

CHRIST'S GRACIOUS INVITATION TO SINNERS.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—
REV. III. 20.

THESE words are part of an epistle which Christ sent by the apostle John to the church of Laodicea. In it there is matter of conviction, direction, encouragement, admonition.

1. By way of conviction, he shews her sin, her misery, lukewarmness, ver. 15, 16 ; self-conceitedness and carnal confidence, ver. 17 ; none so apt to conceive themselves rich, &c.

2. By way of direction, he shews her the means to escape this misery ; from whom, and how redress may be had, ver. 18.

3. By way of admonition, ver. 19 ; these distempers must be corrected ; do not promise thyself security from my love and indulgence, rather expect the contrary.

4. By way of encouragement, to use the means prescribed, improve the providences offered for recovery, and this, ver. 20. Wherein two propositions, 1, simple, categorical ; 2, compounded, hypothetical.

In the first, 1, The matter of it ; wherein considerable ; (1.) The agent, *Jesus Christ*, described, chap. i. 13, &c. ; 2, his posture, *stand* ; 3, act, *knock* ; 4, the place, *the door*.

2. The momentousness of it, of which he gives us notice by the particle *Behold*. The Holy Ghost uses the word *ἰδοὺ* frequently to stir up, to attend to something wonderful, worthy of admiration ; so Mat i. 23 and ii. 9, Luke xiii. 16. It has the same use here. By fixing an *ecce* in front of this verse, he gives us notice we should attend to that which follows, as worthy of admiration and full of wonder. Hence

Observe, that Christ should thus offer himself to sinners in a way of mercy, is a matter of admiration. It is like himself, whose name is Wonderful. As he is wonderful in himself, his person, his nature, offices, so in his administrations ; and amongst the rest, this is wonderful, that he should condescend to offer himself.

This is worthy to be considered, and the consideration of it should raise our minds to admiration : Ps. viii. 'Lord, what is man?' so Isa. ix. 5. You will see great reason to wonder at this, if you consider, 1, who it is ; 2, To whom it is ; 3, in what manner it is ; 4, what it is he offers.

1. *Who.* Consider (1.) his majesty ; he who is the mighty God ; he who is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5 ; who has the keys of hell and death, ver. 18 ; all power in heaven and earth, who is *Alpha* and *Omega*, &c., ver. 6 ; who is higher than the heavens ; who is exalted far above, &c. ; in comparison of whom the sun is but a lump of darkness, the heavens are but a span, the vastest regions of the world are but as small dust, and all the inhabitants of the earth as grasshoppers, and the glorious angels little better than vanity ; the glory of whose majesty is so far from being expressed, as the apprehensions of the highest angels come infinitely short of it. That this glorious majesty should stoop so low, should condescend thus far, is wonderful, worthy of all admiration.

(2.) His all-sufficiency. He, who has all things within the compass of his own being, whereby he is infinitely happy and glorious ; whose glory, whose happiness, had been nothing less than it is, if man had never been created, and would be nothing less, if all mankind should sink into nothing. He who stands in no more need of us, to add to his glory and happiness, than the angels stand in need of men, which is just nothing ; nay, he stands in no more need of the angels. He was infinitely glorious and happy before any creature had a being, and had continued infinitely so, if the creatures had for ever continued in the state of nonentity, of nothing. *Et infinito nihil addi potest.* Our goodness extends not unto him, no, not that of the angels. He is infinitely above both, Job xxii. 2. All that can be expected from either is to acknowledge him glorious. But an acknowledgment makes no addition, adds nothing to what it sees, only takes notice of what is in him, and would be no less in him, if it were not at all taken notice of. The sun would have no less lustre, would be no less glorious, if no eye ever saw it. So here, the Lord declares how little need he has of man, Ps. l. 9-12. He stands in no more need of man to make him happy and glorious, than the heavens stand in need of a gnat to move them, or the earth of a grasshopper to support it, or the sun of a glow-worm to add to its light and lustre, or Solomon in all his glory of a nest of ants to make it more illustrious.

If the Lord Christ could not be happy or glorious without man, then the wonder would be less in that he condescends thus far unto him ; but since he is infinitely happy and glorious without him, since he can gain, can expect nothing at all by him, stands not in the least need of him, it is wonderful he should stoop so low as to offer himself in such a way unto him.

(8.) His independency. He is so free, so absolute, in his being and actings, as nothing can necessitate him, nothing lay any engagement on him. If man could oblige Christ, if he could deserve anything from him, if he could present any motive effectual to persuade him to offer, &c., the wonder would be less ; but there is not, there cannot be, the least merit, the least motive from without, to engage the Lord to any such thing ; nay, there is exceeding much to disoblige him, to engage him against any such gracious condescension.

But here is the wonder : Christ does this when man is so far from deserving it, so far from engaging him, so far from moving him to it, as he does not so much as request it, not so much as desire it, not so much as think of it. He is 'found of those that sought him not.' He condescends thus far, stoops so low when there is no necessity laid on him, no desert, no motive, no desire, no thought of it, in or from the sons of men.

(4.) His sovereignty. This makes this condescension a wonder. Christ might, before he had otherwise determined, without any prejudice, annihilate all mankind, if it had continued innocent, and might have justified the act,

upon the mere account of his sovereignty. 'Shall I not do what I will with my own?' Mat. xx. 15; but after sin, he might have executed the sentence of death upon the sons of men in the very moment when they receive life; and, as he threatens Ephraim, Hos. ix. 11, might have made the glory of man to fly away as a bird from the birth, womb, conception. He might have crushed this cockatrice in the egg, &c.; and this, too, with advantage to his glory, and thereby much prevented that dishonour which the continuance of our lives occasions. 'It is the Lord's mercy that we,' to whom he is now offering himself, 'were not consumed' in our infancy; a wonder of mercy that we not only live, but live to hear Christ offering life, &c.

What a wonder, when Christ might, with so much glory to his justice, power, wisdom, sovereignty, have destroyed us, he should rather choose to offer salvation!

When there was, as it were, a contest betwixt justice and mercy, and when there was so much reason for the execution of justice, so little or none from us for the tenders of mercy, that the Lord should here interpose his sovereignty to prevent man's ruin, and when there was no other reason to offer him mercy, because he would offer it. As Exod. xxxiii. 19, as if the Lord should say; There is no reason in man, why I should thus condescend to him. I see many weighty reasons why I should utterly, entirely, destroy him; my severity will be justified before all the world, and my justice much glorified thereby. Yet for all this, though there be much reason from my own glory, and all the reason in the world from man himself, why he should perish without the least tender of mercy, yet will I spare, yet will I stoop so low as to offer myself unto him. Oh how full of wonder is this condescension of Christ! How ought we to admire it! How may we be astonished at it, if we consider but who it is that stoops so low; that is the first. More wonderful it will appear, if we consider,

2. *To whom* it is he thus offers, he thus condescends. If the sovereign Majesty of heaven, so all-sufficient, so infinitely glorious, will vouchsafe to stoop to any, we may think in reason he must be some person of worth and honour; no, it is to men, it is to sinners, it is to his enemies. Here is the wonder, this is it that calls for the *Ecce*, the *Behold* in the text. The great God stoops thus low to man. The sovereign Majesty of the world vouchsafes this to a slave. The absolute commander of heaven and earth condescends thus far to an enemy. Behold and wonder, consider this and be astonished, and let your admiration rise by these three steps.

