffering for Christ.

Cyprian tells the elders and deacons in an epistle, lib. 4, that the persecution came upon them for their sin. *Intelligendum est enim et confitendum, secundum peccata nostra venisse*. And yet then such multitudes suffered for Christ, that the persecution, *Gregem nostram maxima ex parte populata est, et usque populatur*, had even laid their churches desolate. Eusebius, in the beginning of lib. 8, going to describe the tenth persecution, gives an account of those sins which brought those sufferings upon them ; yet never was there greater multitudes in any age who gave up themselves to be sacrificed for the name of Christ. Though the sins of God's people may provoke him to let loose the rage of hell, and the world upon them, and to bring them into a suffering condition, yet, if in this case they humble themselves, and return to him, and in the day of trial part with all, rather than flinch from him, they will be owned as sufferers for him.

Nor need it seem strange that the same suffering should be both for sin and for righteousness. Here is no contradiction : these are very well consistent in different respects. The same suffering may be for sin in reference to God, who may leave his people to sufferings, because they have sinned against him ; for pride, worldliness, slothfulness, security, lukewarmness ; for their contentions, divisions, want of brotherly love ; or for their backsliding, declinings, or their non-proficiency and unfruitfulness, or other sinful miscarriages. And yet these very sufferings may be for righteousness, in reference to their persecutors, who afflict them, not because they have sinned against God, but because they will not sin more ; not because they have been unfaithful to Christ, but for their faithfulness to him, because they will not further provoke him by complying with their sinful impositions, or serving their wicked designs. The hard measures which the believing Hebrews met with from the unbelieving Jews, when they were reproached, and their goods spoiled, were sufferings for Christ, else they could not have endured this joyfully, and yet the apostle speaks of these sufferings under the notion of chastisements, Heb. xii. Now chastisements are properly for sin ; take the word in a proper sense, and none are chastened but in reference to some miscarriage.

The two last particulars I shall a little more insist on, adding what the time would not then permit me to offer to you. And the rather because I find I am apt to be mistaken, and such constructions put upon my words as the expressions will not bear, and my thoughts were never guilty of.

It may be of some use to take notice of those sins which Cyprian and

Eusebius mention, as the provocations which brought the Christians in their times into a suffering condition.

Eusebius tells us that the Christians, under some of the governors before Diocletian, had much liberty, many encouragements, and some of them great preferments. But *ἐκ τῆς ἐπὶ πλείων ἐλευθερίας*; they as it were surfeiting of too much liberty, grew wanton and slothful, contented themselves with a specious outside holiness, fell into divisions and contentions, envying and reproaching one another, and strove who should get uppermost to lord it over their brethren, *ὅτε τὴν τυραννίδας τὰς φιλαρχίας ἐκθύμους διεδικοῦντες*. That which he most insists on, and repeats over and over, is their divisions and contentions amongst themselves, *ταῖς πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀνφορίστον φιλονεικίαις*. The fire of contention broke out amongst them; discord, threatening, emulation, and mutual hatred did increase among them. For these sins did the Lord wax angry, and involved them in that dreadful persecution. Yet afterwards he gives an account of hundreds and thousands that suffered for Christ. So that hence it is clear that men may suffer for sin, and for righteousness too.*

The sins that Cyprian tells us brought the Christians in his time under persecution, were their too much minding their estates and riches, *patrimonio et lucro studentes*; pride, *superbiam sectantes*; emulation and dissension, *emulationi et dissentioni vacantes*; neglecting the faith and simplicity of the gospel, *simplicitatis fidei negligentes*; worldliness, *seculo verbis solis, et non factis, renunciantes*; self-pleasing, and offensiveness to others, *unusquisque sibi placentes, et omnibus displicentes*. These sins brought them into a suffering condition; for he adds, *vapulamus itaque ut meremur*, we have deserved these scourges, *cum scriptum sit, servus, &c.*, Luke xii. Yea, he instances in the confessors themselves, who were already under sufferings, that were also under guilt, and yet owns them as confessors, *i. e.*, sufferers for Christ, though they had not yet resisted unto blood.

But it may be you will be better satisfied with a domestic instance. Let me give you one nearer home, and which some of you are better acquainted with. In Edward the VI. his time a reformation was happily begun, the main body of popery was cast out, and the gospel had a free passage. Yet the reformation being so opposed as it could not be perfected, and the gospel not being duly esteemed, and obeyed, and improved, these and other sins, as the martyrs confess, brought those black and dreadful days of Queen Mary's government; so that sin brought those suffering times, and yet those times afforded many hundred martyrs. The martyrs acknowledge that their sins had some hand in kindling those flames wherein so many were sacrificed for the testimony of Jesus; so that it is clear to any one that will not shut their eyes that men may suffer for their sins, and yet for Christ too.

4. It cannot be concluded, they do not suffer for Christ, who have some sin mixed with that which is made the cause of their sufferings, if it be the cause of God indeed, for the substance of it, and they sincere in it for the main. When the people of God are ready to offer up themselves, and what they have for him, he will not reject such a sacrifice for every blemish. Christ had something against the church of Ephesus, something to charge her with as matter of provocation, even when he is speaking of her sufferings, Rev. ii. 4. And yet he owns her as one that had suffered and laboured for his name's sake, verse 8.

Nor can this be concluded, because of some miscarriage under their suf-

* Vid. Spondanum.

ferings. David, while he was persecuted by Saul, miscarried divers ways, as you may see 1 Sam. xxi. 2, 12, 18, and elsewhere; yet this did not hinder him from being a sufferer for righteousness.

As the Lord has provided a way, that what his people do for him may be accepted as done for him, though there be too many sinful mixtures therein, so he has provided an expedient, that what they suffer for him may be accepted as suffered for him, though there be many flaws therein, both for matter and manner. The Lord Jesus, the advocate of and sacrifice for his people, is effectual for both. When they apply themselves to him, in the exercise of faith and repentance, through his mediation, that which is therein evil shall not be remembered, that which is good therein will be accepted, Rom. xii. 1. How acceptable, see Eph. i. 6, 7.

Licinius, as you may read, Eusebius *De vita Constantini*, makes an edict, that whosoever did relieve the imprisoned and distressed Christians should suffer the same things that were inflicted upon them. Now, suppose some, out of love to Christ and his afflicted members, should have ventured (as many did indeed) to have relieved them, and yet should have done it too sparingly, or too fearfully, or with some selfish reflections, and should, according to the edict, have suffered for relieving them, here had been some sin mixed with the cause of their sufferings. And yet in this case, since their cause was good, and the cause of Christ, for the substance of it, who would deny but they suffered for Christ?

Or suppose one should suffer because he would not leave praying (which was Daniel's case, Dan. vi.), and yet in his prayer should have some mixture of unbelief, and lukewarmness, and other distempers, which the best cannot always escape, here would be some sin mixed with the cause of sufferings; yet who would deny but that, suffering for doing his duty, he is a sufferer for God?

To proceed a little further: suppose some godly Lutherans should suffer for those great truths of the gospel, which they maintain against the papists, and together with them should suffer for consubstantiation, which indeed is an error, here would be a sin mixed with the cause of their suffering; yet I suppose their laying down their lives for those other great truths of Christ, notwithstanding this sinful mixture, would be accounted a suffering for Christ.

So much for the negative rules. Proceed we now to the positive.

1. They suffer for Christ, who suffer for the truths of Christ. He suffers for Christ who suffers for the gospel, who will part with all, rather than deny any truth of the gospel, Rev. ii. 18. To 'hold fast Christ's name,' and 'not to deny the faith,' are all one. So that to suffer, as Antipas did, rather than deny the faith, is to suffer for Christ's name, Philip. i. 27. To stand striving for the faith of the gospel, *αναθλόντες ἐν τῇ πίστει*, striving as combatants, resolving to uphold the truth, or to fall for it, is to suffer for Christ; for he adds, ver. 29, 'To you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer for his name.' Jude, ver. 3, *παγνίσκουσιν*, struggling for it, as with the pangs of death. It is taken *pro luctu in morte*, says Gerard. Those that strive for the truth as for life, being ready to part with life and all rather than quit it, in such contests they are suffering for Christ. He that parts with all, rather than deny the least truth, for the name of Christ is concerned in all, and he is faithful indeed who will not be unfaithful in a little. So the Christians in the fourth age would suffer rather than yield a title, an *ἰσρα*, to the prejudice of the truth they were then called to contend for, viz., the divinity of Christ; rather than they would put *ἁμαρτίας* for *ἀμαρτίας*, in their confessions of faith (though there be

but the difference of the least letter in the alphabet), they would be exposed to the rage and cruelty of the Arians.

Some think that which is said here of the church of Pergamos is a prophetic description of the state of the church under popish corruptions, that apostasy being a falling from the faith; so suffering for the truths corrupted or subverted by the papists will be a suffering like Antipas, which wants but a syllable of Antipapas.

2. They that suffer for the worship of Christ. The name of Christ is put for his worship, 2 Tim. ii. 19. To suffer for his worship is to suffer for his name's sake, to suffer because they will not neglect the worship of Christ. So Daniel, because he would not forbear praying, though there was a law to the contrary, Dan. vi. 7, was cast into the den of lions; he suffered for God. Or because they will not give the worship of God to any other, so the three faithful Jews would be cast into the furnace rather than fall down before an image; they would not give outward adoration to an image, though they were free to keep their hearts and inward man for the true God, Dan. iii.

So those that have suffered by the papists' cruelty, for not bowing to altars, and images, and crucifixes, have suffered for Christ. 'Mine honour will I not give to another,' Isa. xlii. 8. He is jealous of it, and takes it as a kindness to himself when others are jealous of it too.

So the primitive Christians that suffered, not only for not sacrificing, but rather than they would throw a little incense into the fire with respect to an idol, as those did who are called by the ancients *Thurificati*; yea, rather than they would receive a ticket signifying they had done so, though indeed they had not, thereby to escape suffering as those did whom they call *Libellatici*.

Or because they will not worship God otherwise than he has prescribed, according to the devices and inventions of men, who are so presumptuous as to think their own inventions may take place of God's institutions, and will not be content to serve God as the apostles and primitive Christians served him. Those that have suffered for opposing the superstitions and will-worship of papists, and popish innovators, have suffered for God; they are amongst the number of those who, as the apostle expresses it, 'suffer according to the will of God,' 1 Pet. iv. 15, when they run all hazards rather than not worship God according to his will. The children of Israel, while they retained their integrity, are ready to hazard their lives, even against their brethren, upon an apprehension that they had innovated upon the service of God by setting up an altar, Joshua xxii. 11, 12, as the apostles did for not observing the Jewish ceremonies.

Or because they will not be present at false worship, though they do not join in it. So the Reformed divines determined upon the question, that those who would be faithful should suffer rather than be present at the mass, though their hearts were against it, Dan. iii. They might have directed their inward worship to the true God, and to him they might have referred their outward adoration too, without intending to give either to the image. But such relative worship they did not know, or could not swallow, though modern idolaters and their advocates think theirs sufficiently excused and justified upon this pretence, that what honour they seem to give the image is directed and referred to God in Christ.

8. Those that suffer for the discipline of Christ. For hereby Christ exercises his kingly office in the church; and to suffer for his kingdom is to suffer for himself, Luke xviii. 29. Christ has left us not only ordi-

nances of worship, but ordinances of discipline, probation, and trial of officers and members, ordination, admonition, excommunication, that the societies of Christians may be visibly holy, and their administrations not profane. They that suffer for observing the orders Christ has left us, for keeping out those who have no visible right to church-membership and privileges, or casting out those who are scandalous and impenitent, lest the church of Christ should become a nest of unclean birds, to the profaning of his ordinances and the dishonour of the Christian name, they suffer for the name of Christ, Rev. ii. 2, 8. He owns what they had done or suffered in trying pretenders, and not enduring those that were evil amongst them, as done for his name's sake. Those who are acquainted with the practice of the churches in the first three hundred years after Christ, may observe a remarkable strictness and severity both in their admissions and censures.* Nor were they deterred therefrom by all the sufferings in those times.

4. Those that suffer for acts of mercy or justice. These in Scripture pass frequently under the name of righteousness, and so to suffer for them is to suffer for righteousness' sake; and that is all one as to suffer for Christ's sake, Mat. v. To suffer for such acts as those of the two famous virgins Prazidis and Potentiana, who hazarded themselves to bury the bodies of the martyrs, and laid out their estates to relieve those that were in distress: Mat. xxv. 40, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;' consequently, inasmuch as they suffer for doing this for the least of Christ's members, they suffer for him. Such an act was that of Obadiah, 1 Kings xviii. 34. Now if he had suffered for this act of mercy and charity, he had suffered, not only for relieving men, but fearing God, for that was the rise of it.

So for acts of justice. Elijah causes the priests of Baal to be slain. For this cause Jezebel persecutes him, 1 Kings xix. 1, 2, and puts him to fly for his life. Now, herein he suffered for God, and so he apprehends it: ver. 10, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.' This will be more evident and unquestionable when those acts are done out of love to Christ, or in obedience to him, or with respect to his honour, or in subserviency to his interest; for acts of a lower nature thus done, are done for Christ, and to suffer thus is to suffer for Christ. Elijah had warrant to do thus by the law of God; for, by the judicial law, idolaters and seducers were to be put to death, Deut. xvii. 2. And this was done with the concurrence of the elders and the people; for there was met in Carmel a general assembly of all Israel by Ahab's order, so that, if the prophet was not a magistrate, we need not have recourse to special and extraordinary instinct to justify the act. He, according to the law of God, requires the assembly, consisting of magistrates and people, to do execution, and they do it; but for this Jezebel threatens and persecutes him.

5. You may suffer for Christ, though the cause for which you suffer be a civil act. That a person may suffer for God, it is not always requisite that the cause for which he suffers be merely and strictly religious. The cause of David's sufferings from the hand of Saul was his title to the kingdom, and that was a civil thing; yet when for this he was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, he is counted as one that was persecuted for righteousness' sake. A man may suffer for God when he is persecuted for a civil act, if that act be his duty, if he was called to it by God, if it was that which God would have him do; for in this case he suffers for

* Vid. Spondan. in Cypr.

well-doing. He suffers according to the will of God, he suffers for righteousness, which expressions are all one in Scripture with suffering for God. He that is persecuted for doing the will of God, whether it be in a matter religious or civil, he is a sufferer for God. And so he may be more comfortably when the cause is mixed; when, for the matter of it, it is civil, but the end of it is religious (and so indeed it should be always), when the end is the advancement of Christ, promoting his gospel, depressing of wickedness, encouraging of holiness; when it has a special tendency to these or like ends, and is undertaken in order thereto, then is their suffering for it more evidently for God. I say, it will more evidently be a suffering for Christ if the civil act be directed further, and so is of a higher tendency than otherwise in its own nature it would be. For substance, the choice of officers or magistrates in a corporation is a civil act. Now, suppose a man should endeavour, in his place and station, so far as lawfully he may, to get such chosen as will oppose popery, give free passage to the gospel, discourage wickedness, decline persecuting, and be true to the interest of Christ, and the nation, and the people of Christ in it, if he should suffer for such endeavours, though he act but in his civil capacity, yet he would constructively and really suffer for Christ; and so far as he acts sincerely with such intention, Christ will own him as one that suffers for his name's sake, and he may have the comfort of such a sufferer. And those that decline such endeavours, for fear it should expose them to suffering, they thereby decline the cross when they are called to take it up, and are so far guilty of disobedience and unfaithfulness to Christ.

6. A man may suffer for Christ in refusing to do that which in itself is lawful to be done; and that in two cases, to instance in no more.

(1.) When the doing of that which is lawful in itself may be an offence to others; i. e., an occasion of sin to one or other, either to weak brethren or to false brethren. The apostle is an example to us in both, 1 Cor. viii. 13. Though it was lawful for him to eat this or that, yet rather than he would lay a stumbling-block before those whose weakness was not satisfied of the lawfulness of it, he would not eat, whatever came on it, whatever he suffered for it.

And as careful he was not to lay an occasion of sin before false brethren, as appears in another instance. Circumcision was in his time lawful; and so being in such circumstances wherein it might be done without offence, he circumcised Timothy, Acts xvi. 3. But when it was like to prove an occasion of sin, he refused to circumcise Titus, Gal. ii. 4, 5. He saw, if he should then have used that rite, which otherwise was lawful, it would have confirmed the unbelieving Jews in their opinion of the necessity of it, when indeed it was not necessary, and it would have encouraged them to impose and obtrude it as necessary upon others. The case being thus, rather than he would do it, he exposed himself to the malice and rage of those false brethren who persecuted him upon this account. Yet, Gal. v. 11, what he suffered for this cause he suffered for Christ, inasmuch as he glories in his sufferings.

Obj. Whereas it may be objected, that there is a twofold offence, *scandalum acceptum et datum*, an offence taken, and an offence given; it is the offence given that is of pernicious consequence, when a dangerous occasion is offered, such as tends to the prejudice of another's soul. This offence the apostle condemns, and would have avoided; and we ought to suffer (as he would have done) rather than offer it to any. But an offence taken is another thing; when one takes occasion when no just occasion is offered;

when he is scandalised, stumbles, and falls, because another does that which he may lawfully do.