(1.) It is to man, it is not to the angels, it is not to the seraphims of glory; no, it is to man, contemptible man; it is to him who is but dust and ashes; it is to 'man who is a worm, and to the son of man who is but as a worm' compared with Christ, Job. xxv. ; it is to man that Christ thus condescends, in comparison of whom man is not so much as a worm: 'He is but as a moth,' Job. xxvii. 18. Nay, compare him with Christ, he is inferior to this small contemptible creature, Job. iv. 19. 'He is crushed before the moth.' And will Christ wait upon dust and ashes? Will he come to the habitation of a moth, and stand and knock at the door of a worm? Oh what a wonder is this, that the brightness of infinite glory, the mighty God of hosts, should stoop so low! Nay,

(2.) It is to sinners; it is to man by sin made worse than those creeping things, worse than the beasts that perish. Man by creation was but dust, and in this contemptible enough; but by sin he is become polluted dust, and so not only vile, but odious, loathsome, so loathsome, as the Lord is of purer eyes than to behold, cannot endure to see him. A wonder then he will endure to come so near him, that he will stand and knock at the door

of such a leper, so deformed, so loathsome, so infectious! See how he describes those to whom he offers love, ver. 17, Wretched and miserable, twice miserable, extremely miserable, and (which makes the gracious offer wonderful), wilfully miserable. Misery, when it is not voluntary, may move pity; but when it is wilful, when a man throws himself into it, is obstinate against freedom from it, rejects the means offered, contemns the offer, slights him that offers it, boasts of his own happiness, when he is admonished of his misery, will not know it, will not seek redress, will not desire it, will not accept it; who will relieve such misery? Such is the misery of a wretched sinner. He has wilfully brought it upon himself, and wilfully continues in it. Christ in the gospel tells him of his misery: he will not believe him; he says, 'I am rich,' &c. Christ shews the way out of it, he obstinately refuses to walk in it; Christ shews the means, he rejects them; Christ offers happiness, he contemns the offer, and despises Christ himself that offers it. Oh woful misery! And yet Christ will come and knock, and stand waiting, to shew mercy to such wilful wretches; and continues thus, notwithstanding their obstinacy, their contempt of those gracious offers, and of Christ himself that makes them. Oh how wonderful is this!

Add to this; Christ offers it to those that are poor, blind, and naked; so poor, as they have nothing to cover their soul's deformity and nakedness, and yet so blind, as they will not see that which has nothing to cover it. And will Christ offer himself to such poor, blind, loathsome, obstinate, miserable wretches? Oh how wonderful is this! See the woful condition of sinners described by the Lord himself, when Christ offers himself to them; behold it and wonder, Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 6, 8. Will he condescend so far to such wretches, when they lie in their blood and are covered with loathsome pollution? Will he pity those whom no eye pities, who will not pity themselves? Will he spread his garment over such defilement? Shall the time of loathing be the time of his love? Oh how full is every word with wonder! It is to sinners that Christ stoops, to sinners; and that is the worst, the most odious, the most loathsome thing that earth, nay, that hell, can afford; and will he condescend so far to these?

(8.) It is to enemies. Not only to those that are hateful to Christ, but those to whom Christ is hateful; to those that are his utter enemies, enemies in their minds, in their hearts, in their lives; to those that hate Christ, and all his; hate him without a cause, hate him with a mortal hatred, even to the death; hate him implacably, so as they will never cease to hate him till their old hateful hearts be plucked out of their flesh, Ezek. xi. 19; those that join with his deadly enemies, shew themselves enemies to his crown, nay, to his life. Such an enemy is every unregenerate sinner unto Christ; and yet to such enemies does Christ come, and stand, and knock, that he may shew them mercy. To such does he offer himself, communion with himself; and waits till they will open, waits till he may enter, to feast them with his own joys and comforts, and to entertain them as his dearest friends. Oh the wonder of this condescension! If men will not, heaven and earth will, be astonished at it, to consider to whom. It will appear more wonderful if we consider,

8. *How* it is he offers himself. He comes, knocks, stands, entreats, importunately, compassionately, again and again.

(1.) He comes. It is the great concernment of sinners, and their duty too, to come unto Christ, to seek him, and not to look that he should come to them. It is thus with men; they stand upon terms, and will have their inferiors to know their duty, or else suffer for it. How much more might the great God stand upon it, and let men perish if they will not come and

seek to him for happiness? Are they not more concerned than he? Does he lose anything if we perish? Must he condescend to careless, undutiful wretches, as though he were beholden to us for making us happy? Must he condescend further to man than one of us will stoop to another? Will he come to those who will not come to him, though they die for it? Oh how wonderful is this! yet thus it is. While men mind not their greatest concernment, while they neglect their duty, while they take no notice of their distance, yet Christ stands not upon terms; while they refuse or delay to come to him, he vouchsafes to come to them. Oh wonderful condescension!

If we consider the infinite distance betwixt Christ and sinners, we cannot but count it a wonder that he should suffer such vile, loathsome, hateful wretches to come near him, though they were willing to do it. How much then is it to be admired, that he will stoop so low as to come to them, who are unwilling, as they are most unworthy, to come to him! Will Christ come to make them happy, that will not so much as come to him for happiness? Will he come to save them from death, who will not so much as come to him for life? Will he come to seek and save those that are lost, when they will rather lose their souls for ever than come to him for salvation? This is the condition of every unregenerate sinner: 'No man comes to me,' says Christ, 'except the Father draw him,' John vi. 44; and so he complains, 'Ye will not come to me,' &c., John v. 40. Oh if Christ should stand upon terms here, as most justly he might, and the very custom of the world would justify him in it; if he should say, If I be not worth the coming to, if life and happiness be not worth the coming for, why, then, stay where you are, and be without it. Oh if Christ should say thus, why, then, no flesh would be saved. Oh but when careless wretches, forgetful of their souls, unmindful of their duty, regardless of Christ's honour, will not come to him, rather than they shall perish, he condescends, he humbles himself, to come to them. Here is that we may for ever wonder at: the King of glory comes to a slave to make him happy, to a slave who refuses to come to him. The sovereign Lord of the world comes to offer peace to his mortal enemy, whom he could crush into nothing; seeks peace with a sinner that refuses peace with God. The glorious Majesty of heaven vouchsafes to come to dust and ashes, which refuse to move towards him. The holy God, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, comes to deformity and pollution, though it be loathsome to him; comes and offers heaven to that which provokes him to spurn it at the greatest distance from him, even into the lower hell. Would you see this wonder? Look into the text, and behold Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Holy One of Israel, coming unto men, to sinners, to enemies; coming with life, and peace, and happiness, to wretched, condemned, deformed slaves, while they refuse to come to Christ for them. But, which adds to the wonder, behold,