Ans. It is an eating to this latter sort of offence which the apostle forbids and condemns (that which seems more innocent and more tolerable), the meat which he speaks of, the eating of it was lawful in itself; he declares it so, and was persuaded of it by the Lord Jesus, Rom. xiv. 14; and yet he would have it forborne when thereby a weak brother is offended, though the meat being not forbidden, and so the eating of it innocent in itself, the weak brother had no just occasion of offence offered; nor could he reasonably take it, it was merely his mistake to judge it unlawful. He would have every one avoid occasion of such offence, this tending to destroy him who takes it, Rom. xiv. 15, 20. And we ought rather to suffer than do what is otherwise lawful, when it may prove destructive to another's soul.

(2.) When the thing is lawful, yet he who is put upon the doing it is doubtful whether it be lawful or no, Rom. xiv. 23; while he doubts of its lawfulness, if he should do it, he would sin; and therefore if he should suffer for not doing of it, he suffers for avoiding sin, and consequently suffers for conscience towards God, which indeed is a suffering for God, Rom. xviii. 28. He that eateth or does anything not of faith, *i. e.*, as he explains it, while he doubteth of the lawfulness of it, if he be not fully persuaded that he may do it lawfully, as verse 5, he sins. He does that for which he may be damned, that which exposes him to condemnation; and therefore he ought to suffer anything rather than to venture on anything with a doubting conscience, for any suffering from man is far more tolerable than condemnation by God. And those who enjoin anything, not only apparently sinful, but which is suspected and doubtful, and those under penalties, instead of that love they should have for souls, take the course to damn them.

7. Whatever be alleged as the cause of good men's sufferings, whether it be a matter religious or civil, whether it be a duty or a thing indifferent, yea, though it be some sin or miscarriage that is pretended to be the cause why they are hated, and reproached, and persecuted, yet if the great motive, the main inducement, be their godliness, their strictness in following Christ, their zeal for his interest, their severity against sin, their endeavours for reformation, and the like, though their persecutors would have it believed that they suffer as evil doers, yet Christ will own them as suffering for him.

Polybius tells us that statesmen have their *causas justificantes*, some plausible reasons, which they publish as the cause of their actings, to put the fairer colours upon them; and some *causas reales*, which though they conceal, yet really set them a-work, and are the true reason of their proceedings. Just so have persecutors something specious, which they give out to be the cause of their acting against the people of Christ, whenas they conceal that which has the greatest influence on them, and is the true cause indeed. It would not be for their credit to let it be known that they are so fierce against any that profess Christ for their strictness, and holiness, and faithfulness to Christ.

Now, whatever be alleged as the cause of any man's sufferings, if the *causa realis*, the true reason, and the great inducement, that sets them against him, be his strictness, holiness, faithfulness in discharge of his place, &c., endeavours to reform what provokes God; so that were it not for this, notwithstanding anything alleged against him, he might be passed by, he might escape hatred, reproach, persecution as well as others; in

this case, however the cause of his sufferings may be disguised, yet is it for Christ that he suffers indeed, 2 Tim. ii. 9. When the panther flies upon a picture, and tears it, because it has some resemblance of a man, the picture suffers, but it is for the man's sake. If persecutors fly upon you for the image of Christ in you, for any resemblance you have of him, whatever you suffer, it is for Christ's sake.

Whatever Cain might pretend why he fell upon his brother, the Scripture tells us the true cause: 1 John iii. 12, 'Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' And upon this account Cain passeth for a murderous persecutor, and Abel for a martyr.

Whatever the wicked Jews pretended of old for their persecuting the prophets, and fair pretences they had to delude their own consciences and justify their actions before others, yet the true cause was because the prophets reproved them for their backsliding, and corrupting the worship of God, and endeavouring their reformation. And upon this account Christ brands the Jews as persecutors, and honours the prophets as sufferers for his name's sake, Mat. v.

The primitive Christians, as Eusebius and others tell us, were accused of sedition, sacrilege, murder, meeting privately to conspire against the emperor, putting out the lights and committing filthiness together, &c.; and by these and the like pretended crimes the persecutors sought to justify their rage against them, whereas the true cause was because they were Christians, worshippers, and followers of Christ, and would not join with them in their worship of idols. And now the other odious and false aspersions being wiped off, the true cause of their sufferings appears, and is acknowledged; and they are, and will be in all generations, honoured as the martyrs of Jesus, as sufferers for Christ, even by those who otherwise follow the steps of those persecutors in their false accusations of the people of God, and in their real enmity to purity and holiness.

To go a little further: suppose one should speak or act something without due cautiousness, such as prudence requires, and thereby occasion be taken to draw him within the compass, or make him obnoxious to some law, rigidly and so injuriously interpreted, and thereupon he suffer grievously; if there be sufficient ground to believe that this advantage would not have been taken against him, it might have been overlooked, but that he had before appeared steady for the interest of Christ, or in opposition to mischievous designs and attempts against it; in such a case, though this be never alleged, nor so much as mentioned, as the cause of his sufferings, yet he may be justly reputed to suffer for Christ, though another occasion was taken to make him suffer.

This and the other I thought it requisite to insist on for the ends forementioned. Other doubts and scruples that perplex any under the cross may be reduced to these, and so hereby be removed. It concerns you to take notice of them, and remember them, against any hour of trial and temptation, when Satan, and subtle and malicious persecutors, would rob you of the comforts you may have in suffering for Christ; or want of a clear understanding of the true cause of suffering may hide them from you, and render a suffering condition dreadful. Nothing can hinder it from being formidable, unless you be satisfied that you suffer for Christ.

Use. Information. If he that will not suffer for Christ is no Christian, this shews us that Christianity is another thing than many take it to be; a harder thing to be a Christian than it is supposed to be. Many (it is to be feared) take themselves to be Christians who are not so indeed, think them-

selves complete Christians when they want that which Christ himself hath made essential to a Christian.

That thou mayest be a Christian indeed, it is not enough to be baptized into the name of Christ, nor to take up the profession of Christ, nor to believe the truths of Christ, nor to partake of the outward privileges of Christians, nor to expect the reward of Christians, nor to do the acts and perform some duties of Christians, to pray, hear, communicate with them, and minister to their necessities, &c.,—these are some things indeed that belong to Christians; but these are not all, all this is not enough.

When the young man told Christ that he had observed all the commandments, 'All these,' says he, 'have I kept from my youth,' Mark x. 20, one would have thought this had been enough. No, says Christ; for all this, 'One thing thou lackest,' ver 21, 'sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' So say I, or rather Christ in the text says it to you, notwithstanding all the truths which you believe as Christians, notwithstanding all the duties you perform as Christians, yet one thing you lack; and for all the good conceit you have of yourselves, if this one thing be wanted, indeed, all that you profess you have will be nothing to prove you Christians. This one thing will try what your professions and pretences are. And what is this one thing upon which so much depends? Why, it is the cross. What think you of that? Here is the test. Are you willing to take it up? Are you willing to be hated, and reproached, and impoverished, and tortured, and ruined for Christ? What say you to this? Do you think it a hard saying? Must you hate* the ease, and the plenty, and the credit, and the friendship of the world, or else no bargain? You like not to be Christians upon other terms; you are ready, with the young man, to go away sorrowful when you hear that it is like to cost you so much; or, you will not believe that Christ is so strict, or that it is so dangerous a thing to be a Christian. Well, I know not upon what grounds you go, but I am sure these are the words of Christ, and such as you will find true hereafter, however you may evade them now. He that taketh, &c. He that is not willing, ready, resolved to part with all that is dear to him in this world, to suffer all that is grievous to the flesh for Christ's sake whenever he shall be called to it, let him please himself with what fancies he will, Christ will never own him for a Christian. If you be not ready to entertain the cross for the name of Christ, whatever you are, or do, or believe, you are but almost Christians; what progress soever you seem to have made in Christianity, you are not so much as fully persuaded to be Christians if you be not resolved upon the cross, Acts xxvi. 28, 29. Except these bonds, says Paul. We may wish, indeed, that there were such an exception, that the sufferings which attend the faithful profession of Christ might not deter any from being Christians; but, whatever we may wish, Christ has made no such exception. He tells us plainly, if we will have him, we must have him with the cross; if we will take him we must take him with bonds, and imprisonment, and poverty, and disgrace, or whatever we may be put to suffer for his sake. He would not have us mistaken in promising ourselves better usage than we are like to find: Mat. x. 84, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.' Do not deceive yourselves with a conceit that I came into the world with any design to secure those that follow me in a quiet and peaceable possession of outward prosperity. No; if you will follow me indeed, you must rather

* Qu. 'have'?—Ed.

expect the sword ; not only lesser sufferings, but death itself, ver. 35. No bonds, sacred or civil, shall restrain those from whom you might expect better usage, from exercising their malice and cruelty against you ; the nearer they are to you the more bitterly will they persecute you. These are the terms which Christ makes known to you. Now are you Christians upon these terms ? Can you welcome Christ with the cross ? Will you bear it for him ? Are you ready to be nailed, to be fastened to it, for his sake, whenever you have a call to it ? If not, delude not yourselves, you are no Christians. *Qui timet pati, non est ejus qui passus est*, says Tertullian ; he that will not suffer for Christ is none of his who suffered so much. And by this it is too manifest that there are few Christians indeed, how many soever take up the profession. And we shall endeavour to convince you of it in some particulars, since such conviction is exceeding necessary ; for while men persuade themselves they are what they really are not, they will never seek to be what indeed they should be.

(1.) What shall we think of those, who are so far from bearing the cross themselves, that they are ready to lay it upon others ; those who hate, and revile, and reproach, and persecute the servants and ministers of Christ ; whose hearts are possessed with hatred, and malice, and bitterness against them ; who are so far from bemoaning and resisting these unchristian distempers, and striving to suppress them and root them out, as they nourish them, and are pleased with them, and encourage one another therein, and desire more power and liberty to let them out more freely, and take all occasions to express their malice and enmity against them ? What think you, are these Christians ? Another question may resolve this. Were they Christians who persecuted Christ himself ? Were those Jews Christians who cried out, ‘ Crucify him, crucify him ’ ? If they were not, no more are these ; for those who hate, and reproach, and persecute the members of Christ, they, in Christ’s account, do this against himself. ‘ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ’ And upon inquiry it will appear they have little more to excuse themselves from this guilt than those wretched Jews had ; for if some should plead that they do not hate, or reproach, or persecute any, because they are Christians, or ministers, but because they are hypocrites, and pretend to be what indeed they are not, why, just this did the Jews : they did not persecute Christ because he was the Messiah (they abhorred the thought of such a crime), but because (as they wretchedly alleged) he was an impostor, one that deceived the people, and pretended to be the Christ, the Messiah, when they could not believe he was any such person.

And if any should plead that they are far from persecuting any, they abhor the name, the thing ; they detest those wretches who burnt the martyrs in Queen Mary’s days ; if they had lived in those times, they would have used those faithful people otherwise. Why, but just this did those Jews, who persecuted Christ and his followers ; even while they were eagerly persecuting, they detest the name of persecutors. They condemn their forefathers for killing the prophets ; if they had lived in their days, they would have been far from so abusing the Lord’s messengers, Mat. xxiii. 29, 30. This they said, whenas they were walking in the steps of their fathers, ready to express the same persecuting spirit which possessed them. Yet they would have been taken for the people of God, as persecutors since would be accounted the people of Christ. But he tells them what they are indeed : ver. 38, ‘ Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? ’ The poison of malice and hatred which fills their hearts,

the sting which these put forth in their words and actings, shews what they are : not Christians, but a generation of vipers ; not the seed of the woman, but the seed of the serpent ; not the disciples of Christ, but the followers of those who persecuted Christ and the prophets of old.

~ (2.) What shall we think of those who will not part with their lusts, will not forsake their sins for Christ, will live in them, however he forbid them, however he threaten them ? Are these Christians ? No, certainly ; whatever they may think themselves, whatever others may account them, Christ will never own them as his disciples. Are they no Christians, who will not part with father and mother ?' &c. And are they Christians who will not so much as part with their lusts for Christ ? Will they take up their cross for Christ, who will not lay aside their cursed sins for his sake ? Will they obey Christ, when he calls them to lay down their lives for him, who will not obey him, when he commands them to leave their swearing, and drunkenness, and Sabbath-breaking, and worldliness, and uncleanness, and revengefulness, and malice, for his sake ?

Can you think that servant will go an hundred miles for you, who will not so much as stir out of doors for you, when you command him ? Will they suffer so much for Christ as the bearing of the cross amounts to, who will not do so little for him as the leaving of a sin comes to ? Will they suffer all extremities for the name of Christ, who will not forbear profaning that blessed name by their oaths, and irreverent use of it in common discourse ? Will they endure to be tortured for Christ, who will not deny their carnal ease and sensual pleasures, who will not cross their carnal appetite and inclination for his sake ? Will they part with all in the world for Christ, who will not be restrained, at the command of Christ, from such an immoderate pursuit of the world, as makes them neglect heaven and their souls ? Will they drink up the bitter cup of death for Christ, who will not leave their intemperate cups at his command ?

What clear convincing evidence is here, that those who allow themselves in any known sin are no Christians ! If men were not under a strong delusion, they would never think themselves Christians while they go on in any sin. But, alas ! the God of this world has blinded their minds. What clearer reason than this ? Those that will not bear the cross of Christ are no Christians ; but they who will not leave their sins for Christ, will never bear the cross for him ; (Are they like to suffer for Christ, who daily make him suffer by their sins ?) *Ergo*, those that will not leave their sin for Christ are no Christians.

(3.) Others there are who will bear but some part of the cross. The whole weight of it is too heavy, too grievous, they must be excused if they will not endure that.

Some cannot endure to be vilified, and reviled, and reproached for Christ. They will decline those ways that are covered with shame and reproach. They forbear good company, and neglect good duties, lest their wretched acquaintance should jeer and deride them. That way, which is everywhere spoken against, shall have none to walk in it for them. But are they Christians who will not bear the lightest part of the cross ? What lighter than the froth and spawn of malicious hearts and tongues ? Are they worthy the name of Christians, who will not endure to be abused and reviled for his sake, who gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to the nippers, and withheld not his face from shame and smiting ?* That was a Christian temper in David, who, when he was jeered for

* Qu. 'spitting'?—Ed.

his zeal for God, could answer, 2 Sam. vi. 22, 'I will be yet more vile than thus.' Others can better bear reproach; but to lose their estates, their places, their livelihood, to have their relations ruined, to be brought to a low, poor, necessitous condition, this they cannot bear. They will stoop to unworthy shifts, and stretch their consciences, and not stick at a small matter, to prevent this. Why, but if you have given up yourselves to Christ, you give up your estates, and all you have, to be at his disposing. You promised to be content with him alone, so you might but have him for your portion. If, therefore, when it comes to the trial, you will not part with all rather than offend him, it signifies you did never heartily enter into covenant with him, yea, but did flatter with your lips. That was a temper truly Christian in the Hebrews, who, as the apostle testifies, did suffer the spoiling of their goods with joy, Heb. x. 34.

Others can better endure the loss of outward comfort; but when life is endangered, when a shameful or cruel death is before them, though they have been forward before, yet then they recoil, they relent, they comply, here they will be excused. 'Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life.' Why, but Christ himself tells you, in the verse before the text, that life itself must be hated if you will be Christians. If you love life itself more than him, you are none of his. If you be Christians, you are not your own, neither your estates, nor your bodies, nor your spirits; all that are called yours before are now his, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Now, if they be all his, you are no more true Christians, if you do not part with life and all when the honour and interest of Christ requires it, than he is a truly honest man who will not give every one his own. You are his, all you have is his, not your own; and do you deal as Christians, do you deal honestly, if, when he calls for it, you will not give up that which is his own? An honest heathen would not deal thus with you. And can they be counted Christians who will deal thus with Christ.

(4.) Others are confident that they will be ready to suffer for Christ, whereas there is not any probability that ever they will suffer for the truth of Christ. This is too evident in those who are ignorant of the main truths of the gospel, and will not spare time, nor take pains to get a competent knowledge thereof, for all the means of knowledge which are at hand. Is there any probability that such will suffer for the truth? Is it likely that men will suffer for they know not what? Or count that worth the dying for which they count not worth the knowing? or endure the pains of death for that which they will not take the pains to understand? Is it likely they will take up the cross, rather than deny the truth, who count it a cross to labour for the knowledge of it? How far are these from being Christians, if none be Christians but those that take up the cross, since there is no likelihood that such will ever take up the cross whatever become of the truth.

Others presume they will suffer for Christ and the gospel in the gross; suffer rather than turn Turks, or Jews, or papists. But single out any particular truth, and rather than they will suffer for it, they will deny it, or yield it up for peace' sake, or overlook it as a point of small consequence, or give half of it away by some distinction, or betray it by concealment, when it requires a plain and open confession; this argues more fear of the cross than love to the truth, this is not to deal with it as Christians. Christ will not own these as his disciples, he will be ashamed of them who are afraid or ashamed to bear witness to his truth: Mark viii. 38, 'My words;' whatever he hath delivered to us.

(5.) How few are there who would suffer for the worship of Christ! How manifest is this, since there are so many who wilfully neglect the worship of God in their families, are so far from instructing them, that they do not pray with them, though they have all liberty and encouragement to do it, no danger yet of suffering for it, these are more like heathens than Christians. The prophet makes it the character of heathens, Jer. x. 25. Though some would suffer rather than yield to gross and palpable idolatry, yet how few would suffer for that which is only probably and in appearance such?

How few would take up the cross rather than yield to superstition and will-worship, since so many run into it of their own accord! How few would suffer for the purity and spirituality of gospel-worship, as freed from carnal rites and ceremonies, and from the mixtures of man's devices and inventions! And yet this is the character of true worshippers, i. e., of true Christians, John iv. 23, 24.

(6.) How few would suffer for avoiding of sin, unless some gross and notorious abominations!

[1.] How few would suffer rather than offend in a little? The general looseness of men's lives, and largeness of their consciences, gives occasion of jealousy in this particular. How few of the temper and tenderness of that famous sufferer Marcus of Arethusa, who would die rather than give a halfpenny for the repairing of an idol temple! *Ne obolum quidem*. He would be tortured to death rather than give two farthings for such an unlawful use, Sozomen. lib. 5, cap. 9. How far are many from the temper of Valentinian, that great captain under Julian, and afterwards emperor, who, having a drop of water sprinkled upon his garment, which was cast about by their priest in their heathenish services (much like the papists' holy water), to shew how far he was from approving their superstition, cut off that piece of his garment upon which the drop fell, and that in the sight of the heathenish emperor, *ἀντίπα πειρημένῃ καὶ ἀπορρίψαι τὸν ἀντὶ τῆς ψεκασθῆναι ἰβράχην τῆς ἰσθῆτος*, and hereupon was afterwards banished by Julian, pretending (says Sozomen. lib. 6, cap. 6) that he was negligent in looking to his soldiers; for he would not seem to punish him for his religion, lest he should have the honour of a martyr or confessor, p. 371.

In the primitive times, they excluded such from the communion of Christians who had yielded to an officious lie that they might avoid suffering; nor would they re-admit them till they had satisfied the church by an exemplary repentance. This was the case of those who, in Cyprian's phrase, did *libellis conscientiam suam maculare*, purchase tickets, signifying that they had complied with the heathen in their worship, when indeed they had not, and so avoided suffering by a kind of officious lie. Those that did thus they looked upon as *lapsi*, such as had fallen from the faith, and therefore they would not own them as Christians, nor admit them to the privilege of the church without a deep and solemn repentance; yea, they would not look upon them as Christians who would make use of a lie for the avoiding of the greatest extremities.

[2.] How few would suffer for avoiding the appearance of evil! Not only for shunning apparent evils, but the appearance of them; apparent sins, but sins in appearance. The ancient Christians would not conform to the rites and customs of the heathens when abused by them to idolatry, though they might have been otherwise lawfully used; they would suffer rather than do this, because there was an appearance of evil in it, viz., a seeming compliance with the heathen.

It was lawful in itself to set up lights and bays at their doors, but because the heathen did this out of respect to their idols, therefore the Christians would rather suffer than do it, in *gratiam magistratus*, though the magistrate enjoined it. *Igitur quia lucernæ præ foribus, et laurus in postibus, ad demones pertinent; accendantur lucernæ quibus lux nulla est: Affigant postibus lauros, postmodum arsuras, quibus ignes imminent.**

It was lawful in itself to wear garlands upon their heads, yet because the pagans did it, the Christians, to avoid the appearance of that evil, would suffer rather than do it. Hence the soldier, for whom Tertullian pleads, in *lib. de Corona Militis*, when he came to the tribune for his donative, would not wear the garland upon his head, but brought it in his hand, by which, discovering himself to be a Christian, he was hailed to prison and executed. How far are they from this temper and tenderness, how far from suffering upon such accounts, who are zealous for a conformity to the papists in those rites, ceremonies, and gestures which they apparently abuse to idolatry!

Diocletian, having a design to root out the Christian religion, gave order that the Scriptures should everywhere be burned, whereupon multitudes suffered in that tenth persecution because they would not deliver their Bibles to the flames. Amongst the rest, Secundus being commanded to deliver his Bible, makes answer, *Christianus sum, non traditor*, I am a Christian, I cannot do it. Then he is required to give up some riff-raff, *aliqua ecvola*, to be burnt instead of his Bible; this also he refused, and would rather suffer than do it; for though it was lawful, yet it had some appearance of that evil which they were guilty of who are called *Traditores*; he would die to avoid the appearance of sin (Park. p. 11).

[8.] How few would suffer for avoiding that which is evil by construction and interpretation; for avoiding that which others put an ill construction on, though themselves see no hurt therein. Julian, above others, infamous for endeavouring by subtilty to overthrow Christianity, used many artifices in a cunning way to ensnare Christians, and to debauch their consciences. He would dress up that which he required them to do in the fair shows of innocency and lawfulness; but, when he had drawn them to do it, then he would construe it to be a compliance with him in his idolatrous services. And since they could comply in one thing, why not in another? Thus, like an angler, he hid the hook till he could catch them. And some indeed he did ensnare. But when the hook was discerned, his design discovered, they would suffer anything rather than be tempted by the fairest baits he could lay before them. To give some instances pertinent to our purpose. The Christians thought it lawful to give some honour to the emperor in his picture; Julian taking an advantage by this to ensnare them, together with his own picture, sets up some of the images of the heathen gods, *ἐκείνους*, &c., says Sozomen, lib. v. cap. 16, *παραμύνησθαι ταῖς εἰκόσι*. Now the Christians, while they suspected no hurt, continued their civil reverence to the emperor in his resemblance; but some of them understanding that he accounted this an adoring of his heathenish images, *οὐκ ἀνίχοντο προσκυνῆναι*, would give him that reverence no longer, when so ill a construction was put upon it; but rather chose to suffer, though he made them suffer upon this account, *ὡς καὶ εἰς πόλιν καὶ βασιλίαν ἐξαμαρτάνοντες*, as offenders against king and state, for so are the historian's words.

Theodoret gives us another instance. When the soldiers were to receive donatives from Julian, he had ready before his throne a fire with incense; and those who would receive the gold from him, must first throw some

* Tertul. 'De Idololatria.'

incense into the fire. This divers of them did, looking on it as a civil custom, and suspecting no hurt in it, τὴν δὲ τὴν πάγην οἱ πλείστοι μὲν ἠγνόησαν παντελῶς, lib. iii. chap. 15. They understood not that it was a snare. But when it was told them that this was not agreeable to the Christian profession, ταῦτα γὰρ τῆς χριστιανικῆς ὁμολογίας ἀντίπαλα, they lamented bitterly, and tore their hair, and cried out in the streets, that they were ensnared by the emperor's fraud, βασιλικῶς παρακρουσθῆαι τεχνάσμεσι; and run to the palace, and desired that they might be cast into the fire, since they had dishonoured Christ by casting incense into the fire, chap. 16.

It is to be feared, then, many amongst us would not be so ready to suffer for such a thing, as to excuse it, and plead its lawfulness, as Marcellinus did, *non Diis sacrificavi*; that which I did was no sacrificing unto idols, *sed tantum grana thuris*, &c., but only throw a grain of frankincense into the fire. But this excuse did not hinder Marcellinus, the Bishop of Rome, from being condemned as an apostate. Nor is he worthy the name of a Christian, who, to avoid suffering, will do anything (howsoever excusable by fair pretences) which may be interpreted to be a denial or dishonour of Christ.

Another pernicious device of Julian's to ensnare the Christians was this, all the meat which was to be sold in the market at Constantinople, he mixeth secretly with that which had been offered to idols (as Baronius relates it) that so the Christians might either perish by famine, or else eat that which might be interpreted an honouring of his idols. This they perceived, abstaining from buying any meat in the market, and contented themselves *cocto frumento*, with boiled corn. And though some may think this a nicety, and more scrupulousness than was needful, yet if that of Augustine be allowed, it will justify them; for he determines that it is better to die by famine than to eat an idolothyte.

It is to be feared that many who bear the name of Christians would make use of the Nicolaitans' plea, rather than suffer in such a case: Though I eat the idols' meat, yet my heart is free from all idolatry and superstition; though I do thus and thus, &c., as papists and superstitious persons do, yet, &c. Ay, but there is something else to be minded, if you will demean yourselves as Christians indeed; not only what the act is in itself, or what you intend in it, but what others may judge of it, and suffer rather than do that which is like to be judged evil. He that sees thee eat meat dedicated to idols, *existimabit te nonnihil idolorum cultus deferre*, says Chrysostom. And we must suffer rather than do that which may be judged a countenancing of idolatry.

[4.] How few would suffer for avoiding of that which is but accidentally evil? In itself lawful, but by accident evil, as it may be an occasion of sin to others; because it is *ædificans ad delictum*, as Tertullian defines scandal, may build up others either in erroneous opinions or unlawful practices. We think it enough if we are ready to suffer rather than sin ourselves; but the apostle thought it a sufficient ground to suffer rather than give occasion of sin to others; he would take up the cross, and bear it, rather than venture upon a thing lawful in itself, in case of scandal. In the interval betwixt the death of Christ and the destruction of the temple, the ceremonies of the law were indifferent, and in themselves lawful; yet the apostle would rather suffer than use them, when the use of them was like to prove an occasion of sin to others, viz., when the Jews were like thereby to be confirmed in their opinion of their necessity, which was an error; or encouraged to press them as necessary upon others,

which was a sin to the prejudice of Christian liberty. In such cases the apostle would suffer persecution rather than use them, Gal. v. 11. As if he had said, Some report that I am for the urging of circumcision, but this report appears to be evidently false, because I suffer persecution for this very thing. If I would use circumcision as others do, I should be no more troubled with the cross; the wrath of the Jews would be appeased, and the cross would cease. I should escape it as well as others. The main cause why the apostle was persecuted and suffered so much from the Jews was his non-conformity to the ceremonial law; because he would not practise himself, and press upon others, those ceremonies which were indifferent in themselves, but could not be ordinarily used without offence, *i. e.*, without being occasion of sin.

It was sometimes lawful to eat that which had been sacrificed to idols, *viz.*, in case the party that ate thereof did not know it had been idolatrously abused; for so it could not be countenancing idolatry. Or in case none present with him knew it to have been so abused; for so it could not prove a scandal. But in case of scandal, however otherwise it might be lawful, it was no ways allowable, 1 Cor. viii. 9, 1 Cor. x. 25, 28. If it be a Gentile that tells thee, avoid it, lest thou confirm him in his idolatry. Or if it be a weak Christian that tells thee, one not satisfied of the lawfulness of it, avoid it for his sake, lest by thy example he be drawn to eat thereof with a doubting conscience, and so be betrayed to sin. Or if it be one in the way to Christianity, not fully taken off from his idols, avoid it for his sake, lest by thy example he be turned back again to his idolatrous practices, *καὶ ὁδὸς ἐπὶ ἰδωλολατρίαν τὸ πρᾶγμα ἔγινετο*, Chrysost. in 1 Cor. x. He would have them avoid even that which in itself is lawful in such cases as these, though they suffer for it; for he more than intimates that, *ver.* 18. Though some motives you meet with may tempt you to comply herein with idolaters, *viz.*, the persecution of the heathen, yet let not this fright you into such a compliance; for this is the common lot of Christians to be persecuted, and God will moderate their rage, and deliver you. And therefore avoid this evil, and fear not, whatever may befall you for so doing.

And to be brief, those who, to avoid persecution and the cross, would eat things sacrificed to idols, whatever offence came thereby, Christ himself thinks them unfit and unworthy to be continued in the fellowship of Christians, and reproveth the church of Pergamos for not casting them out, Rev. ii. 14. There was some amongst them who bare the name of Christians, and after ages called them Gnostics, whose principle it was that they might comply with idolaters, to avoid persecution; and therefore rather than suffer, they would eat things offered to idols, though thereby they laid a stumbling-block (like Balaam) in the way of others, and occasioned their falling into sin. He reproveth the church for tolerating such among them; he would not have them owned as Christians.

Many who now profess Christ are too much of this temper, as far from taking up the cross of Christ, since they shew themselves so ready to comply with things that have been as much abused to popish idolatry as those meats that were offered to heathenish idols.

To conclude this use, since it is essential to a Christian to bear the cross rather than offend Christ, to suffer rather than sin, how few true Christians are there to be found, since so many who bear the name will rather sin, in one kind or other, than bear the cross, and undergo anything grievous for the name of Christ.

Use II. For Exhortation. Let this stir you up to prepare for the cross. He is not a Christian that will not bear the cross; and he that doth not prepare for it never means to bear it.

The disciples of Christ are always liable to the cross, and that which we are always liable to we should be always ready for. Christians should always make account of the cross; so the apostle, Acts xx. 22, 23. And what we should always make account of, we should always prepare for. Christ would have his disciples take up his cross daily. Now you do not, in the remotest sense, take it up daily, if you do not daily prepare for it. It is certain the cross will be upon you if you will be faithful to Christ, but when it will fall upon you is uncertain; you cannot promise yourselves one day's exemption from it, and therefore you should be every day ready. Christ having discoursed of the troubles which were like to befall his disciples in the general calamities that were coming upon that generation, concludes it with this use, 'Watch ye therefore,' 'be ye always ready,' Mat. xxiv. 42, 44; Mark xiii. 33, 35-37; Luke xxi. 34-36.

Obj. But some may say, I see no danger of the cross, no danger of persecution, and therefore what need so much talking of it? What need so much preparing for it?

Ans. 1. Is there no danger because you do not see it? Did no evil ever befall you but what you foresaw? Has nothing fallen out in your days but what you saw beforehand? or rather, has anything remarkable fallen out in these times which you did expect a year before it came?

It does not become a Christian to say he need prepare for no danger but what he sees. He is in most danger who sees least. If you be Christians, you are engaged in a spiritual warfare. Now if a soldier should tell his captain that he will not prepare, he will not be ready for danger till he see it, he would think him more fit to be cashiered than to be trusted. Even so may Christ, the Captain of our salvation, deal with such secure professors. What, are there no ambuscades, no surprisals in your spiritual warfare, nothing that may be upon you before you are aware of it? You run quite counter to Christ's advice. He would have his disciples watch always, be always ready, because they know not at what hour the master of the house will come, at what hour a calamity will come. He will have them always ready, because it may come at such an hour when they are not aware of it. You think it needless to be ready, because you know not the hour; needless to prepare for it, till you see it and be aware of it. *Nec tamen remittendæ sunt excubiæ, si quando hostis simulabit tranquillitatem.* If you will demean yourselves as Christians indeed, you must not neglect your watch; you must not neglect to be in readiness, when there is fairest show of tranquillity; that is the way to be surprised.

Ans. 2. Grant you see no danger of public and open persecution, yet there may be much still of the cross, and much persecution where it is not open and public, and by authority. You may meet with enough of the cross, enough of persecution, in a private way, if authority do discountenance it. You may, said I; nay, you must, says the apostle, either of the heart, or the countenance, or the tongue, or the head. There was no persecution by public authority till the latter end of Nero's reign, above thirty years after Christ's death; yet in that time of connivance and indulgence the Christians had a heavy share of the cross, escaped no kind of sufferings, as you may see in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the catalogue of Paul's sufferings, 2 Cor. xi. 23-25.

Ans. 3. If you will not prepare for the cross till it come, you will not

prepare for it till it be too late. What, prepare to take up the cross when it is upon you! Preparation is a readiness beforehand. If it be upon you before you are ready, preparation comes too late. Then it is most necessary, most seasonable, before the cross comes; and because it ordinarily comes before men can or will see it, it will be necessary to prepare for it before it be seen.

It may be, some of you feel not the pressure of the cross. Oh, but if you be Christians, this in general you must make account of, that it will be upon you one time or other, and when, or how soon that time will be, you know not; and therefore, if you would not be surprised, you should always watch, *i. e.*, as Christ himself explains it, you should be always ready, always prepared. It may come as a thief in the night, who chooses to come when his coming is least looked for, least feared or suspected. It may come as a snare which is laid out of sight, and catches him who thinks he treads safe and discerns no danger. Therefore be always watchful, always prepared.

The watchful soldier will stand upon his guard, and have all things ready, even when he sees no danger, because there may be danger when there is none seen, he may be surprised; but if he perceive danger near, and see an enemy approaching, even though he be disposed to sleep, he will not then give way to it, he will not then need any warning to have all things ready for his defence. You should be always preparing for the cross, even when you see no danger of it; much more when it is visible, and the approaches of it are apparent.

But how shall we prepare for the cross? I shall give some directions.

1. Make your peace with God. Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' What follows? ver. 2, 8, 'We glory in tribulations,' &c. Peace with God will enable you not only to bear the cross, but to triumph under it. John xvi. 23, Christ promises peace as the best means to bear up his disciples under the cross. Without this, tribulation will be unsupportable, the cross will be intolerable.