(2.) He knocks. That implies the door is shut (as you shall hear hereafter); but though he finds the door shut, though the heart of the sinner be closed against him, though he finds none ready, since none willing to open to him, yet he knocks. Though he sees the sinner sometimes bolting the door faster against him, sometimes taking no notice of him, sometimes stopping his ears that he should not hear, sometimes withdrawing himself, as counting the gracious importunity of Christ troublesome; always admitting his deadly enemies at their first approach when himself is shut out, yet he knocks.

Oh what a wonder is it, that Christ does not depart in indignation, and swear in his wrath that he will never enter under the roof of such a wretch!

If Christ expected any great advantage by being admitted, then it would be less wonder that he should knock, and continue knocking. But he desires to enter, that he might make that wretch happy that shuts him out. He expects no costly entertainment; he will put the house neither to cost nor trouble; he brings his entertainment with him, and gives the sinner notice of it: Rev. xxii. 12, 'Behold, I come shortly, and my reward is with me.' He comes not empty-handed: 'Length of days is in his right hand, and in his left hand riches and honour,' Prov. iii. 16. He would have entrance, that he might pour out his treasures into the bosom of the sinner; and yet he is shut out, and glad to knock, that he may have admission. He knocks in the ministry of the word; knocks by the law, by the gospel; knocks by the motions of the Spirit, knocks by afflictions, knocks by checks of conscience, knocks by reproofs and admonitions of his people, knocks by variety of providences; and yet seldom, and, if ever, hardly gets admission.

Oh the wonder of Christ's patience! Would any prince on earth do as the Prince of the kings of the earth here does? Coming to the cottage of some peasant to make his condition rich and honourable, would he stay to knock when he sees himself shut out, and none regard to open to him? Yet will the King of kings digest this affront from dust and ashes, and knock for admission though it be denied; whereas he might fire the house about the ears of sinners, and with the breath of his nostrils tumble them into destruction: 'The Lord's ways are not as our ways,' &c.

(3.) He stands. Continues in a posture not easy to us, not becoming the majesty of men in honour. He waits on vile sinners; he is not weary of waiting, he stands. Though the sinner sometimes plainly refuse to admit him, sometimes puts him off with excuses; though he tell him he is not at leisure, he has something else to do than to run to the door; though he bid him come another time, when he is not busy; though he tells him he has other guests, and those that he likes better; though he see him entertaining sin and the world, so taken up with them as himself is not regarded: yet he stands. Oh the wonder of Christ's patience! And what heart will not be filled with admiration that considers who it is that thus stands, and at whose door? 'Behold, I stand;' I, says Christ, I stand, whose seat is the throne of glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high. I, 'at whose name every knee should bow, both of things in heaven, and things on earth,' Philip. ii. 10; I stand, before whom all the glorious angels of God bow down and worship, Heb. i. 6; I stand, at whose feet the glorified, triumphant saints do cast their crowns, Rev. iv. 10; I stand, before whom the glorious host of heaven do fall. I stand waiting upon dust and ashes, waiting upon sinners, the very worst of all my creatures, waiting upon my enemies. I stand while they sit in the seat of scorners, while they lie wallowing in lusts and pleasures, while they sleep securely in ways of sin, not regarding me. I stand without, while base lusts are freely entertained, and the worst of my enemies heartily welcomed within. I stand at the door while Satan has the throne; I am shut out while every vanity is let in. And will Christ stand upon such terms, after so many refusals, affronts, after so much disrespect and contempt cast on him? Yes, he stands, and so continues, till his locks be wet with the dew, and his head with the drops of the night! Oh, who would not stand amazed to see Christ thus stand at the doors, at the hearts of sinners!

(4.) He entreats. Here is a wonderful condescension indeed, that the great God, speaking to the vilest of his creatures (so man is by sin) should use the language of entreaty; that he who commands winds and seas, he who has heaven and earth, angels and all creatures at his command, should

humble himself so to entreat, to beseech his creature! And entreat what? To do him some favour, to help him to some advantage? Then indeed the wonder were less. No; but the Lord is infinitely above any such thing. That which he entreats is, that they would admit him, admit him whose presence is the glory, the happiness of heaven. That they would be reconciled to him, reconciled to him whose favour is life to them, but no advantage at all to himself, but what he can otherwise procure though they perish. He can as easily get himself glory in destroying the proudest of his enemies, the greatest of sinners, as in pardoning any; and yet he beseeches, he stoops so low as to entreat condemned sinners to accept of a pardon, 2 Cor. v. 20. If a prince should do this, if he should come to one of his meanest subjects, by whom he had been highly offended, from whose displeasure he fears no loss, and from whose friendship he expects no advantage, and should entreat him to be reconciled and accept of his favour, would not this be the wonder of all that hear of it? Yet thus does the glorious God to those that have shewed themselves traitors, enemies to his crown and dignity; he comes to them, offers them his favour, his pardon, stands waiting for their acceptance. And when they are slow to accept it (who are most concerned to sue for it), he beseeches, he entreats them to accept of his favour, not to refuse a pardon, whenas without it they perish, soul and body, eternally. Oh how wonderful is this condescension!

(5.) He bewails their unkindness to him, their cruelty to their own souls. When other means are not effectual, he takes up a lamentation. Here is a wonder indeed! He stoops so low as to take the weakest of our infirmities that can without sin be expressed. When sinners regard him not, his knocking, his entreating; when they continue obstinate against him, and resolute to continue in sin, notwithstanding all the means used to reclaim them, he lifts up his voice and weeps over them.