Now, though Christ promise peace, yet this, as all other promises, will have its accomplishment in his own way. You must use the means that he has prescribed, walk in the way that he has directed you to, if you will have the peace he has promised. And therefore, if there be any controversy betwixt God and you, make haste to get it taken up; fly to the blessed Umpire, the great Mediator betwixt God and you. Mourn that you have given him any offence; apply the blood of Christ by faith; beseech him with all importunity that he would interpose and make your peace, and rest on him for that purpose as the great peace-maker.

If your conscience check you for any act, or any neglect, which may be the matter of a controversy betwixt God and your soul, bewail it with grief and anguish of spirit, humble yourselves for it to the dust, get your hearts filled with hatred and indignation against it, and yourselves for it; get your souls raised to strong and vigorous resolutions against it. Shew the sincerity hereof, by avoiding all occasions, by watching against all temptations, by diligence in the use of all appointed means, that you may never return to it. Or if it be some secret corruption which hath not broken forth into open act, but disturbs your peace by its inward motions and solicitations, engrossing your thoughts, or drawing your hearts to inclinations towards it, why then rise up with all your might for the subduing of it, fly unto Christ for more strength, be diligent in the use of all means to get it mortified. Shew that you look upon it as an enemy (though it be

in your quarters, and you cannot get it dislodged), by making a hearty, a constant, a resolute resistance. Let the Lord see that you look upon it as a greater grievance than any outward pressure or suffering.

Or if your conscience do not check you for outward acts, or inward corruption, take heed it be not because conscience is asleep. And therefore be diligent in searching conscience, lest anything escape you that may make a difference between God and your souls. It will be sad to have conscience asleep, till it be awakened by the cross. The pressure of the cross and the pressure of guilt falling on you together, is like to prove a burden too heavy for you. The cross, when it falls upon a guilty soul, it is like a heavy burden upon a galled shoulder, the pain and anguish of it will scarce be tolerable. If conscience be not pacified, if God be not at peace with you when the cross comes, the coming of it will be terrible. Jer. xvii. 17.

If men accuse, and reproach, and revile you, and conscience accuse you too; if they frown, and through guilt you can expect no smile from God; if they threaten, and you find yourselves under the Lord's threatenings also; if the world's rage and hatred break out against you, and the Lord withdraw the sense of his love; if the world smite and wound you while conscience is lashing you; if the Lord be a terror to you while the terrors of sufferings are before you; if you have no peace with the world, nor no peace with God neither, what will bear you up in such a condition? If the cross lie heavy on you, and, through guilt, you cannot with any confidence expect support from God, the pressure will be unsupportable. And therefore, if you would not sink under the burden, get this laid as the foundation to bear up all: whatever you do, mind this above all, your peace with God. Whatever you neglect, neglect not to do this, for so the cross may undo you. No matter how much water there may be without the ship, the more sea-room it hath, the safer it is in the storm; but if water get within the vessel, then it is in danger of sinking. It will be less matter how many troubles soever you meet with from without, if there be peace within. And therefore keep the way of peace, if the Lord have continued you in it; or if you have swerved, make haste to recover it. Search out your sins, especially those that have had any influence upon the public, that have contributed anything to the loss of gospel liberties, or the bringing of national judgments. Apply yourselves seriously to the exercises of repentance and the actings of faith upon Christ, for we have peace, being justified, and are justified through Christ, and that is by faith, which acts not in this case without the exercise of repentance.

2. Get much love to Christ. A strong affection will carry you after Christ when you cannot follow him but under the cross, will make you follow him wherever he goes, though the way be deep, and rugged, and thorny, though it lead directly to the cross, and bring you to mount Calvary.

Much love will make you willing, ready, resolute to suffer for Christ; and it is want of will, more than want of strength, that disables us from bearing the cross. Christ uses not to deny strength to those who are resolutely willing to suffer for his name's sake. There is a strength in love which is too hard for death itself; love is strong as death.

Much love will make you suffer much, for it is *affectus unionis*, that which makes the soul cling to Christ; and the more it is, the faster it cleaves to him, and the more hardly will it part from him; no small matter will part them. A servant that has some affection to his master will suffer

something for him, but an affectionate wife will suffer far more for her husband, because the conjugal love is stronger.

If you mean to suffer much, you must learn to love much. A little love will go but a little way under the cross. If love be weak, get it strengthened ; if it be cooling, get it inflamed ; if it be declining, get it repaired. A declining love is a step to apostasy, and will be in danger to end there in a day of trial. When the Church of Ephesus has lost her first love, Christ speaks of her as fallen, Rev. ii. 4, 5. There are some amongst these churches who professed Christ, but, for want of love to him, gave way to a principle which was more for their own safety than his honour. They would hold all those things indifferent for which they were like to suffer, that so none might condemn them for yielding in things indifferent, rather than be ruined. These held it indifferent to be circumcised, to escape sufferings from the Jews ; indifferent to eat things offered to idols, to escape sufferings from the Gentiles ; and, when they had no other way to escape, they would hold it indifferent to deny the faith. So Eusebius, lib. vi. chap. xi., tells us, it was the opinion of their followers, *ὅτι τὸ ἀπρησασθαι ἀδιάρητον ἔστι*, indifferent *ἐν ἀνάγκαις*, in great necessities, to deny with the mouth, provided they do it not with the heart. Now it is probably thought that this principle had made some impression upon the church of Ephesus. Hereupon she is charged with losing her first love, because she was not so ready to suffer for Christ as at first. This principle, inclining her more to comply than suffer, she was not so disposed to do her first works, and undergo her first sufferings, for which she is commended, ver. 8. And why ? Her first love was lost, she was fallen. If you would not decline the cross, or fall under it, keep up your first love ; or, if it be declined, make haste to get it repaired. Follow Christ's advice to Ephesus, ver. 5, 'Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent,' &c.

Content not yourselves with some small degree of love to Christ ; that will not serve you when a day of trial and suffering comes. A little water will quench a spark ; it must be a flame, indeed, that all the waters will not quench, nor the floods drown and extinguish, Cant. viii. 6, 7. Get your love kindled into a vehement flame, and then you will follow Christ, and may safely do it, though all the waves and the billows go over you.

Labour by all means to raise your affections to a higher pitch. That love, which will make a fair show, and makes a shift to go after Christ, while it is encouraged by outward prosperity, will not serve your turn when the cross comes. The apostle, 1 John iv. 18, speaks of a perfect love ; not that there is any love in this life free from imperfection, but there is one degree of love perfecter than another ; a love which will embolden a man to appear for Christ in the face of discouragements and dangers. Such a love he calls perfect, as being nearer to perfection than that which startles at the cross. And thus he describes it, ver. 17, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment ;' that we may have boldness, viz., in confessing Christ and his truth. It is *παρρησία*, a bold, and open, and fearless confessing of Christ in the face of dangers. He had been speaking of confessing Christ before, ver. 18 ; not every one that professeth this upon any terms, for every professor dwelleth not in God, and God in him, but he that thus confesseth Jesus when he hazards the loss of all by so confessing him. The perfection of this love expresseth itself in such a boldness for Christ, *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως*, in the day of judgment, i. e., not the final judgment, but when we are brought before the tribunal of men, to be judged or sentenced for faithfulness to Christ, because as he is,

so are we in this world ; as he was exposed to sufferings in this world, so are we ; and our love to him should carry us through these sufferings, as his love to us did him. He adds, ver. 18, 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear.' Such a degree of love makes us fearless of sufferings, renders the soul bold and valiant for Christ, so as he will not shrink from him and his interest for any danger ; he will not think any cross so dreadful as to decline it when Christ calls him to bear it. So Tertullian fourteen hundred years since explained this text. John denies, says he, that there is fear in love : *Quem timorem intelligi prestat, nisi negavimus authorem ?* What fear may we here best understand but that which is the cause of denying Christ ? *Quam dilectionum perfectionem, what perfect love, nisi fugatricem timoris, et animatricem confessionis, but that which banisheth fear and animates to a confession of Christ.* So that love, thus freeing the heart from the fear of the cross, is an excellent preparative to the bearing of it.

But how shall our hearts be raised to such a degree of love ? Why, I know nothing more effectual in the world than frequent and fixed thoughts of the love of Christ. If that will not kindle your hearts into flames, vehement flames, I know not what in heaven or earth will do it, 1 John iv. 19. Set some time apart frequently to meditate on the love of Christ, and the wonderful transporting expressions of it.

Say to thy soul, Was he, in whom there dwelt the fulness and riches of the Godhead, content to become so poor for my sake, as he had not whereon to lay his head ? And shall I think much to hazard my estate and outward enjoyments for his sake ? Oh what had become of my soul if he had stood upon such terms !

Was he, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, content to become the scorn of men and reproach of the people ; to be jeered, and buffeted, and spit upon ? Was he willing, when he was the King of glory, to be reviled and abused, as the vilest of men, for me ? And shall I think much to be vilified, and scorned, and reproached for his sake ?

Was he content to leave the delights and joys of heaven, that he might become a man of sorrows ? Was he willing to be scourged, and nailed, and wounded, and endure such grievous things for me, as made his soul heavy unto death, and forced him to cry out to heaven, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?' and to cry out to earth, 'Have ye no regard, all ye that pass by ?' &c. And shall I think much to endure any pain or torture for him ?

Was he content to bear the wrath of God, and the rage of men and devils for me ? And shall I think much to endure the rage and malice of men for him ?

Was he content to suffer a cruel, a shameful, a cursed death for me ? And shall I refuse to suffer a blessed death, a death that himself hath blessed, for his sake ?

Oh what had become of me ! in what a hopeless and helpless condition had my soul been in, if he had stood on the honour, and ease, and plenty, and respect of the world, yea, or his own life ! And shall I stand upon these, when his honour and interest requires me to forego them ?

Make such use of the love of Christ to provoke your hearts to a more ardent and vehement affection. 'The love of Christ constrains us,' says the apostle. There is something in it that is irresistible ; a sweet and powerful force therein, when the Spirit of God impresseth the sense thereof upon the heart, to constrain you to such a love as will compel you to take

up the cross, and bear it for his sake, notwithstanding any reluctance of flesh and blood.

8. Learn to deny yourselves. Be still practising of self-denial. It is self that is pinched by the cross, and so makes us loath to take it up, and impatient to bear it. Till self be renounced, the cross will not be endured, Mat. xvi. 24, Mark viii. 34, Luke ix. 23. The order and connection of these in all the evangelists shews us plainly that self must be first denied before ever we will take up the cross. Self-denial is the first letter (as you see in these texts) in the Christian's alphabet; he that hath not learnt this is far from the highest form, which in the school of Christ is the place of sufferers. When the cross comes, Christ and self are brought into competition, either self must be denied or Christ will be denied. He that cannot deny himself, rather than take up the cross, will deny Christ, either in point of faith or obedience. If ever you would bear the cross, as becomes the disciples of Christ, you must learn to deny,

(1.) Your own worth and excellency, the apprehensions and conceits thereof, whether the ground of it be your accomplishments or enjoyments. If this be not denied, you will think yourselves too good to suffer for Christ. He that is high in his own apprehension will never stoop to the cross; he will count it intolerable, to be vilified, and set at nought, and trampled on, and reproached, and counted (as the apostles were) the refuse and off-scouring of all things: Mat. xi. 29, 'Take my yoke, &c., for I am lowly.' If you will follow Christ, and take up the cross as he did, you must be qualified as he was, meek and lowly.

(2.) Your own judgment and wisdom; else you will be too wise to suffer for Christ. You will think it foolishness to be undone in this world, rather than yield in a small matter, offend Christ in a little; you will think it folly to suffer, when you may avoid it by straining conscience a little. The cross is foolishness to the wisdom of the world, 1 Cor. i. 18, 22, 23.

(3.) Your own reasonings, else you will reason yourselves out of the reach of the cross. This is too small a matter (will carnal reason say) to lose all for; and this is not clear, it is controverted amongst great names, persons of great learning and judgment; and this is yielded to by men of great repute for piety and strictness; and this few stick at, the whole stream runs against it. Which was the great reasoning against Luther of late, and Athanasius of old; what pertinacy, for one man to hold against the whole world! Or this may be connived at now, it may be retrieved hereafter. To tack about is not to go backward (not to backslide), but to make our way so well as the wind will serve; when it serves fairer, we will keep a more direct course; but now we must do as we can, though we do not what we should. If such reasonings had not been renounced heretofore, the world would have had but few instances of such as would follow him under the cross.

(4.) Your own wills. 'Not my will, but thine be done,' says Christ, and yields up all when the question was about his suffering. He that cannot follow Christ in this, will never take up the cross, unless per force, will never bear it as a Christian. Accustom yourselves daily to make yourselves yield to God when his will lies cross to yours, which if you will not do now you are not like to do it when the cross comes, when it cannot be done but upon harder terms, and more contrary to flesh and blood. If your wills be flexible now, and you are accustomed to submit at every beck, at every intimation of the Lord's pleasure in the way of obedience, there is

no such danger that they will be stiff and inflexible when the Lord tries you in a way of suffering.

(5.) Your own inclinations. If you give way to these, they will carry you far from the cross, even when Christ calls you to it. He that cannot endure to cross his own natural inclinations will never endure the cross.

(6.) Your own ease and contentments. The cross of Christ and your own ease are inconsistent; if you cannot forego these, you are never like to bear this as becomes the followers of Christ. If respect to your ease make you neglect holy duties, or cut them short, so that you do not watch to them, and continue in them; if the exercise of repentance and duties of mortification be waived, or slightly passed over, because they cross your ease, how will the cross be endured, which is more inconsistent with your ease? As the prophet, Jer. xii. 5, 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?' &c. The apostle would have Timothy to inure himself unto hardship, 2 Tim. ii. 8. If it seem a hardship, and contrary to the ease which the flesh would have, to be much in prayer, meditation, self-examining, watchfulness, the exercise of repentance, the duties of mortification, if this seem a hardship, inure yourself to it; forego your own ease herein, and that will be a good preparative to greater hardships. It will not go so much against the hair, to quit your ease when the cross will not give way to it, if you have been accustomed to it before. He that has found his inclinations commonly denied, will not think much to be denied upon special and extraordinary reasons.

(7.) Your own interest. When the question is, Whether you shall bear the cross or no? the question is indeed, Whether the interest of Christ shall be preferred before your own interest? For a carnal heart counts it his interest to have ease, plenty, safety, which the cross would bereave him of; but the interest of Christ is, that we should suffer rather than displease or dishonour him. Now he that can deny his own interest will readily take up the cross and bear it; but he that is wedded to his own interest, and will not be divorced from it, will deny Christ one way or other, expressly or implicitly, directly or by consequence, less or more, rather than let his own interest be crucified, as it must be if he yield himself up to the cross.

The more you can deny yourselves in all respects, the more are you prepared for the cross, the more ready for sufferings; and therefore, if you would bear the cross as followers of Christ, be much in the practice of self-denial. If you be to seek here, Christ will have you to seek when he calls you to suffer.

4. Die to the world. Get your minds and affections disentangled, your hearts loosened more and more from worldly relations and enjoyments. An inordinate affection to the things of the world, arising from an over-valuing of them, is a main reason which keeps men from following Christ in bearing the cross, and puts them upon sinful shifts to avoid suffering: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' He left him, and would not partake with him in his sufferings, which he is there speaking of, because he loved this present world. A man who is in love with the world will run into the embraces of that strumpet, far more readily than follow Christ in a way of suffering. Hence worldlings are called adulterers and adulteresses for their excess of love to the world, James iv. 4. This friendship is enmity to God, enmity to Christ, especially to the cross of Christ. Die to the world; for he that is alive to

it must needs look upon the cross as dreadful. Now he is alive to the world whose mind and heart is upon the riches, and delights, and splendour of it; whose soul, by a high esteem of these, and an immoderate affection to them, is linked and united to the world. For as natural life is from an union of soul and body, and spiritual life from an union of the soul with Christ, so this moral life is from an union of the soul with the world; which union is affected by love to worldly things; for love is *affectus unionis*, and this love is begat and nourished by a high esteem of worldly things. So far as you overvalue and overlove the world, so far you are alive to it; and so far as your esteem thereof is taken down, and your love thereto is taken off, so far you die to the world. So far as you are dead to the world, so far you will less fear or regard the cross, as that which only can bereave you of what your heart hath already quitted, and from which your soul is already separated and divorced, which you have inwardly relinquished as a worthless, unlovely object, as a dead thing.

The more you are dead to the world, the less sensible will you be of sufferings in your worldly concerns; the loss of them will but be as the removing the dead out of your sight. It would have been a great affliction to Abraham to have been bereaved of Sarah while she was alive, but when she was dead, 'Give me a burying-place,' says he, 'that I may bury my dead out of my sight.'

While you are alive to the world, riches, and honours, and the pleasant things of the world will be lovely and amiable, you will be apt to doat upon them, know not how to be without them, cannot bear the loss of them, count that an insupportable cross; but you being dead to them, and they to you, you will not then think much to have them removed, to have them buried out of your sight.

It was an evident symptom of this death in the apostle, when he was so indifferent as to outward things, indifferent whether he did abound or was in want, Philip. iv. 11, 12. Make this your business, your great endeavour, so far to die to the world, to get mind and heart so far separated from it, as to be indifferent whether you be high or low, whether you want or abound, whether you have much or little, whether you be respected or despised; and then you will be fit indeed to bear the cross, yea, and ready to welcome it. 'I can do all things,' as he adds, ver. 13. No cross will be too heavy for you if you could once come to this. The apostle could not only bear the cross, but triumph under it, glory in it, yea, and in nothing so much, Gal. vi. 14. But how was he enabled thus to entertain the cross with triumph and glorying? Why, the following words shews us: 'By whom I am crucified,' &c. He was dead to the world, and the world was as a dead thing to him. Now what means you should use to this purpose, I have shewed at large on another subject.

5. Get freed from fears of the cross and the instruments of it. Fear not men, fear not sufferings, if you would bear them like Christians. Give not way to diffident, distracting, perplexing, discouraging fears. There is no one thing that you have more frequently from the mouth of God in Scripture than this, 'Fear not,' 'Be not afraid.' Labour to be obedient to this heavenly call, to the command of God, if you would not decline the cross, or sink under it, or under something worse than any cross can be; for such fear makes the cross worse than it is, and makes a Christian less than he is, and exposeth him to that which is far worse than the cross.

(1.) Fear makes the cross worse than it is. Many a man has sunk under his fears, who might have been otherwise able to have stood upright

upon the cross. When we look upon suffering through our fear, it is like a magnifying glass, which represents it greater than it is, makes a mole-hill seem a mountain. And besides, fear often troubles us more than the troubles that we fear. A man suffers more by his fears than by the sufferings he is afraid of. Fear many times proves the heaviest part of the cross, so that he that gets his fears removed is already freed from the weightiest part of the cross, that which is often most oppressive. Many have been more oppressed with the fears of a low afflicted condition than with the condition itself when they have come to try it; many more afflicted with fear of a prison and exile than with imprisonment and banishment itself, when the Lord has vouchsafed them his presence in such a state; many more troubled with fears of death before it came than with death itself when they have come to it, which occasioned that saying, *Mortis timor est morte peior*, the fear of death is worse than death.

This is a remarkable difference betwixt the enjoyments of the world and sufferings for Christ. Those enjoyments promise more than ever they perform, these sufferings threaten more to a fearful heart than they ordinarily execute. Those enjoyments prove not so good as we expect, these sufferings prove not so bad as we fear. Our fears are often the worst part of them, and tortures a man more than what he suffers. 'Fear has torment,' says the apostle. Get fear removed, and the sting and torment of the cross is in a great part gone, you will more easily bear it.

(2.) Fear makes a Christian less than he is, less fit to bear the cross than a weaker person whose fears are less. It makes him both unable and unwilling either to take up the cross or to bear it; it makes him unable, it deprives him of his strength, or makes his strength useless. Fear dispirits and discourages him; and when his courage and spirits are down, the strongest Christian is like Samson when his locks were cut, he becomes like other men, no more fit to bear the cross than if he had no strength to bear it. A strong and numerous army, when they are under fears, and their courage gone, are easily routed, a small matter will put them to flight. A weak Christian, when he has a spirit of courage raised above fears, will venture more, and may undergo more for Christ, than a Christian, otherwise strong, when his spirits are sunk under the burden of his fears; even as a stout stripling may shew more gallantry than a fearful, cowardly giant. Fear weakens the hands, and makes the knees feeble, so that he can neither take up the cross nor undergo it.

And as it disables, so it makes unwilling. The more fearful any one is, the more loath to venture upon anything hazardous; it makes him draw back when the cross approaches. No greater obstacle in the way of sufferings than fear: 1 John iv. 18, 'Fear hath torment.' The expression may be three ways taken, and so may serve to illustrate all the three particulars before us; *πάλασις* may be as much as *κώλυσις*, an impediment or hindrance. Fear stops a man, and keeps him back from suffering; and it is an impediment, because it is tormenting; there is a kind of rack in it which awes men, so as they will not dare not venture upon anything noble and heroic for the name of Christ. You will never be able, never be willing, never dare to venture on the cross further than you prevail against the fears of it.

(3.) Fear exposeth you to that which is far worse than any cross you can meet with; Jer. i. 8, 'I am with thee,' that is one motive. But he adds another kind of inducement, ver. 17, 'Fear not their faces,' their stern countenances, their wrathful dispositions, which are wont to appear in the face. Fear not to deliver my message to them, fear not when thou shalt

be converted before them for delivering it. Why so? Lest I confound thee; or, as the word signifies, lest I break thee to pieces before them, lest I destroy thee utterly; and that will be worse than anything which they can inflict on thee. So Mat. x. 28, Luke xii. 4, 5. To fear what you may suffer from man, to fear the cross which they may lay on you, so as to offend God by shifting it off, is as if a man should fear the sting of a wasp, whenas a dagger is at his heart, or as if he should fear the wetting of his clothes, when he is in apparent danger of drowning. If you will be unfaithful out of fear to suffer, there is something more to be feared in such a case, and that which is so dreadful, as should swallow up the sense of your other fear, 1 John iv. 18, *κρίσιν*. Fear hath punishment. The Lord will dreadfully punish that fear which keeps you from taking up the cross when he calls you to it. What punishment, says Tertullian, *Nisi quam negator relaturus est*, but that which he that denies Christ shall suffer; *cum corpore et anima occidendus in Gehennam*, when he shall be destroyed body and soul in hell. This is the portion of the fearful, of those whose fears make them unfaithful to Christ, Rev. xxi. 8, *δουλοῖ*, the cowardly. Those that are so cowardly and fearful as to deny Christ rather than suffer, so fearful as to be *ἄπιστοι*, unfaithful to Christ in the day of trial, have something worse to fear than the cross, viz., their part in the second death. *Inter reprobos, imo ante omnes*; amongst others, nay, before others, says Tertullian, *Timidis particula in stagno ignis*.

But how shall we get above these fears, which are so dangerous in themselves, and such heavy aggravations of the cross, and such great impediments to the bearing of it? Why, briefly, if you would be freed from fears of man, set God before you; it is the means which himself does everywhere direct us to. How often do we meet with that, 'Fear not, for I am with thee'? Let your eye be much and often upon the infinite greatness of God, and man's nothingness; upon the absolute sovereignty and power of God, and man's impotency; upon the unlimited goodness of God, and the restraints of man's mischievousness, Isa. li. 12, 13. Man is not much feared but when God is out of sight and not remembered.

[1.] View much the greatness of God, and man's nothingness in comparison. See how the Lord describes himself, and how inconsiderable all the world is when set before him, Isa. xl. 15, 17, 22, 23, 24. What proportion do they whom you are apt to be afraid of bear to this drop, to this dust! How little are they, how little to be feared, when all nations are so little, of which they are but a small part, and, as it were, the thousand part of this drop! What fear of such a thing as this! What, be afraid of that which is not so much as nothing, be afraid of that which is less than nothing and vanity, be afraid of those which are not so much as grasshoppers compared with that great God who is your security!

[2.] Upon the sovereignty and power of God, who has all things at his beck, and rules the hearts, and tongues, and hands of all men, so as they cannot so much as move without him, nor move any farther, nor any otherwise than he will give leave, no more than the rod can move without the hand; and therefore the hand of God should be feared, and not men, who are but as a rod in his hand, and cannot stir without him, Isa. x. 5, 24.

[3.] Upon the unlimited goodness of God, who is so good that he can turn evil into good, and none can hinder him; let the actings and intentions of men be never so mischievous, the issue of them, in despite of hell and the world, shall be good to his people; a greater good than the friendship of the world could do them, or the enmity of the world can deprive

them of; a good that will more than countervail all the evil that men can bring upon them, Rom. viii., Jer. xxiv. 5, Gen. i. 20. Now, if all they can do shall turn to good, why are they so much feared? A wise man does not use to fear a good turn. But these things I must but point at.

6. Get corruption mortified. The mortified Christian is the best suffering Christian, the willingest to take up the cross, and the ablest to bear it, so as to honour Christ in bearing of it. Carry on the work of mortification with all speed, with all diligence, for mortification affords many advantages for enduring the cross.

(1.) There will be less reluctancy to the cross the more you are mortified. When corruption is subdued, there will be little left to lift up itself against the will of Christ, calling you to the cross; for though nature not corrupted would be averse to that which is afflictive to it, yet corruption very much strengthens this reluctancy. And though outward prosperity would be desirable to innocent nature, yet corruption desires it excessively, doats upon it, knows not how to be without it. And no wonder, for this brings in provision to the flesh, and cherishes corruption, and gratifies our lusts; whereas the cross rather straitens, and pinches, and starves them. So that the voice of the flesh is always that of Peter's to Christ, when he was speaking of his suffering, 'Master, spare thyself.' It cannot endure to hear of the cross. An unmortified soul is like an untamed heifer, a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; it will not be brought to the cross without much struggling, it will fling every way to avoid it; and when it cannot be avoided, will fling it off as soon as may be, whatever come on it. But so far as corruption is mortified, there is a quiet submission to take the cross when Christ calls to it, and to bear it, whatever it be, during his pleasure. You see it eminently in the apostle: he being dead to sin, could die daily for Christ, and could rejoice in so doing.

(2.) There will be more strength to bear the cross, for corruption is the soul's sickness and distemper; and the stronger a distemper is, the weaker is the subject. A soul little mortified is in a sickly, and weakly, and languishing condition, not able to support itself, much less to bear a cross, a heavy cross. Where corruption is unsubdued, there is but little spiritual strength; and a little strength will be apt to sink or faint under an oppressing cross, Prov. xxiv. 10. A soul of small strength will be ready to faint in the day of adversity; and where corruption is strong, spiritual strength is small. A mortified soul is of a healthy, strong constitution, having purged out those distempers under which others languish, and so is the more able to bear up under the cross. The more you are mortified, the more strength you have both to do and suffer.

(3.) Mortification is a kind of martyrdom, it has some resemblance of it, and the expressions which represent it to us in Scripture import as much; for our natural corruption is called our old man, and a body of death, Rom. vii. 24; a body of sin, Rom. vi. 6, Col. ii. 11. And our lusts are called the members of that our body, Col. iii. 5; and naturally are as dear to us, and we as tender of them, as of the members of our bodies. And then to mortify them, as the word tells us, is to kill them, to lay them dead, *νεκρώσας*, Col. iii. 5; to put them to death, *θανατοῦν*, Rom. viii. 13; to put them to the worst kind of death, to crucify them. So that he who is daily mortifying his lusts is daily suffering for Christ's sake; and so it will be no new, no strange thing for him to suffer; he has this lesson ready, he daily learns and practises it. Hence when Christ calls him to part with relations, or estate, or liberty, he can say he hath

parted with that already which he loved as much as these; he hath parted with the life of his lusts, which naturally are as dear to us as our lives. When Christ calls him to suffer pains, or tortures, or death, why, he hath suffered some such things as these long since, he daily suffers it; he is cutting off his right hand, and plucking out his right eye, and wounding the members of his body of sin; yea, he has sacrificed his Isaac, his darling sin, for Christ's sake. And he that has suffered thus much, what will he stick to suffer for Christ? He has parted with one life already, the life of his lusts, and so has learned the better to part with the other life too when Christ requires it. You are dead, says the apostle, Col. iii. 4; and I am crucified, says he of himself, Gal. ii. 20. He hath suffered one death already, the death of his body of sin, which is indeed another self, and so is the readier to suffer the other death when he shall be called to it. He has given up his old man within him to be crucified for Christ's sake, and so will not think much to give up his whole man to be crucified, or otherwise martyred, if the honour and interest of Christ should require it. None so ready, so fit, so willing, so able to suffer for Christ, as he that is most mortified; and therefore if you would be thoroughly prepared to bear the cross, get thoroughly mortified. The book which goes under the name of Cyprian, *De duplici Martyrio*, is express in this: *Si deest tyrannus, si tortor, si spoliator, non deerit concupiscentia, martyrii materiam quotidianam nobis exhibens*: if there be no tyrant, no tormentor, no spoiler, yet concupiscence (our natural corruption) will be present always to afford us a continual occasion of martyrdom, p. 365. And afterward: *Apud Deum tamen quicunque carnem suam crucifixerunt, &c., martyres sunt, nec martyrum corona fraudabuntur*. In God's account, those who crucify the flesh, *quicunque Christo vere commortui sunt*, those who are truly dead with Christ, they are martyrs, and shall not be deprived of the crown of martyrdom.

7. Keep conscience tender. Be tender of his truths, of his worship, of all his ways, of every part of his will, so as not to offend in the least; to avoid the appearance of evil, to hate the garments spotted with the flesh; not only the flesh, and the spot of it, but the garment that is spotted with it. He that is fearful of all sin, afraid of the least, will be ready to suffer rather than offend in a little. Fear sin more than suffering, and then you will welcome the cross rather than give way to any sin.

Want of this tenderness has made way for many to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, cast these over board to save themselves from suffering. Want of this tenderness is the highway to apostasy, the highway to deny Christ, and betray his cause, and renounce his truth; for he that will be drawn to sin in a small matter, to escape suffering, may by degrees be drawn to yield to anything rather than suffer. We may observe it in experience: some, by bending their consciences to comply in less things, by degrees have made them so flexible as to yield to anything; by admitting of small evils, have made way for the greatest. For every degree of evil brings a degree of hardness with it; so the conscience in a little while becomes as it were paved, so that anything may pass it without scruple, when it would have scrupled a little thing at first. By often swallowing, the passage becomes wider and wider, so that anything will down at last, especially when fear of suffering enforceth it. *Qui modica contemnit, &c.*, says Augustine; he that slights smaller evils, by little and little falls into greater; and he instanteth in his mother Monica, who by sipping of a little wine at first, came by

degrees to take large draughts. Turn but a bowl down a steep hill with the least touch, and you will scarce be able to stop it till it comes to the bottom.

Thus the ancients, by giving too much way to ceremonies and human inventions in the worship of God, made by degrees a way for popery, as protestant divines observe; and by giving way to an exorbitant prelate in a particular church, made a way for a pope in the universal church. Though they saw no harm in prelacy to make them scruple it, but thought it a prudential expedient to prevent divisions in the church, as Jerome tells, yet the premises being laid by them, after ages thought such a conclusion did necessarily follow as they little dreamed of: if a prelate be necessary to prevent divisions in a particular church, then a pope is necessary to prevent divisions in the universal church. This consequence had never been swallowed, if men had been so tender as not to yield the antecedent. And to this day the papists rely upon the connection of these, and thereupon ground some hopes and expectation of prevailing; insomuch as Contren the Jesuit is bold to say, in his Politics, lib. ii. cap. xviii., that were all England once brought to approve of bishops, it were easy to reduce it to the Church of Rome.

The want of this tenderness, too, has let in idolatry amongst those who profess the name of Christ; and has made them so far from being sufferers, as the primitive Christians were, for not yielding to the appearances of idolatry, that they are transformed into persecutors of those who will not join with them in their idol worship. At first there was such tenderness, as they thought themselves greatly defiled by the touch of an idol: *seque putant contactu simulacri vehementer contaminari*. They would rather suffer death, as the supposed Cyprian tells us, than to defile themselves: *Ut mortem appetant citius, &c.*, p. 864. *Non est dubium*, says Lactantius, *quum nulla religio sit, ubicunque simulacrum*: without all doubt there is no religion where there are images. And the Council of Eliberis, Can. 86: *Placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere*: let there be no pictures at all in the church. And Epiphanius, when he found a picture in a hanging at a church door, he tore it in pieces. But by degrees this tenderness was remitted; pictures were admitted into the church for ornament, and, in Gregory's time, in the seventh century, for instruction. And then in the eighth century the second Council of Nice decrees that images should be adored, and those that opposed this decree were persecuted. So that when at first they would suffer rather than touch or see an image in their churches, this tenderness being lost by degrees, it came to this in the conclusion, they must suffer who would not adore those images which the primitive innocency detested and abhorred.

Those that will not preserve their consciences tender, so as to avoid the occasions, the beginnings, the appearance of evil; instead of suffering for Christ, are in danger to prove persecutors of such who are faithful to him; instead of taking up the cross themselves, are in the highway to lay it upon others. If you would be faithful to Christ in bearing the cross, preserve that tenderness of conscience, which will be alarmed at the first approaches of any corruption, either in doctrine, worship, or daily practice.

8. Acquaint yourselves more with God. Get effectual apprehensions of him, what he is in himself, and what he is to his people. Walk in the sight, in the view of God; have him often in your eye. This enabled Moses to endure the cross, Heb. xi. 24-28. Study much the all-sufficiency, the power, the goodness, the unchangeableness of God.

(1.) The all-sufficiency of God. What fulness there is in him to make up all you can lose for him ; what refreshments there are in him to sweeten all you can suffer for him.

What fulness. You may as well doubt that all the waters of the ocean cannot fill a spoon, as that the divine fulness cannot be enough to you, if you should have nothing left in this world ; for all the waters that cover the sea are not so much as a spoonful, compared with the boundless and infinite fulness of all-sufficiency.