When he prevails not by coming, by standing, by knocking, by waiting, by beseeching, why this is his grief, his sorrow, and he vents his sorrow in tears. Behold the compassions of the Lord to obstinate sinners, as he expresses it over Jerusalem. Behold it, and wonder! He represents himself as clothed with the weakest of man's infirmities; he falls a-weeping, Luke xix. 41, 42. Behold the wonderful compassions of a dear Saviour. Now if one should ask him, as he did the woman, John xx. 15, Blessed Lord, 'what seekest thou? why weepest thou?' we may suppose this would be returned: Why, I seek not myself, I weep not for myself, there is no need of that; I shall be infinitely, eternally glorious; though sinners be not gathered, I am infinitely happy, whatever become of them. But this is the grief of my soul, that sinners will rather cast their souls into hell than give me admission into their hearts; that they will rather force me to forsake them than forsake their sins; that they will rather part with me, who am their life and hope of glory, than part with the world, than part with their lusts, which will certainly ruin them. When I come, they do not admit me; when I knock, they open not to me; when I stand, they do not regard me; when I entreat, and beseech, and promise, they do not believe me. I know what this will cost them, it will be bitterness in the end; and if my compassions move them not, nothing remains for them but weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever. This he foresaw in Jerusalem, and this he foresaw in others disobeying the gospel as they did. And hereupon his bowels were turned within him, his compassions vented themselves in tears. And O, did the Lord weep for them who will not weep for themselves? Oh how wonderful is this compassion! how full of wonder this condescension!

(6.) He does this frequently, again and again. He comes, and though

sinner provoke him to depart, he comes again; he knocks, and though they will not open, he knocks again; he stands, and though they force him to remove, he returns and stands again; he entreats, and when he is not regarded, he doubles his entreaties, he enforces them, by presenting his tears, his blood, to the view of sinners in the gospel. The preaching hereof, in season and out of season, is his appointment, that therein sinners may see him daily set forth as crucified before their eyes, that they may behold him stretching out his hands all the day long unto them, that they may hear him, as though he were now, as in the days of his flesh, mourning, complaining, and weeping over them, Luke xiii. 34. How often would the Lord have gathered you! how often has he come, knocked, stood, waited, entreated, lamented! If it be a wonder that he will condescend to any of these for once, how wonderful is it that he should condescend to these so often!

This will be yet more wonderful if ye consider,

4. *What* it is that he offers. Behold what it is the great God offers to men, to sinners, to enemies, with such condescension, affection, compassion, importunity, and you will see matter of highest admiration. He offers (1.) his love; (2.) himself; (3.) his blood, and all that he purchased by it; (4.) his comforts; (5.) his glory; and (6.) his kingdom. He comes, to give these; he stands, to offer these; he knocks, that these may be admitted; he entreats, that these may be accepted; he laments, when sinners regard not these offers. And this day by day, year after year; and that to those that have made themselves the vilest of his creatures. Let all these things meet together in your thoughts, and you will apprehend Christ wonderful. You will get some acquaintance with the employment of heaven, admiration of Christ in his tenders of mercy to sinners. You will see there was reason to begin this verse with a note of admiration, *Behold!*

(1.) His love. Such a love as it is a wonder any creature should be the object of it; more wonderful that Christ should offer love to the vilest of creatures. Consider what love it is that Christ offers.

[1.] An ardent love. Many waters could not quench this love. Not the floods of reproaches, injuries, sufferings from men; not the waves and billows of God's wrath and indignation. All these went over him, yet did this love flame forth in the midst thereof; nor was it ever more ardent than in the height of sufferings.

[2.] A transcendent love. No love found in the breast of any creature is worthy to be compared with it. We may say of it with more reason than David of Jonathan's, 2 Sam. i. 26, 'His love was wonderful, passing the love of women.' Greater love than this was never visible in the world, John xv. 13. His love, like his ways and thoughts, is far above the creature's, John xv. 9. There is not an equality, but there is resemblance. No love comes so near the love of the Father to the Son as the love of Christ to his people; greater love than a man bears to himself, more love than Christ shews to heaven or earth. He left heaven to manifest, to offer this love. He refused all the kingdoms of the earth, offered to stop the current of this love, Mat. iv. 8-10. If [thou wilt] desist from this great work, render thyself incapable of redeeming man, and so lay aside the thoughts of loving him.

[3.] An everlasting love, John xiii. 1; Isa. liv. 10. Such a love it is that Christ offers to such creatures. He stays not till they sue for it, but offers it; and that to worms, sinners, enemies; those who have no love in them to Christ when he makes this offer, no, nor anything lovely. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, nothing but bruises, &c.; the

face of his soul covered with a filthy leprosy ; as full of noisome sores as Lazarus's body, whose sores the dogs licked ; full of more loathsome boils than Job's body, when he sat in the ashes and scraped himself. A soul polluted with sin is far more loathsome in the eye of the holy God than that which is most loathsome to us in the world. And will Christ offer love to that which is so loathsome ? such a love to such a deformed wretch as man is become by sin, especially seeing the soul is as full of hatred as it is of deformity ? Will the glorious Majesty of the world, the brightness of infinite glory, the beauty of heaven, the wonder of angels, love such deformity, love that so much which is so much an enemy to him ? Will he come and stand, and knock, and sue, and entreat that this love may be accepted ? Oh how wonderful ! How may we break forth into admiration with the Psalmist, Ps. viii. 4, ' Lord, what is man ? ' What is he but a lump of pollution, a mass of deformity, as full of hatred to Christ as a toad of poison ? And is this a thing to be loved, to be loved of Christ, to be loved with such a love ? Would it not be a wonder if such a creature should prevail for any love from Christ if he should sue for it to eternity ? Oh what wonder is it then that Christ should of his own accord make the offer !

(2.) Himself. It is not some lesser expression of love, but it is the highest, the greatest that heaven can afford. It is himself, it is no less than himself, which is more than ten thousand worlds, that he offers. He offers himself to be theirs by covenant, by marriage covenant, and that for ever ; to be thine assuredly, intimately, eternally ; to be thy God, thy friend, thy husband, thy Jesus, thy Saviour, thy Christ, thy king, thy priest and prophet, thy advocate, thy intercessor. Oh what infinite riches is there in this little pronoun *thine* ! Canst thou say, Christ is *mine* ? Why, this is more than if thou couldst say, All the treasures of the world are mine, all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them are mine. Why, this is it that Christ offers, no less than himself, to be thine for ever. This is it which he offers when he stands and knocks at thy heart : Open to me ; I will be thy God, the Lord thy Redeemer. Though thou hast rebelled against me, and followed after strange gods, yet now renounce those idols, open to me, I will be thy God, and that by covenant more durable than heaven and earth.

Open to me, thy Redeemer will be thy husband. Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, thy unkindness, disrespects, disobedience, ingratitude, disloyalty shall not part us. I will marry thee to myself in an everlasting covenant that shall never be broken ; I will rejoice over thee as a bridegroom over his bride.