What refreshments in him, &c. One drop of divine sweetness is enough to make one in the very agony of the cruellest death to cry out with joy, The bitterness of death is past. Now in him there are not only drops, but rivers ; not a scanty sprinkling, but an infinite fulness.

What is there you can want under the cross, but all-sufficiency can supply ! What is there you can fear under the cross, but all-sufficiency can secure you ! And that which can secure you from all wants, and from all fears, is enough, well considered, duly improved, to make you willing to take up the cross, and make you able to bear it.

(2.) Eye much the power of God, how it can support under the cross, what it can bring to pass for you by the cross. No cross so sharp and grievous, but he can make it sweet and comfortable. No cross so heavy and intolerable, but he can make it light and easy. No cross so ignominious and reproachful, but he can turn it to your honour. No cross so fastened to you, but he can easily remove it : Eph. iii. 20, he is ' able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think.' A man may ask much, so much as men and angels cannot give ; but how much soever he ask, he can think more than he may think fit to ask. Yea, but let him ask or think as much as ever he can, the Lord can do more than he can either ask or think, abundantly more, exceeding abundantly more, *ὡς ἡ ἀνάγκη ὑπερῷον ἡμῶν*, more than superabundantly more.

You may be apt to think, Oh if such a cross befall me, such disgrace, or poverty, or imprisonment, or such tortures as the primitive Christians suffered, I shall never endure it, I shall sink under it, it will be my utter ruin. Oh but look to the power of God. He can make the cross prove quite another thing than you imagine it to be ; far more easy, far more comfortable, far more advantageous, than you can imagine ; far better to you every way, than that part of your life wherein you have fared best in the world.

He can make a ruining, impoverishing cross, the way to the greatest riches and advancement. See it in Joseph : what a grievous cross was that for him, who was his father's darling, to be sold by his own brethren for a slave ; to be slandered by his mistress as a rogue ; to be thrust into the worst dungeon as the vilest malefactor, where his feet were hurt in the stocks, and he laid in irons ! Would you think this a way to preferment ? Yet so the Lord ordered, as thereby he was advanced to be lord of Egypt, and, which was more, the preserver of Israel.

Nay, which is stranger and better too, he can make the cross a means to advance the soul nearer heaven. Never was David's soul in a more gracious and heavenly temper, never nearer to God, nearer to heaven on earth, than when he was bereaved of all that was dear to him, not only outward comforts, but public ordinances, and hunted as a partridge upon the mountains ; which plainly appears by the psalms he penned in that condition.

He can make a poor and indigent estate most rich in inward comforts and sweet contentments, as you see in Paul.

He can turn a prison into a most delightful paradise. So Pomponius Algerius found it, who, being imprisoned for the gospel, dates his letter from thence, *ex delectabili carcere*, from my delightful paradise.

Finally, What more terrible to flesh and blood than fire? What more dreadful to nature than a tormenting flame? Yet this the Lord can make as full of ease as a bed of down, as full of delight as a bed of roses. So our English martyr found it, and tells the papists out of the midst of the fire, when his body was all of a light flame, I feel no more pain in this fire, than if I were in a bed of down; it is as pleasant to me as a bed of roses.

Look to the power of God; if you would be encouraged to take up the cross, if you would be enabled to bear it, he can make it as tolerable, as comfortable, as that condition which most likes you.

(8.) His goodness. His all-sufficiency and power make him able, his goodness makes him willing to do for his people under the cross what his all-sufficiency and almighty power can afford. His goodness sets his mighty power a-work for his suffering saints. His goodness sets his all-sufficiency, his fulness, abroad for them, so that it runs freely upon them; and never more freely than when they are under the cross: Ps. xxvii. 18, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord,' &c. What is it that makes you ready to faint under the cross, or thoughts and foresight of it? Look to the goodness of God, there is support.

[1.] Fear you the pain of the cross, the weight, the pressure, the tediousness of it? Why, but the Lord is too good to lay more on you than you are able to bear. He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able. He knows your frame, he remembers that you are but dust. He spares you, as a father spares his son that serves him. He stays the rough wind in the day of the east wind: he afflicts in measure; and though the wicked know no measure, nor no end, he will make them know both; the rod of the wicked shall not always lie upon the back of the righteous. He will not contend for ever, lest the spirit should fail. He is too good to let the cross lie too heavy, or to let it lie too long. He is so good, as he will suffer with you, and as it were, bear his part of the cross. In all their afflictions he was afflicted. He cries out, as touched with the sense of the pressure, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' As though it were not goodness enough for Christ to admit us to the fellowship of his sufferings, he is so good as to come himself into the fellowship of our sufferings. As we suffered in him then, so he suffers with us now, and so head and members are all along fellow-sufferers. And fear you to suffer, when Christ will suffer with you? Will you not take up that cross, whereof Christ himself will bear a part? Oh what honour, what happiness is this, to suffer for Christ, nay, to suffer with him! Who had not rather have a share in such a cross, than in all the glory of the world?

Or [2.] do you fear want under the cross? Why, but hear what Goodness itself says to this: Mat. vi. 26, 'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?' If you have a servant that works for you, you will think yourselves obliged to provide for him, much more if he suffer for you. Why, but here is a greater engagement the Lord lays upon himself. Those that take up the cross for him, he looks on them as children, as children suffering for him. Now will not he who provides for his ordinary servants, yea, for the very birds, provide for children when under the cross for his sake? Sure, if

ordinary means fail, he will provide for them in an extraordinary way: he that feeds the ravens, will send the ravens to feed his children, as he did the prophet, rather than that they shall not be provided for. What special care may not they be confident of, since he sometimes feeds the ravens in a way little less than miraculous, if we may believe what some good authors report. They tell us, that when the young ravens are forsaken of their dams, and so in danger to be starved, out of their own dung there ariseth a worm, which creepeth to their mouths, and becomes nourishment to them. Has the Lord such a care of ravens? will common goodness do so much for them? what then may children, suffering children, expect from the special goodness of a heavenly Father? Are ye not much better, much dearer to him than they? If you would be encouraged to take up the cross, and bear it, look to the goodness of God.

(4.) The unchangeableness of God. He is the same God to you, though your condition be not the same, and therefore you may have as much peace and contentment, as much joy and comfort, under the cross, as in a prosperous condition; and if so, there will be no reason to dread the cross, or to decline it. This may make you as ready to embrace the cross as to embrace outward prosperity.

Those exhortations, whereby the apostle calls us to rejoice evermore, and to rejoice always, may seem strange. What, rejoice in poverty, disgrace, in losses and sufferings, in wants and dangers, when destitute, afflicted, tormented! What, can we rejoice as much then as when all things succeed with us in the world according to our desires? Why, yes; if your joys and contentments be those of Christians, and not those of wordlings, you may have as much joy and contentment in a suffering as in a prosperous condition, because the Lord, who is the ground of your joy, is still the same. Where there is the same ground of contentment, contentment may be the same, but the Lord is the same in every condition. Indeed, if your joys and contentments arise from earthly things, they will alter as those things suffer alteration. But if they arise from God, as they do if they be such as become Christians, they may be the same under the cross, because God is the same still; though your condition be changed, yet the Lord, who is the ground of your comfort and contentment, is not changed. 'I the Lord change not.' His all-sufficiency, his power, his love, his goodness, is without variableness or shadow of change. If there be any change, it is not in his nature, but in some outward expressions; and even in these, when you come under the cross, there will be no change unless for the better. The Lord may be better to you in a suffering condition than in any other condition; and indeed so he is wont to be far better to his people under the cross than in outward prosperity; they find him then a thousand times better than ever. And this we may expect from that promise, whereby he engages himself to return an hundredfold for whatever they suffer or part with for his name's sake. He will be an hundred times better to them under reproach for his sake, than when they are cried up by the world; an hundred times better in wants and losses for his sake than when they have the greatest abundance; an hundred times better in prison and sufferings than at ease and liberty. To be still looking thus upon God is an effectual way to prepare you for the cross. Such a view of God will make you ready to take it up, and willing to bear it.

8. Get more spiritual strength. Make it your business, before the cross comes, to strengthen yourselves for it. Be diligent in the use of all means

to get all the strength that may be; and the more, to use the apostle's expression, as you see the day approaching.

There is an habitual strength, which consists in the grown and confirmed habits of grace, strengthen that which is weak, Rev. iii. 2. And there is an actual strength, which consists in the exercise of grace, which the Scripture expresseth by girding up the loins, denoting agility. And there is an auxiliary strength, which consists in divine influences and assistances, Eph. vi. 10. And there is an external strength, which consists in extrinsecal advantages, such as a staff is to a man under a burden, and such as wind, and sun, and armour, and fortifications, are to a soldier. And there is a strength proper for a suffering condition, which consists more peculiarly in suffering graces, faith, and patience, &c.

Now, if you would be prepared for the cross, you must endeavour to strengthen yourselves every way; all will be little enough to enable you to demean yourselves as the followers of Christ, and so as you may honour your leader.

The less strength you have, the less will you be able, as to do, so to suffer for Christ. *Nihil agit ultra vires*. A little cannot do much, suffer much, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. If you will 'quit yourselves like men, be strong.'

The less strength, the more danger sinfully to decline the cross, or shamefully to sink and fall under it. You know what befell Peter when he encountered the cross in his weakness.

The less strength, the more afflictive, the more painful, will any cross be. A man of strength will carry that with ease which will be a grievous oppression to a child or a weakling.

The less strength, the more weaknesses and distempers will you shew under any cross whatsoever, so as Christ and his cause and interest may hereby come to suffer by you when you are called to suffer for him.

(1.) Get more habitual strength. Get the habits and principles of grace strengthened and confirmed. The cross will try your strength.

[1.] Content not yourselves with the infancy of grace, with the first beginnings of it. Think not that enough which will barely give you a title to heaven. If you will come there, you must keep the way, and the way lies through many tribulations; and it will require more than the strength of an infant, to hold on in deep and rugged paths, to bear up under many and heavy crosses, Eph. iv. 14. As there is a wind of temptation from the sleight and cunning craftiness, so there is a temptation from the hatred, malice, and violence of men; those that are but like children will be in danger to be tossed to and fro with every wind. It must be a strong cable that will ride out a storm. Labour to be rooted and grounded in every grace. A weak plant, not well rooted, will hardly bear up against a fierce blast, Mat. xiii. 21. Those that have no root, when tribulation and persecution ariseth, will never stand; those that are but weakly rooted will be in danger to fall.

[2.] Take heed of inward consumptions and declinings, which waste the strength already attained. Take heed there be no carnal, or worldly, or spiritual distemper insensibly consuming the inward man. A languishing consumptive soul is very unfit to bear a cross, Rev. iii. 1, 2. Some of them had already fallen under persecution. Though they seemed to be alive, yet when the cross came they appeared to have no more strength than dead men. Others of them were ready to die, ready to fall; their weakness was not like to bear up under the cross. To prevent the danger, he calls upon them to strengthen that which was weak and languishing.

Make this your great business, to grow in grace. While others make it their business to grow rich and great, or to entrench themselves so as their worldly interest may be secured; while they trouble themselves about the many things of this life, mind you this, as that one thing needful, to grow in grace.

Keep up eager desires after the increase of grace. The hungry soul is, above all other, the growing and thriving soul. 'He filleth the hungry with good things.' He is wont to do it, to fill them that hunger with the strength and riches of grace. And he is engaged to do it, Mat. v. Never look to thrive and grow strong, if you keep not up an eager appetite after more and more spiritual strength. 'The rich he sends empty away.' Who are the rich? Those who think themselves rich, who demean themselves as though they had enough already. Be diligent in the use of all appointed means for the increase of grace. It is the diligent hand that makes rich. Spiritual riches is spiritual strength. Be the more diligent, because the time is short and your opportunities may be shorter. Suck in the word, as those that know your life, and strength, and growth, depends on it, 1 Peter. ii. 2. Labour to retrieve what you have lost by former sloth and negligence, and be much at the throne of grace; there it is you may find grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. Come with faith, with fervency, with importunity. You are encouraged by the promise of God and the experience of his people, Ps. cxxxviii. 3, תְּרַחֵבֵנִי, Thou shalt strengthen me. He hath done it, and he will do it. Let this encourage you, and provoke you, not only to pray, but to cry as he did.

(2.) Get more actual strength. Be much in the exercise of grace. A man that hath strength and useth it not, loseth it for want of use; he will be able to do less when the trial comes than he that hath less and useth it more. A soul well furnished with grace is like a good instrument, but if grace be not kept in exercise, it is out of tune. He that hath a worse instrument may play a lesson in less time and with less pains than the other can tune a neglected instrument. When Christ would have his disciples prepared for the troubles he had been foreshewing them, he calls upon them to have their loins girt and their lights burning, Luke xii. 35, i. e., keep your graces still in exercise. No matter how much match soever a soldier have, if his match be out when danger is upon him, he is not like to do any service. If grace be not kept in exercise, your light is not burning, your match is out; you are more like to run than stand to it when danger comes. 'I sleep, but my heart waketh,' says the spouse. 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?' Cant. v. 2, 3. That is the posture and condition of a soul that hath not grace in exercise; how much soever he be furnished with, yet it is as it were put off and laid aside when it is not used and exercised; and in that case he will be unready to entertain Christ, when he comes with a visit of love, much more when he comes with the cross. The strongest man, when he is asleep, may be more easily mastered and baffled than a weaker person upon his guard. If the cross surprise you when you are asleep, i. e., when grace is unexercised and laid down in a sluggish rest, it will find you unprepared, unable, unfit to bear it.

(3.) Get more auxiliary strength. Look up to God for divine assistance and influences. The strength of inherent grace, though it be necessary, yet it is not sufficient to support you under the cross, unless it be continually empowered and influenced from above. We are not sufficient of ourselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Who had more inward strength than the apostle? And yet that was not sufficient, without a further aid, to think of bearing

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the cross, to resolve on it, much less actually to endure it. But our sufficiency is of God. It is the name of God, 1 Sam. xv. 29. He is 'the strength of Israel.' And so he is, not only by planting strength in the soul, but by a continued conveyance of strengthening influences. For the strength implanted in the soul is but a dependent strength, something like a staff in a man's hand, which depends upon the hand both for its support and motion. Remove the hand, and the staff falls, and will stand him in no stead who formerly leaned on it. If you rely upon inherent grace, without looking higher, it will prove like a broken reed; it will fail you when the pressure of the cross is upon you.

The earth hath a vegetative power in itself, whereby it brings forth herbs, and flowers, and fruit; but without the heat and influence of the sun, this power will be fruitless. Even so will the power of inherent grace. It will be fruitless, and stand you in no stead, unless it be excited, and quickened, and fortified by renewed aids and influences from above: Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' There is the fountain of your strength. That which you have in the cistern has no virtue nor power otherwise than by a secret intercourse betwixt it and the fountain. Apply yourselves then to the Lord for those divine aids and influences: engage him to vouchsafe and continue them, by a continual dependence on him for them. 'Those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.'

Take heed you provoke not God, by high conceits or self-confidence, neglects of him, or any otherwise, to suspend these influences of assisting grace. Not only Peter, a man compassed with like infirmities as we, but Adam in the state of innocency, of perfection, and the angels in a higher state both of grace and glory than he, when they were left to themselves, found all their strength to be mere weakness, not able to support them a moment. They fell by a less temptation than the cross may prove; for the impressions of fear, proper to the cross, are more forcible than those of the other affections wherewith they were overpowered.

(4.) Make use of strengthening advantages. I shall name some of them, which will contribute much strength and support under the cross.

[1.] Keep the sense of former comforts. To comfort is *confortari*, to strengthen, as the word imports. The joy of the Lord is your strength, Nehem. viii. 10. Comfort is that strength which the object contributes to the heart, as one describes it; and the strength is proportionable to the object. The Lord being the best object, brings most strength to the heart. He that can comfort himself in the Lord, will be thereby so strengthened as he will not faint under the cross.

[2.] Make use of former experiences, both your own and others'. Remember what the Lord hath been, and what he hath done for yourselves and others under the cross. Experiments are great encouragements, and that which encourageth the heart doth strengthen it. When the psalmist was ready to sink under the pressure of his troubles, he fetches strength and support from hence, Ps. lxxvii. 10-12. From the experience of times past, he draws encouraging presages of future mercies, and had thereby strength and relief under the infirmity and weakness he there mentions.

[3.] Stay yourselves on the word, the promises of God. No such cordials in a fainting fit. Treasure up those promises which are suited to the cross. No condition hath so many promises, nor any of a sweeter import. Let these be your delight, and they will be your strength,

Ps. cxix. 92. He had fainted and sunk under the weight of his afflictions, but that the promise was his support, and that which he delighted to stay upon.