Open to me, I will make over no less than myself unto thee. Thou shalt have that which it is the glory and happiness of heaven to have, myself, communion with me ; I will come and sup with thee, and thou with me. Art thou poor ? Open to me ; the commander of heaven and earth will be thine to enrich thee. Art thou vile and contemptible ? The King of glory will be thine to honour thee. Art thou deformed ? The Sun of righteousness will be thine to beautify thee. Art thou distressed ? The great Redeemer will be thine to relieve thee. Art thou weak ? The Lord of hosts will be thine to strengthen thee. Art thou dejected ? The God of all consolations will be thine to comfort thee. Art thou in darkness ? The bright Morning Star will be thine to enlighten thee. Art thou wretched and miserable ? The Fountain of bliss and happiness will be thine to enhappy thee. Thus Christ offers himself ; and oh how wonderful is it, that he should come to vile worms, and knock, and wait, and entreat that himself may be accepted !

(8.) His blood. He offers not himself in a common, easy, cheap way,

but himself as dying for those that will open to him, Eph. v. 2. He offers that which the sons of men will least part with, skin for skin, &c. He offers his life, his blood, Rev. i. It is not silver, or gold, or wealth, or honours only that he offers; it is something of more value than sceptres, or crowns, or earthly kingdoms: it is 'his precious blood,' 1 Pet. i. 18. Take those things which the sons of men do most value, and they are but corruption compared with what Christ offers: it is his blood. So transcendently precious is the blood of Christ, as all the treasures of the earth are so vile compared with it, as that which the Scripture counts vilest, as corruption itself. Christ comes, and stands, and knocks, to offer his blood, when he comes to the hearts of sinners. He comes, as he is described, coming from Bozrah: Isa. lxiii. i. 2, 'with dyed garments, red in his apparel; with garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat, dyed with his own blood.' This he offers, and all those infinitely precious things which are the purchase of his blood. If thou wilt open, all shall be thine. Is the wrath of God kindled against thee? My blood shall pacify him. Is the justice of God incensed against thee? My blood shall satisfy it. Is heaven shut against thee? Open to me, my blood shall open it. Is thy conscience a terror to thee? My blood shall speak peace to it. Fearest thou any thing? My blood shall secure thee. Wantest thou, desirest thou any thing? My blood shall purchase it, procure it for thee. This Christ offers. He will not think his blood too dear for sinners that will open to him. Oh what wonder is it that Christ will offer his blood for vile worms; nay, his blood for his enemies; that he will come, and knock, and stand, and wait, and entreat, that his precious blood may be applied, may be accepted! If a physician, having a patient desperately sick, and knowing no other remedy for him but his own blood, should come, and knock, and entreat, and after affronts and repulses, and many expressions of hatred and contempt from the patient, should yet continue importunate that he would accept of his own blood for his cure, would not this astonish all that should hear of it? Much more wonderful is this, that the King of glory, though despised and hated by sinners, should offer his own blood to save them from death; and when the offer is slighted and neglected, should yet knock, and call, and cry, and beseech, that it may be accepted. Oh, if any thing affect us, this must needs be wonderful in our eyes.

(4.) His comforts. Those comforts which flow from his presence, in whose presence is fulness of joy. Those joys which spring from communion with himself. 'I will come in, and sup with him,' &c. The well-spring of heavenly joys, the fountain itself will flow in, if the sinner will but open. And this is it that Christ intends, when he comes, knocks, and stands, and waits, that joys unspeakable and glorious may fill those souls who have been a grief, an affliction, a dishonour to him. You have made him a man of sorrows, he offers you everlasting joys. You have given him gall and wormwood, he brings you the foretastes of heaven, the first-fruits of the land of promise. He stands, and calls, and entreats, that this may be accepted. Oh how wonderful is this!

(5.) His glory and kingdom, John xvii. 22. He offers glory to dust and ashes; his own glory to despised worms. Such glory as himself enjoys, not equal to it, yet much resembling it. When David promised Mephibosheth the honour to sit at his table, how is he transported! How does he express his sense thereof! 2 Sam. ix. 8. Oh how much better does this admiration, this expression become those to whom Christ offers his glory! What is thy servant, that thou shouldst take notice of him? What is dust and ashes? What are poor worms, that they should sit at thy table as one of

the King's sons? That the great God should offer this great glory to vile creatures, and that by way of entreaty, oh how wonderful is it! Not only to sit at his table (which Mephibosheth, though a king's son, thought so great an honour from a king), but to sit on his throne, ver. 2; and now we are so high, as admiration should be raised to the highest. The King of glory stands, that vile sinners may sit; stands knocking at their doors, hearts, that they may sit on his throne, on his own throne; entreats those who are enemies to accept of his kingdom, his own kingdom.

Use 1. Information. This shews the reason why sinners are so much, so exceedingly affected at their first conversion. No wonder if they be astonished, transported with admiration; for herein they have a clear discovery of these wonders; a deep sense of their own vileness, misery, enmity against Christ; a clearer view of his transcendent excellencies; a more tender resentment of his condescensions in coming, standing. They are as one born blind; when he recovers his sight, every thing almost is a wonder to him, much more the sun. When men's eyes are opened, all the carriage of this business is wonderful, especially Christ. Why do they see so much to astonish, transport them, whereas others see little or nothing, or are little or nothing affected with what they discover in Christ, in themselves? Why, till converted, they are in darkness; but upon conversion are 'translated into marvellous light,' 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Use 2. Reproof. Those that slight, neglect, despise these condescensions of Christ in offering these things. Are things so wonderful thus to be undervalued? Do ye neglect to hear? Regard ye not, when Christ comes, knocks, stands, entreats? Can you withstand all his importunity, and resolve for sin, put him off with excuses, delays? Oh take heed! You take the course to provoke the Lord to make your plagues wonderful, Dent. xxviii. 59.

Use 3. Exhortation. Since it is a wonder in itself, let it be so in our eyes. Be much in meditating on those things that represent Christ wonderful. Consider him, how glorious, all-sufficient, &c. Consider thy own vileness, sinfulness, how wretched. Let these things lie on thy thoughts till they affect thy heart, till they raise thy mind to admire, adore, as the queen of Sheba, 1 Kings x. 5. Consider how often Christ has come, how long stood, how much entreated, how many motions, providences, convictions. Consider what he offers, as Elizabeth, Luke i. 43; and then break forth in praises, rise up into admiration, fall down astonished at the wonders of Christ's condescension. This is the employment of heaven; hereby you will do the will of God as it is done in heaven. This is it which Christ calls for by the first word, *Behold*.

Pass we from the consequence of this proposition, *Behold*, to the matter of it; wherein, 1, the person; 2, his posture; 3, the place; 4, his action. The person is Christ; his posture, standing; the place, man's heart; that is the door, and there he knocks. These, put together, afford two observations, one implied, the other expressed. That implied is this:

Obs. The hearts of sinners are shut against Christ; every soul by nature is closed against Christ. If it were not, there would be no need for Christ to stand and knock, there would be no ground to represent him in such a posture.

That the strength and evidence of this truth may appear, we will take it in pieces, and so explain and confirm it by opening and proving two propositions contained in it. 1. Christ is *extra*; 2. *exclusus*. 1. Christ is without, there he stands, there he knocks; 2. The sinner is unwilling to let him in. He is not only without, but shut out; therefore he stands, he knocks.

1. Christ is *without*, he is not in the soul of a sinner naturally. While a sinner is in the state of nature, he is without Christ, so described, Eph. ii.

12. We are born without Christ, live without him, nor has he place in us, till an almighty power, which the Lord usually puts forth in the ministry of the gospel, make way for him in our hearts. Till conversion, till the Lord open the heart, as he did Lydia's, Christ is not present in the sinner, nor entertained by him; he is not present in respect of his special and gracious presence (so understand it).

He is not in the mind, he is not present there as a prophet, to instruct, to enlighten it; darkness covers the face of it; the Sun of righteousness shines not there with a saving, a spiritual ray; the Day-star does not there arise. Though he may apprehend much by natural light, yet nothing spiritually, savingly, effectually. The things of the Spirit of God are not discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14

Christ is not in the will, he is not present there as a king; his throne is not there established, his sceptre is not there advanced; the heart submits not to him, complies not with his laws, is not ruled by him, breaks his bonds, casts his cords from him, says, I will not have this man to rule over me.

Christ is not in the conscience; he is not present there as a priest; his blood has not yet been there sprinkled, does not purify it, mollify it; does not free it from guilt, nor make it tender. If it scruple at sin, restrain from it, accuse for it, the love of Christ, the blood of Christ, does not constrain it so to do; it is from some other enforcement, some more foreign consideration.

Christ is not entertained; other things are admitted before him, take place of him. And this leads me to the reason of this point.

Christ is without, because the soul is so taken up with other guests, as there is no place left for him. The like reason why Christ is not admitted into the heart of a natural man, as there was why he was not admitted at his birth into the inn, Luke ii. 7. Christ finds no better entertainment, when he comes spiritually to a sinner's heart, than when he came in the flesh to Bethlehem. He lodges without, because there is no room within. The soul of a sinner is full of other guests; sin, and the world, and Satan have taken up every room in the soul. The mind, the will, the heart, the conscience, they are full of sin, full of corruption, crowded with multitudes of lusts; and *intus existens prohibet alienum*, so much corruption within keeps Christ without. Man brings into the world a soul full of corruption, a nature wholly depraved, a heart abounding with all manner of lusts, full of pride, unbelief, worldliness, uncleanness; full of rebellion, obstinacy, security, self-love: these and many other so take up the heart as there is no room left for Christ; these must be whipped out before the soul can become a fit temple for Christ; it must be emptied of these in some degree before the glory and power of Christ's presence will fill the tabernacle of the soul.

While these strong men armed keep the house, as Luke xi. 21, Christ stays without, these cannot rule together; no serving of two such masters; no entertaining of these so differing guests; one heart cannot hold them, because these lusts of corrupted nature are in possession and rule within, Christ is without. That is the first.

2. Christ is *shut out*. He is not only without, but the sinner is unwilling to let him in. The heart is closed against him, and many means are used to make it fast, many bolts and locks are added to make it sure. Were not the heart closed, the door shut, Christ would not need to knock; were not the sinner unwilling to open, Christ would not be put to stand knocking, the heart would open to him at his first approach, at his first knock. But the Holy Ghost, by these expressions, plainly declares to us the sinner's un-

willingness to open to Christ. The reasons of it are many, I shall but mention three ; prejudice against, distrust of, disaffection to, Christ.

(1.) Prejudice against Christ. This shuts Christ out of the mind, makes the sinner unwilling to admit him into the outer room. The mind of every man naturally is full of prejudice against Christ ; it is part of that enmity of which the apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 7. Hearing in the gospel upon what terms Christ will be admitted, it forthwith judges his admission dangerous, troublesome, or needless, and so shuts him out. This prejudice shews itself by judging it.

[1.] Dangerous. If I open to Christ upon these terms, I must forego all my unjust gains, all my forbidden pleasures ; I must be no more wanton, intemperate, or revengeful, how much pleasure soever I have taken herein ; I must not commit the least sin to gain the greatest advantage ; I must cut off every dear lust, though it be to me as my right hand, &c. ; I must not leave a hoof behind if Christ be admitted ; nay, I must not only part with my pleasing and gainful sins, but be ready to sacrifice my estate, credit, liberty, life, when he calls for them. Hereupon the sinner thinks Christ offers him loss when he offers to come in upon these terms, and so shuts him out.

[2.] Troublesome. If I open to Christ, I must bid adieu to my carnal ease, humours, interests ; I must be diligent in mortifying duties, which are so irksome to flesh and blood ; I must spend so much time in prayer, meditation, self-examination ; I must be always watchful over my heart, thoughts, ways, senses ; I must beat down my body, bring it into subjection ; maintain a continual combat with my own corrupt nature ; expose myself to the reproaches and scorn of the world, by strictness, scrupulousness in matters which they judge of small moment ; I must live in continual exercise of repentance, self-denial, mortification. These, and such like, Christ requires if he be admitted. And so the sinner looks upon him as a troublesome guest, and shuts him out.

[3.] Needless. Think it not needful to admit Christ further than they have done. They are baptized in his name, submit to his ordinances, profess him openly, have a name to live ; sometimes pray, read, and hear his word ; order their outward conversation, as they think, inoffensively ; so conclude they are Christians good enough, that it is not needful further to admit or entertain Christ, and so close their hearts against him, when he should enter to purpose and take full possession of them. What needs all this stir ? Cannot a man be a Christian, &c., except so strict, precise ? This is to be hypocrites. Do ye not see what becomes of them that profess and pretend to so much ? Christ is not so scrupulous as some men would make him. He may be in my heart as well as theirs, though I make not so great a show. How many content themselves with such thoughts as these, and are ready to express it upon occasion ? Prejudice against the holy ways of Christ makes them willing to judge, that an outward profession of Christ is a sufficient admission of him ; account more needless, are not willing to open to him further, and so indeed shut him out. This is the first bolt whereby the soul is made fast against Christ.

(2.) Distrust, unbelief. This shuts him out of the will. Man by nature has neither that faith, which is consent to receive Christ as he is offered, nor that faith which is an assent to what Christ has delivered. The first is a belief on Christ, which the Scripture calls *πιστεύειν εἰς τὸν Χριστόν*. The latter is belief of Christ, which we call *πιστεύειν τῷ Χριστῷ*. Every man by nature is defective of both. The consent to receive Christ on gospel terms, is either the essence of saving faith, or a property inseparable from it ; for

to believe on his name, and to receive him, pass for one and the same thing, John i. 12. Now, unbelief in this sense is such a bar to keep out Christ, as nothing but an almighty power can remove, Eph. i. 19.