[4.] Keep in God's way. The strength of a soldier is in his intrenchments and fortifications. While he [is] within his works he is in his strength, whereas a straggler may be easily cut off. While you straggle not, but keep God's way, you are within your fortifications; 'The way of the Lord is strength,' Prov. x. 29. If a cross meet you there, it may trouble you, but it cannot easily hurt you. If a storm rise while you are at anchor in the channel, or in the harbour, you may ride it out more safely; but if it take you while you are amongst rocks and shelves (as you are always when you leave the way of God), you will be in danger to be wrecked. When a man is under a heavy burden, it is a great advantage to him if his way be fair; but if he be upon a bog, the weight of his burden will go near to sink him. Every step out of God's way is over a quagmire. There is no bearing a heavy cross where you can have no sure footing; but the way of God is firm; it will bear you up under any pressure.

(5.) Labour for that strength especially which will serve in a more peculiar manner to fortify you under the cross, that strength which consists in suffering graces. Let me insist a little upon two, faith and patience. Every grace may contribute something to enable you for the cross, but these two more than any of the rest, more especially, more immediately.

[1.] For faith. The apostle commends this to us above all the rest, with an *ἰσὺς ἰσχυρὸν*, as that which above all the rest will enable us to stand in a day of trial, Eph. vi. 13, 14, 16. Above all, get the shield of faith, if you would stand. Get faith strengthened, get it exercised; act it upon the attributes, upon the promises of God; encourage it by your relations to him, by your experiences of him, by the acts of his providence for you and others under the cross in all ages. Those worthies of whom we have a catalogue, Heb. xi., were by faith enabled both to do wonders, and to endure wonderfully. All that they acted, all that they suffered, is by name ascribed to faith, ver. 24, 25. By faith Moses took up the cross out of choice; he did choose it, rather than all the pleasures, riches, and honours of Egypt. And by faith, when he had taken it up, he bare it, he endured it, ver. 27; and others were enabled thereby to endure things more grievous, ver. 35-38. And all by faith. This enabled them to encounter death in all shapes, to bear all kinds of crosses, even those that seem most intolerable to flesh and blood; and so to endure them, as they were not only admired by men, but the Lord himself breaks forth into their praises, ver. 39. If you would tread in their steps under the cross, you must get their faith; for faith affords the greatest advantages to fortify you for bearing the cross. Let me instance in some briefly.

First, Faith engages the strength of God with you; and they are strong indeed who are fortified with his strength. What cross is there that the strength of the Almighty will not enable you to bear? Now faith will make you sure of this. It will oblige the everlasting arm to bear you up, and to keep you upright under the cross, how heavy and oppressing soever it be, 1 Pet. i. 5-7. What kept them in such a temper under the cross, as they could rejoice under manifold sufferings, so as they lost no more by their sufferings than the gold loseth by the fire, which comes out more bright and precious and orient than it goes in; yea, so as their manifold

crosses, and their undergoing them, was to the praise and honour and glory of God, exceedingly every way to his glory? What is there that could keep flesh and blood thus under the cross? Why, it was the power of God, to which nothing is impossible, nothing difficult, being kept by the power of God. And how came this power of God to be engaged with them? Why, through faith. Never fear the heaviest cross, if there be the power of God to bear it. And this will not be wanting if faith be not wanting. Faith is a relying upon God for strength. Now those that rely on him oblige him; he will not fail them, Ps. ix. 19, עֲנִיִּים. The oppressed, those that are ready to sink under their pressure, if they expect the Lord's strength to bear them up (and faith doth expect it), he will not disappoint them. That would be a great dishonour to him, to disappoint those whom he has encouraged to depend on him. Honest and ingenious men will not deal thus, much less the faithful God. If you believe, the Lord and his power is engaged.

Secondly, Faith stays itself upon God, Isaiah l. 10. Believing is a leaning on him, Cant. viii. 5. The words סָכַךְ and שָׁעָן, whereby faith is ordinarily expressed in the Old Testament, signify to stay or lean upon. One of them is used when Saul is said to lean upon his spear. And from שָׁעָן comes שֵׁשֶׁב־עֵץ, a staff, such a staff as a man leans upon, and supports himself by, when any pressure is upon him; so that the words which the Holy Ghost makes use of to express faith clearly teach us thus much, that by trusting God, by believing on him, the Lord himself becomes our stay, our staff, our support. And what cross can be too heavy when there is such a support under it? when the Almighty becomes, as it were, your staff, your stay, to bear you up? Ps. lv. 22. The burden of the cross is too heavy for thee; why, but it is not too heavy for the Lord, and he would have thee cast both thyself and thy burden upon him. He can and will sustain both; and so sustain it, that how heavy soever it be, it shall not so much as move thee. He will bear it himself, rather than it shall move; only cast it upon him. That is the way to be eased of the pressure, to cast it upon God. But how is this done? Why, by believing. It is cast upon God by trusting him. So it is explained, Ps. xxxvii. 5, 58. And the same word is rendered trusting, Ps. xxii. 8; so that faith is a compendious way to give you ease under the cross. When it grows heavy, you may relieve yourselves by rolling it upon God, which is done by believing. And he commands you thus to ease yourselves, by casting the burden upon him. You can never be oppressed, let the cross be what it will, if faith be thus employed.

Thirdly, Faith brings strength from heaven into the soul, fetches supplies from above for the strengthening of the soul under the cross, Ps. xxvii. 19; faith strengthened his heart, kept him from fainting, ver. 14; so Ps. lix. 9, because of his strength יָצָא; because of the strength which I have from God, I will wait upon him; for that is the way to have it; thereby God becomes my strength and defence. It was by faith that the suffering saints, Heb. xi., out of weakness were made strong; so strong, as nothing was too hard, too heavy for them, Isa. xl. 81. Those that rest upon God for his aid, and rely on him for the accomplishment of his promise, they shall have new supplies of strength, enabling them to bear up and hold out when they seem to be quite spent; they shall as easily surmount all the grievances and difficulties that encounter, as if they were carried above them upon eagles' wings; they shall be above the cross even while they are under it; they shall run when the cross lies heaviest on

them ; it shall not weary nor retard them ; they shall walk with it and not faint. Such are the wonderful effects of faith, and the efficacy of that strength wherewith it empowers a believing soul.

Fourthly, Faith strengthens by its representations, Heb. xi. 1 ; it makes those things visible and evident which are not seen, gives the believer a clear prospect of them, and represents those things as present which are yet to come, gives them, as it were, a present subsistence, and consequently shews him those things as past which at present are grievous ; represents to him the crown as though it were present, and the cross that is upon him as though it were already past.

First, Faith represents Christ to one under the cross, as though he were standing by him, as though he saw and heard him, and felt him. It shews him Christ, as though he saw him before his eyes smiling on him, and expressing himself highly pleased that he will express such love to his Saviour as to suffer for him.

It sets Christ before him as though he felt him putting under his almighty arm to ease and support him under the pressure ; as though he felt him holding his head and wiping off the sweat or blood, as one of the martyrs testified, and embracing him with all affectionateness and tenderness.

It sets Christ before him as though he heard him speaking in his ear, Well done, good and faithful servant ; I see thy love, thy faithfulness to me, and I will never forget it. Oh if you did but see Christ standing by you, and hear him with an audible voice speaking so to you, you would think nothing too grievous to suffer for him ! Why, faith will represent him as effectually as if your eye saw him, and your ears heard him, as though you heard him whisper in your ears those sweet words, Mat. v. 11, 12, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven.' It was such a representation of faith that enabled Moses to endure, Heb. xi. 27 ; by faith he saw him, and so endured, as 'seeing him who is' otherwise 'invisible.'

Secondly, Faith represents heaven to him, as though it were set open to his eye ; shews him all the glory that is approaching, as though it were already present ; helps him to such a prospect of heaven in a promise, as Moses had of Canaan from mount Pisgah : 'If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.' 'Henceforth is laid up for me a crown,' 2 Tim. iv. 8. 'The sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us,' Rom. viii. 18. It is already revealed to faith, though not to sense. Faith can draw the veil, and get such a sight of glory as will make the sense of sufferings to vanish. Faith sees the crown, as though he were already crowned ; sees the kingdom, as though he were already reigning ; sees the glory of it, as though he were already shining in it : looks upon these things as matters of as great reality and certainty, as any thing that he hears, or sees, or actually enjoys.

Faith gave Moses such a sight of heaven, as enabled him both to take up the cross and bear it, Heb. xi. 28, ἀπέβλεπε γὰρ ; he looked upon it, he had a sight of it. And so had the apostle ; and that made him think light of all the crosses that befell him, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. How came the apostle to such a sense of glory as made him speak so lightly of all his afflictions and sufferings ; to make nothing of them, as light, momentary,

and inconsiderable? Why, ver. 18, he looked at things not seen: he saw the exceeding greatness and eternity of an unseen glory. And nothing but faith could give him such a sight.

Thirdly, Faith represents the cross as if it were past, looks upon it as that which is but for a moment, and can easily overlook a moment when the boundless length and breadth of eternity is before it. 'These light afflictions, which are but for a moment,' says the apostle, when the eye of faith was upon that unseen eternity. Faith compares the time of suffering with the time of reigning, and sees that that is but as the twinkling of an eye, when it is set against an infinite duration. 'Mine age is nothing before thee,' says David of his life, compared with God's everlastingness, Ps. xxxix. 5. If the cross should lie upon us while we live, yet that is nothing to the eternity of glory with which it shall be recompensed, and faith will not think much to endure that which it looks upon as nothing.

If you would be prepared for the cross, get such a faith as this, and thus exercise it. Let it represent to you Christ and heaven as if they were present, crosses and sufferings as if they were past; since it is but a moment, and they will be no more. Make use of it to engage the strength of God with you; though a small cross may be grievous to you, yet nothing can be too heavy for that. Make God your stay, your support; lean on him by faith; and if the cross grow too weighty, cast it, roll it upon him: he is ready to sustain you, if you will but trust him. At what an easy rate may you be eased of all your pressures!

And when you are ready to faint, make use of faith to bring in new supplies of strength. If you have not such trials now, yet you cannot want occasions to exercise it every day; and the more you exercise it now, the readier will it be to serve your turn in greater necessities, under heavier pressures. This will hold the head above water in the fiercest storms: no cross will ever sink you while faith bears up.

[2.] Patience. Get yourselves stored with this: a quiet submission to the hand of God, without disturbance or discomposure, without murmuring or repining; not thinking it too heavy, or too tedious; not giving way to a thought of revenge, or of making the least ill return to the instruments of your sufferings. This is a grace, serving in a special manner to fit you for the cross. There is no bearing it like the followers of Christ, unless in patience you possess your souls. Hence it is so frequently required, and so highly extolled. The apostle glories in the Thessalonians: 2 Thes. i. 4, 'We glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.' And indeed, it is a great advantage under the cross: it makes the cross far more easy. *Levius fit quicquid corrigere est nefas*: that which is otherwise intolerable, is easily endured by a patient soul. A weak Christian, armed with patience, will better bear a heavier cross than one that has more strength and less patience. This secures the soul against that inward disturbance and discomposure, which is the very sting and malignity of any outward suffering.

But how shall we compass this patience? Why, briefly, follow the apostle's advice: Heb. xii. 1, 2, 'Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,' &c. Look upon Jesus, see with what patience he bore the cross in all forms, and endured all kinds of persecution.

First, The persecution of the heart, that is hatred. He was hated, and

hated with cruel hatred, as the effects of it shewed; and hated without cause. David therein was a type of Christ, and hated by those to whom he expressed the greatest love, John xv. 18; and yet he was the greatest expression of love to the world that ever the world saw, John iii.

Secondly, The persecution of the countenance, when scorn and derision appears in it. For this is Ishmael branded as a persecutor, Gal. iv. And how did he persecute him? Gen. xxi. 9. By mocking. The word is *metasahhak*, which signifies derision, or laughing to scorn. And with this, as some conceive, begin the four hundred years of the Egyptian affliction. Such persecution Christ endured. They feared at him, and derided him; they scorned him when he preached against their wickedness; Luke xvi. 14, *ἔξμελλε τιμωρεῖσθαι*, they blew their noses at him, as the word signifies; they nodded their heads at him when he was in the greatest extremity.

Thirdly, The persecution of the tongue. He was reviled and vilified, falsely accused, and horribly reproached. They called him a glutton, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, Mat. xi. 19; a Sabbath-breaker, John v. 16, 18; an impostor, a deceiver, John vii. 12; a Samaritan, and one that had a devil, John viii. 48; a conjuror, and one that cast out devils by the help of the prince of devils; Mat. xii. 24, *Βεελζεβούλ*, a blasphemer; Matth. xxvi. 65, a traitor, an enemy to Cæsar. And upon these accusations he suffered, and all this falsely. He infinitely abhorred the very thought of what they laid to his charge. They might as well have charged the sea with want of moisture, or accused the sun itself of darkness.

Fourthly, The persecution of the hand. They thrust him out of their synagogues, and out of their city, Luke iv. 29. They apprehended him as a thief, Mat. xxvi. 55; arraigned him as a malefactor; they stripped him, and buffeted him, and smote him with the palms of their hands, ver. 67. They tore his flesh with scourges, and pierced his head with thorns, and wounded his side and heart with a spear, and drove great nails through his hands and feet, thereby fastening him to the cross, and putting him to a painful, a cruel, a lingering death.

Now how did he demean himself under all these sufferings and abuses, which were the more provoking and the less sufferable with any patience, because they were offered to a person of perfect innocency, of infinite worth and excellency. Could he endure this with patience? Could the Lord of glory put up such things, when vile worms thus used him? Why, yes; the prophet shews us how he endured: Is. liii. 7, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.' Not an impatient word, not an impatient motion; and the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23, 'Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again,' &c. And thus he suffered, that he might teach us thus to suffer, ver. 20, 21. If you would learn patience, look upon Jesus; if his example will not teach it, there is nothing in heaven or earth can help you to learn it.

Thus much for direction. Let me now remove some pleas which carnal reason is apt to make use of, and flesh and blood, when it is consulted with, will be ready to lay hold of, to excuse itself from bearing the cross, and to decline it when Christ calls for the taking of it up.

Some may be ready to say, I would willingly take up the cross, rather than deny Christ, or renounce the religion I profess; I would suffer rather than quit the substantial and fundamental truths of the gospel.

Obj. But when the question is about circumstantialia and smaller matters, about rites and ceremonies, gestures and postures, this or that form of worship or discipline,—here I must be excused,—these are not worth the contending about; no wisdom to run any great hazard for such small matters as the Arians of old. What needs so much stir, *propter duas vocales*, for two small words, and those not found anywhere expressly in the Scripture?

In answer to this, let me present to your consideration these four things.

1. He that is a Christian indeed, and follows Christ fully and faithfully, will not, in the day of trial, inquire whether the matter be small or great that is imposed on him, but whether it be lawful or unlawful. If it be unlawful, not warranted by the law of God, how small soever it may seem, he counts it an occasion great enough to suffer anything rather than yield to it; he will submit to anything, how great soever it be, provided it be lawful; he will yield to nothing, how small soever it be, if it be a sin against God. In this case, *nihil obstinacius Christiano* (as the ancient says), nothing more obstinate than a Christian. Let the thing be never so small, if he discern but the least sin in it, do what you will with him, he will never yield to it while he acts like himself.

He counts no sin small, whatever the world may judge of it. Though one sin be less than another, yet no sin to him is little absolutely; as the earth, though it seem but a small point compared with the heavens, yet absolutely, and in itself considered, it is of a vast bigness. So are those sins to him which the world counts little. He sees something of infiniteness in every sin, as that which is committed against an infinite majesty, as that which makes him obnoxious to infinite justice, as that which deserves infinite or eternal torments, as that which cannot be expiated without a satisfaction of infinite value. Let them make light of sin who never saw its sinfulness, who never felt its weight and grievousness. The true Christian has seen and felt that in sin which will not suffer him to look upon it as a light matter, in what diminutive shape soever it appear; and therefore, when it comes to this, either you must do such a thing, forbear such a thing, or suffer for it; he inquires not whether this thing be small or great, but whether it be sin or no; as a man that is careful of his life will not inquire whether a suspected potion be less or more, but whether it be poison or no; if it be deadly poison, he knows a drop is too much, and may destroy him as well as a large draught, and therefore will not meddle with a drop of it. A true Christian looks upon every sin as deadly poison, how finely soever it be gilded over; in how small quantity soever it be offered him, he dare not venture his soul to take it, he will rather venture body and all outward things under the cross.

Thus Daniel would hazard his life rather than not open his window towards Jerusalem; though this was but a circumstance, and the main duty might have been done unobserved, and so without danger, if this had been omitted, Dan. vi. 10.

So Laurentius the deacon, in the primitive times, would die rather than discover the church's treasure to those that would have seized on it, though it is like the church would have been willing to lose their treasure to have saved the life of such a person.

So the man of Berne, that Melancthon speaks of, would be martyred rather than observe a fast in the popish manner, though that may seem a small matter.

So divers Christians, in Diocletian's persecution, would suffer rather than yield to the appearance of evil; they would not redeem their lives by giving a piece of paper at the command of the officers, lest thereby they should have seemed to have delivered their Bibles to the fire.

And the Christians in Tertullian's time would suffer rather than use the rites, and ceremonies, and customs of idolaters, though they might have used them to another end, and with another mind, than they did.

They thought these sinful, and therefore, though they might seem small matters to others, they counted them matter sufficient to suffer. And so is the smallest matter which is but in the leastwise sinful to every true Christian; he that will be faithful to Christ must choose the greatest sufferings rather than the smallest sin, and take up the heaviest cross rather than offend in the least.

There may be great evil in that which passes for a little sin, a small matter. Vain thoughts are counted the smallest sins, but the Scripture otherwise represents them: ver. 4, 14, 'Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?' There is pernicious wickedness in vain thoughts, such as may hinder those who allow it from being saved. An idle word passes for a slight fault, many will count it none at all; but we are told, Mat. xii. 36, 'Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' Is it not better to be condemned at man's tribunal for avoiding of that which, how small soever, may be matter of condemnation at the judgment-seat of Christ? The apostle would have us avoid all appearance of evil, 1 Thes. v. 22. He would have us avoid nothing but what we may comfortably suffer for, yet would have us avoid not only apparent evils, but the appearance; so Jude 28, 'hating the garment spotted with the flesh.'

2. A small evil in itself may become a great evil in consequence; by giving way to the least we may make way for the greatest. He that will yield to small evils, rather than endure the cross, may thereby lay the foundation of the greatest mischiefs. *Solent et minima paulatim despecta in malum magnum trahere.* The least evils slighted are wont to draw us into the greatest.

This is evident in all experience. The greatest abominations in the Christian world have had their rise from small beginnings, and such as it would be counted a nicety to scruple at. What greater abomination was there ever amongst Christians than the popish mass, as we find it now in the Roman missal? Pursue this to its original, and the first step to it will appear to have been a stinted, imposed liturgy. No such thing as a common prescribed liturgy can be found in the first and purest ages of the church. Nay, Socrates the historian tells us, that in his time (and he lived about the middle of the fifth century), lib. v. cap. xxi, page 698, *παρὰ πάσαις θρησκειαῖς τῶν ἐυχῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ἑνὴν (ἀλλήλαις) συμφωνήσας διὰ τοῦτο ἀντὶ*, that amongst all the sorts of worshippers there were not two to be found that used the same prayers. But in the beginning of the seventh century Gregory the Great, who is called the last bishop and the first pope of Rome, imposed the Gregorian form upon the Church of Rome,* thrusting into it the invocation of saints.† And in the ninth century it was urged upon the other western churches by Charles the Great: and in the eleventh century upon the churches of Spain by Alphonsus the VI. And still, as it pro-

ide Field, Append.

† Vide Chemnit.

ceeded, some additions were made, the additions bringing in new corruptions, and the universal imposition making the corruptions generally received, till at last it came up to that height of superstition, idolatry, and error, which we see it now consists of, and which all true protestants cannot but greatly abhor and detest. And so we perceive what a mischief may arise from a small and seemingly innocent thing.

Nor can any deny, but if way had not been given to a stinted, imposed form, the popish mass had never taken place in the world. So that hence it is manifest that a small and seemingly innocent thing may make way for a dreadful mischief. Let me add another instance.

The first step to the pope's throne was the inequality introduced amongst ministers, by one degree after another, rising to a papal height. There was granted to one person, first a presidency over others, then a sole power of ordination, then a sole power of jurisdiction over the rest; and that first over all in a city or diocese, then over all in a province, then over all in divers provinces, and at last over all through the whole world.

If this inequality, in the former degrees of it, had not been yielded to, the man of sin could never have advanced himself above all that is called God. If that egg had never been laid, or had been crushed when it first appeared, this cockatrice had never been hatched; it had never become a dragon, or such a fiery flying serpent as we now find it.

The papists' invocation of saints is apparently idolatrous, and yet the beginnings of it seemed modest. They first began with a commemoration of the saints, naming them, and praising God for them. From thence they proceeded to the suffrages of the saints, beseeching God that they might have the benefit and advantage of the prayers and supplications of the saints departed. And so, in fine, they came to direct their prayers immediately to the saints, making them mediators of intercession. Now if they had at first scrupled those commemorations, they had never gone so far as intercession; but yielding to the one as harmless, made a more easy way to the other, though grossly idolatrous.

Nay further, some words, though less material than things, being incautiously used, have been the foundation of pernicious errors. The ancients using the words *merit* and *satisfaction* in a tolerable sense, the papists upon those words have hatched their blasphemous opinions of the merit of condignity and human satisfactions, challenging heaven as that which they have deserved, and presuming they can make God a recompence for the injury sin has done him.

There is danger in words, not only in rites and actions. Change in words may occasion some change in religion; which the Jesuits apprehend, and therefore advise their followers not to use the words of protestants. So the Rhemists, 'While they say ministers, let us say priests; and when they call it a communion-table, let us call it an altar. Let us,' say they, 'keep our old words, and we shall keep our old things, our religion.' So jealous are they of their religion, indeed their superstition, as they will not hazard it by the change of a word; whereas both names and things as hazardous to our religion, are swallowed down freely by many who are accounted protestants.

Basil was more cautious, who would not abate one syllable to keep his place and purchase the emperor's favour. It is remarkable what Theodoret relates of him, lib. iv. cap. xvii. The emperor Valens being desirous to win Basil over to a compliance with the Arians, sends a governor to him,

with instructions, either to prevail with him or cast him out of his place. The governor applies himself to Basil with all persuasive words, exhorting him to yield to the time, *ἵσταί τι τῷ καιρῷ*, and not to run so great a hazard for so small a matter, *δι' ὀλίγην δογμάτων ἀκριβείαν*; promises him the emperor's favour, and great advantages thereby, both to himself and others. Basil answers him, 'These words are fitter for children, whose weakness is apt to be taken with such things; but those who are nourished up with the word of God, *οὐδέ μίαν ἀνίχονται σὺλλαβὴν*, will not quit so much as one syllable of divine truth; nay rather, they will suffer, *πάσας τοῦ θανάτου τὰς ἰδίας*, all kinds of death. As for the emperor's favour (says he) *μέγα γὰρ ἡγοῦμαι μετ' ἰσασθείας*. I value it highly when it is consistent with piety; but without this I count it pernicious, *ἀποκαλῶ*.

If the ancients had foreseen that their incantiousness in some smaller matters would have been of such pernicious consequence to after-ages, they would have kept closer to the rule, both in rites and words, though they had suffered for it. And we, being warned by such experiences, will be left inexcusable, if we do not endure the cross rather than yield to the least thing which may be of dangerous consequence either to present or future generations.

8. Small things may be accompanied with such circumstances, effects, and attendants, as may swell them into a monstrous and very formidable bigness. Those things which seem small, when you consider them in themselves simply, yet behold them in their concomitants, and you may discern them to be exceeding great evils. As,

(1.) If we stand obliged against them under sacred and solemn bonds, if we be engaged against them by solemn oath and covenant, in that case there is no yielding to them without perjury and perfidiousness to God and men. And that is no small thing which involves us in the guilt of perjury, and that vengeance which will follow it. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' And such perfidiousness will bring us under the hand and stroke of divine vengeance; for the Lord threatens he will avenge the quarrel of his covenant, and avenge it with the dreadfulest judgments, sword, and famine, and pestilence, Lev. xxvi. 25, 26. And you may see one part of the threatening executed with severity in David's time: 2 Sam. xxi. 1, 2, Saul had slain some of the Gibeonites, and thereby violated the covenant made with them some hundred years before, in the days of Joshua. And for the breaking of that solemn league, though it was rashly made, and the Israelites were drawn into it by fraud and dissimulation; and it was questionable whether it was lawfully made, since the Lord had commanded to destroy the Canaanites, part of whom by this oath escaped the sentence of destruction; nevertheless the Lord's wrath broke forth against Israel, nor would he be atoned till David had punished that perfidiousness upon Saul's house by the sword, as he had punished it upon all Israel by famine.

There is some comfort, if we fall into the hands of men for our faithfulness; but what comfort can there be if we fall under the hand of God for perfidiousness? The faithful found some comfort and support in a desolate condition, upon this account, because they had been faithful in the covenant, Ps. xlv. 17, 19. Though they were brought into the most desolate condition of horror and darkness, the very next degree to death itself, yet this supports them, they had not dealt falsely, &c. But perfidiousness will leave us under the revenging hand of God, without support. That is

no small thing which will bring us under such a horrid guilt, and under such a dreadful danger.

(2.) If they make us like idolaters. It is no small evil to be like those whom God abhors, in small matters. The Lord will not have the Jews to use the rites of the idolatrous nations. Because the Gentiles worshipped towards the east, he will have his temple built westward. He forbids the shaving of their heads, because he would not have them like the Gentiles. *Longum divortium mandat Deus ab idololatria* (says Tertullian, *de cor. Mil.*) The Lord commands us to keep the greatest distance from idolatry. *In nullo proxime agendum*, We must not in any thing come near it. *Draco etiam terreus de longinquo hominis spiritum absorbet*, The dragon can kill a man at a distance, and therefore need to keep far off. The idolatry of the papists is as odious to God as the idolatry of the Gentiles, and in many respects more abominable; and therefore it is dangerous to borrow their rites, and habits, and forms, lest in imitating them we partake with them, Rev. xviii. 4. To have fellowship with them in their ceremonies and manner of worship, may be ill resented, 2 Cor. vi. 14–17. The Lord is a jealous God: he will have the relics of idolatry to be abolished; those that will retain them, provoke him to jealousy. Though the brazen serpent was set up by his own appointment, yet when it was once abused to idolatry, Hezekiah breaks it down, and is commended for it by the Lord. How much more should the inventions of men be cashiered, after an apparent abuse, when the Lord will not have his own appointments spared, after once they have been idolatrously abused? Hosea ii. 17. Though the names Baali and Ishi signify both of them an husband, and Baali is an appellation of God himself, Isa. liv. 4, yet since it had been abused and given to idols, he would have it no more used. The Lord is so jealous of his service, that he will not endure an abused name to be made use of in his worship. And will it not provoke the Lord to jealousy, to use not only names, but things, which have been popishly and idolatrously abused? Or is it a small matter to provoke the Lord to jealousy?

(8.) If they give scandal, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of others; if they induce others to sin, or confirm them in sin, or hinder their spiritual edification and comfort, they are scandalous. That which hardens the papists in their way, and makes them apt to think, that those who have left them are again returning to them. That which disposeth others to a better liking of popery, and abates their detestation of the Roman antichrist, which is a principal means to secure them against his impostures; that which confirms any in their superstitious, formal, and heartless devotions; as though the worship of God were but a bodily exercise, a lip-labour, or a ceremonious complimenting with God: that which is of this tendency is scandalous, and that which is scandalous is no small matter. The apostle makes it murder, Rom. xiv. 15; and Christ burdens it with dreadful woes, Mat. xviii. 7, Luke xvii. 1, 2.

(4.) If they tend to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel. Rites, and ceremonies, and forms of worship, borrowed from the papists, in use amongst them, seem small things; but the Reformed churches abandon them all, lest the doctrine of the gospel should be hereby endangered. *Utinam vidissent* (says P. Martyr) *qui hæc conservanda censuerunt*; I would they had seen, who would have these things retained, *evangelium, iis manentibus, non satis esse firmum*, that while they continue, the gospel is not secure. The divines of Hamburg, in their epistle to Melancthon, call the popish mixtures in the German *Interim*, though they passed under the name of indif-

ferent things, *semina corruptela*, the seeds of Romish corruption ; intimating, that in time they were like to bring forth a large popish crop. They looked upon them as *cuniculi*, as secret mines, through which the papists would convey themselves under their foundations, and so overthrow their churches. (*Vid.* Park. of the Cross, page 67.)

The divines of Saxony looked upon it as a design of Satan, *qui ab his parvis initiis ceremoniarum*, &c., who, from those small ceremonious beginnings, was making his way to corrupt their doctrine. Now that is no small evil, how small soever it may seem, which tends to corrupt the doctrine of the gospel.

If any ask, why we may not imitate the papists in their ceremonious worship, what hurt, what danger in that ? We may have an answer from Augustine : *In multitudine ceremoniarum periclitatur fides*, the faith itself is endangered by such ceremoniousness. We shall be put to borrow Roman principles, that we may defend Romish practices. Why may we not imitate them in the government and discipline of the church, rather than tie ourselves strictly to primitive rules ? Why, that of Cyprian may deter us from it : 'It cannot be,' says he, 'that Novatus should keep the doctrine of the church, if he break the discipline.'

(5.) If they be a hindrance to the gospel, and the powerful preaching of it, they are no small things ; for that which is an impediment to the gospel strikes at the interest of Christ : for this is the main instrument to advance him in the world, by casting out Satan, and beating down sin, and promoting holiness. Yet so have these small things been managed heretofore, to the great prejudice of the gospel ; being made use of for the thrusting out, or keeping out many able and faithful labourers, and making many congregations desolate, leaving them in darkness, or without any more light than some stinking snuff would afford them, like those Gileadites, Judges xii. 6. They have served, like those Gileadites, to keep the passages of the church, so as no minister, how able or worthy soever, could pass, unless he could pronounce this Shibboleth. That is no small thing which has been the cause of so great mischief to the souls of men, as the want of the gospel comes to. Boniface, the martyr, wished for the golden preachers which were 'in the church when they had but wooden chalices ; he would have counted it an ill bargain to have exchanged golden preaching for wooden ceremonies.

It is the observation of learned and moderate Bucer, one of the principal reformers both here and in Germany, 'That the ceremonies and the preaching of the word, do mutually for the most part expel one another. Where knowledge prevaileth through the preaching of the gospel, there the love of them withereth ; and where the love of these prevail, there knowledge decayeth.' And therefore, in his judgment, though they were small things, they were great mischiefs.

To conclude this, Bellarmine himself is forced to confess this much, that when a man hath more care to adorn the church with outward ornaments than with a preacher, though his mind be not Jewish, yet doth he *representare Judaicam superstitionem*, he acts as superstitiously as a Jew. To hinder the preaching of the gospel, or to discourage or disable the ministers of it for rites and forms, is the way to make these small things intolerable mischiefs, and such as we had better suffer any thing than yield to.

(6.) If they be made engines of persecution ; if they be made use of to vex, and afflict, and oppress, and ruin those that are truly conscientious.

And this is no new or strange thing either here or in other parts. Such small things have been made the instruments of great oppression and cruelty. You may see it in the persecution of the *Interim* by Charles the Fifth in Germany. I instance so far off, because some men see better afar off than near at hand. There divers popish rites were urged as *adiophora*, under the notion of things indifferent. And though they called them small, yet they made them heavy, imposing them under great penalty. And the pressure lay heaviest upon those who were most conscientious, especially the ministers, who, for a modest refusal of what their consciences could not digest, were reproached as turbulent and seditious, deprived of their places and estates, driven out of the country; and so many congregations were laid waste, and left as sheep without a shepherd; and the shepherds were scattered, or left to wolves in priests' habits.

Now let such things as these be counted never so small, they will be found grievous things in the conclusion, which involve men in the guilt of persecution; especially since Christ counts himself persecuted in the sufferings of his people. He resents it, as though himself were reproached, indicted, arraigned, banished, imprisoned, when his servants are thus used for conscience towards God: 'Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me.' It holds as well in doing them hurt as in doing them good.

And thus you see everything is not small that is so accounted. That which seems little may be exceedingly big with guilt. He that will not bear the cross, rather than yield to things thus aggravated, under a pretence that they are matters of small moment, never intends to bear the cross at all.

(7.) When they are instruments of division, and engines to make breaches amongst Christians, as they are, and will be, when they are generally and rigorously imposed. And hence it comes to pass that those are the greatest dividers who most cry out against divisions, and the greatest enemies to unity who are most violent for uniformity. For when they will not be content to worship God, and order the churches, as the apostles did, and will not satisfy themselves with the primitive simplicity, with those few plain things which the Scriptures make necessary, but will urge such things, and so many, as no general concurrence can be expected, they must needs cause a falling off of many particulars, and so they become the greatest schismatics who most declaim against schism; for they are the schismatics, not who withdraw when they have just cause, but who give the cause of withdrawing. As our divines justify themselves against the papists, when they charge them with separating from Rome. We are not *fugitivi*, but *fugati*; they stirred not till they were chased away, and had just cause given of withdrawing from them. When a necessity is laid upon things which are not necessary, and such small things are rigorously imposed, they make great breaches; and if that be a great evil, these things so urged are not a little guilty.

4. The less the evils are for which any bear the cross, the more faithful they are in following Christ. This is to follow him fully, when you will rather suffer than swerve from him in a small matter. He is faithful indeed who will bear a heavy cross rather than yield to the least evil. He is exactly faithful who will not be unfaithful in a little.

This is the greatest trial, and he that quits himself well here will give a signal testimony that he is a good and faithful servant. This shews the greatest love to Christ, gives the greatest encouragement to others, and

will have the greatest reward. For what Christ promises in another case he will make good in this: Luke xix. 17, 'Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities;' Mat. xxiv. 23, 'Thou hast been faithful in a little, I will make thee ruler over much,' *ἐπὶ ἐλάττω ᾧ πιστός*.

END OF VOL. I.