Now that a natural man consents to receive Christ upon the terms offered, will appear further, in that he assents not to these terms as delivered in the gospel. The terms on which Christ will be admitted, are laid down by Christ himself, Mat. xvi. 24. Let him renounce every sin forbidden, though as dear to him as himself; this is to deny himself. Then let him endure every suffering for my sake inflicted; this is to take up his cross. Let him practise every duty commanded, even as Christ was obedient in all things; this is to follow him. These are the terms. Now, either men will not believe that Christ will not enter but upon these terms, fancy some of their own, more suitable to their corrupt inclinations, humours, interests, or if they yield that they are Christ's terms, yet they will not believe that they are so pleasing, so advantageous as the gospel declares them to be. Whatever he say, if this be his burden, they will not believe it is light; if this be his yoke, they cannot believe it is easy, and upon this account reject these terms; and since he will not enter upon any other terms, they shut him out. Thus does unbelief close the hearts of sinners against Christ. That is the second.

(8.) Disaffection to Christ. Men naturally are so well pleased with the guests that they have already entertained, as they are loath, by admitting Christ, to dispossess them. This shuts Christ out of the heart. They are more in love with the world than with Christ, take more pleasure in fulfilling their lusts than they can expect delight in communion with Christ. They affect not spiritual enjoyments, relish not those pleasures which Christ promises upon his admission, value not Christ's offer to sup with them in comparison of what the world and their lusts afford them. Hence, Mat. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother, &c., is not worthy of me.' He hereby refuses Christ, prefers what he enjoys before what Christ offers, shews himself unworthy of Christ's company by excluding him, James iv. 4. He that is so much a friend to the world as he will not cast it out of his heart for Christ, hereby shews himself an enemy to Christ by shutting him out.

Use 1. Information. This shews us the misery of every man by nature. Christ is not in him. He shuts him out, in whom is all the hopes and comforts and happiness of sinners. How miserable is he who is without happiness, without hopes of it! He that shuts out Christ excludes all happiness, all hopes of it. Yet this is the condition of every man in the state of nature; he is without Christ, Christ is not in him. Oh, take notice of the misery of this condition, that you that are in it may be affected with it, that you whom mercy has delivered from it may pity those who languish under it! But because *generalia non pungunt*, we are not affected with generals, take a survey of this misery in some particulars. He that is in the state of nature, he that excludes Christ, is—

1. In the possession of Satan. Christ and Satan, they have *divisum imperium*, they divide the world betwixt them. Where Christ rules not, there Satan has his throne. He that shuts out Christ shuts in Satan. The soul that is not in the possession of Christ is possessed by the devil. And oh how large are his possessions! You think a diabolical possession dreadful. Why, this is the dreadful estate of every unrenewed man; Satan has possession of him! That this may be evident, observe the Scripture speaks of a double diabolical possession: one corporal, when Satan enters into the bodies of men, and there immediately exercises his power by or upon them;

of such there is mention, Mat. iv. 24, viii. 28, xv. 22. Another spiritual, when Satan enters into the souls of men, and there exercises his power by and upon them. And this is the possession we speak of. Satan does thus possess the soul of every natural man. So he did Ananias, Acts v. 8, *ἰσχυροῦσεν*, he was possessor. So he possessed Judas, Luke xxii. 3. Not that Satan was not in him before, but because he did then more manifest his presence by that devilish act. As Christ is said to be with his people in special (though always in them), because he manifests his presence by some special influence or assistance. Satan is always in the hearts of sinners, though he manifest his possession of them at some time more than other. And lest we should think this diabolical possession of the soul to be peculiar to some notorious sinners, such as Judas was, the apostle speaks it both of himself and of all the Ephesians, before they were regenerate (Eph. ii. 2, 8), and all disobedient sinners. He is in all disobedient sinners, and he works in them. He is in their souls, in like manner as he is in the bodies of those miserable creatures whom he possesses; for the apostle uses the same word. Those that are bodily possessed are called *ὑποζυγούμενοι*, and those souls that are in the possession of that spirit *τοῦ νῦν ὑποζυγούντος*. The spirits that possess men are called *ὑποζυγοῦντες*. Satan has as much possession of the souls of sinners as he has of the bodies of those we call demoniacs. Nay, soul possession is more dangerous, makes a man more miserable than bodily possession. This is more sensible indeed, but the misery of soul possession is upon this account also greater, because the sinner is senseless of it. What more miserable spectacle can you see than that man bodily possessed! Mark ix. 18, 20, 22, 26. What more rueful than to see the devil tear and rend that wretched creature, sometimes casting him into the waters and into the fire! to see him foaming, and gnashing of his teeth, and pining away, and brought to the gates of death! This is a woeful sight indeed, and such as may draw tears from and strike compassion into the heart, not only of a father, but of a stranger. It is sad indeed. Ay! but there is one spectacle more woful, if we could see it. A soul possessed by Satan, grievously vexed, wofully rent and torn by him, sometimes cast into the water, sometimes into the fire, into such dangerous evils as are more dreadful than any water or fire. Satan exercises more tyranny, more cruelty, upon the souls of sinners than upon possessed bodies, only we see it not, and therefore are so slow to believe it, so insensible of it, so little affected with it. But the misery is nevertheless for the sinner's senselessness; nay, it is the more, his misery is so deep, sense cannot reach it. And this is the misery of every soul that shuts out Christ; he hereby makes sure Satan's possession. Oh, consider it, ye that are yet in the state of nature! Till Christ be admitted, you are under the power, in the possession of Satan. When the heart opens, then, and not till then, is the soul 'turned from darkness to light,' &c. Till then Satan dwells in him, works in him, uses him as his slave, oppresses him as a tyrant, employs him as his own, has full possession of his soul.

2. Under the curse of the law, without redemption. For it is Christ only that redeems, Gal. iii. 13. And those that are without Christ are under all the curses and threatenings, without redemption. Every sin is attended with many curses, and every curse (if we were sensible of it) more intolerable than the hills and mountains. Therefore, when the Lord comes to execute them, and the soul is awakened out of the lethargy whereinto sin brings it, he shall call to the mountains to fall upon him, and the hills to cover him. The Scripture speaks no peace to such a sinner. What peace to that rebel who shuts the Prince of peace out of his soul? The gospel speaks no comfort to such a sinner. What comfort when

Christ, the God of all comfort, the spring of all consolations, is rejected? There is no promise wherein he can claim interest, for all promises are in Christ yea and amen. No comfort, no peace, no promise of either, while Christ is shut out; nothing but curses and threatenings are the portion of such a sinner, and no redemption from these till Christ be entertained.

3. Under the wrath of God without mercy. The wrath of God abides upon him while Christ is not entertained by him, John iii. 36. The children of disobedience are children of wrath, Eph. ii. This is their portion. And who are children of disobedience but those who will not hearken to Christ when he calls, not open when he knocks, not entertain him when he entreats for admission? Their portion is wrath: it is entailed on them; no cutting it off till Christ come in. As all the ways of God are mercy to those who admit Christ, so all his ways are wrath to those that reject him. Even those things that are given to others in love are sent to them in wrath; all their enjoyments, all his dispensations. Their table is a snare, their prayer an abomination, the word the savour of death. Prosperity hardens their hearts. Afflictions, the first drops of that deluge of wrath, which will one day overwhelm all those that persevere in rejecting, excluding Christ.

4. Under the sentence of condemnation without pardon. He that believes not is condemned, John iii. 18, 19. This is the condemnation, light is come, the gospel is preached, Christ is discovered. You see him standing, waiting; you hear him knocking, entreating for admission; yet are so much in love with the works of darkness as to shut out the light, shut out Christ the light of the world, the glory of heaven. Here is ground enough of condemnation. No wonder if such a man be condemned already, if the sentence of eternal death be past! Does not that man deserve to die without mercy, who shuts him out of doors that brings him a pardon? All men by nature are condemned persons; Christ is sent to some with a pardon; he comes, stands, knocks, entreats condemned sinners to open to him and accept of this pardon, this pardon which cost him so dear, his own life, his dearest blood. Oh, but sinners will not hearken, will not regard, will not believe his report, are not willing to receive him; this is not to believe him; and therefore are condemned already, yea, and will continue so to eternity if they continue to shut out Christ; for what pardon without him?

5. Near the confines of hell, without a Saviour. Upon the brink of that pit which is bottomless destruction. Every one that runs on in sin is posting towards eternal ruin. Every sin is a step towards hell, and every act of wickedness sinks the sinner some degrees lower. And who shall save him from going down into the pit, since Christ, who only can do it, is rejected? It is Jesus only that delivers sinners 'from the wrath to come,' 1 Thess. i. 10. There is wrath coming apace towards sinners, and they are posting towards it; there will be a dreadful meeting, except Christ interpose; and what hopes of that while Christ is shut out and denied admission?

Oh consider this, all you who prefer your sin before Christ; you have long heard the voice of Christ in the preaching of the gospel; who have heard him knock at your hearts in the ministry of the word, and have not yet been persuaded to part with those sins that keep him out. Consider what it is to be in the possession of Satan without a redeemer, under the curse of the law without an intercessor! And if this estate appear miserable, if you have any sense of soul misery, any desire to be freed from it,

freed from Satan's power and possession, &c., make haste, delay not, open forthwith unto Christ, who stands and knocks for admission. Turn out those woful intruders that have kept Christ out of possession; abandon those lusts, renounce those sins that have closed your hearts against Christ. Then shall it be well with you, who are now in the midst of woes and miseries; then shall Satan be cast out, and the prince of the world judged; then shall the curse be turned into a blessing; then shall the wrath of God, which now overshadows you, clear up into beams of mercy; then shall the sentence of condemnation give place to a gracious pardon; then shall you be brought from the confines of hell and the shadow of death into the suburbs of heaven and glory. Oh that to-day you would hear his voice, who still calls on you, who still knocks and entreats you would open to him! Oh that you would hear his voice while it is called to-day, lest he 'swear in his wrath you shall not enter into his rest;' lest he swear in his wrath he will never enter into your souls.

Use 2. Examination. Try whether you be those who keep Christ out of your hearts, whether your souls be closed against him. Those that thus refuse Christ are in a miserable condition, under the power of Satan, &c., 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Therefore it highly concerns every of us seriously to examine whether this be our state. Oh, but how shall I know? By these two particulars:

1. If Christ be admitted, thou hast had experience of a great alteration. We seldom read of Christ's coming in Scripture, but we find some great alterations attending. When he came to the temple, Mat. xxi. 10, 12, see what follows. Here is work indeed; he seems to turn all upside down; he rectifies disorders to purpose. Indeed, while the strong man armed keeps the house, all is in peace; but when Christ, a stronger than he, comes and disarms him, casts him out, takes possession of the place, then the sinner's peace is broken. This is not done without contest and opposition. The soul will find a great alteration, it will not be so with it as formerly. Malachi prophesies of Christ's coming to his temple; see how he describes it, Mal. iii. 1-8. He makes clean work where he comes; the soul is purified and refined when he comes. He sits in the soul as a refiner. When Christ comes, old things pass away; old lusts, old sinful practices, old hearts, old ways, they are abandoned. The refiner's fire consumes them, all things become new. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,' 2 Cor. v. 17. It is as true the other way. If Christ be in any man, he is a new creature; for this in-being is mutual. When the soul is in Christ, Christ is in the soul. Are ye new creatures? Are all things become new? New judgments, new apprehensions, new thoughts, new hearts, new motions, new inclinations, new consciences, new affections, new delights, new desires, new designs, new conversations. Such a change there is when Christ comes. If you be the same men as formerly, if you be not thoroughly renewed, you may conclude Christ is yet shut out.

2. If you admit Christ, you admit his word. If the word of Christ take no place in you, then Christ himself has no place in you. Where the word is shut out, Christ is shut out; where that abides, he abides, 1 John ii. 24. These two are joined together by Christ, John xv. 7. Does the word abide in your souls? Is it effectually admitted into every faculty? Does it abide in your minds, to enlighten them; in your thoughts? Is it your meditation? Or are you strangers to meditation? Can other things be carefully ruminated, and what Christ speaks in the ministry of the word easily forgotten?

Does it abide in your consciences, to convince you of sin, and restrain you

from sin, and stir you up to the practice of what you hear? If it take not hold on your conscience, but you go on in sin, and neglect the duties urged upon you notwithstanding, how does it then abide?

Does it abide in your wills, to bring them to a conformity with the will of Christ there revealed, to lead them to a compliance with what is well-pleasing in his sight?

Does it abide in your affections, to quicken your affections, to kindle your love, to stir up your zeal, to fill you with delight, to possess you with hatred against sin, to melt you into sorrow for sin, to raise you to high esteem of Christ and spiritual things? If so, it argues the word abides in you, and consequently Christ himself.

But if the word of Christ, which you daily hear preached, pass from you as words of course, pass away as a tale that is told, as an ordinary discourse; if it be no more regarded, no more remembered; if you be no more affected with it, no more ruled by it; if, after sermon is ended, you can lay aside thoughts of it as that which little concerns you; if you can shut out conviction, withstand reproofs, run into those very sins which you hear reproved, neglect exhortations, and neglect those duties to which Christ by his word exhorts you: if it be thus, the word is shut out, Christ himself is shut out. If it be thus with any, I have a sad message for them, but it is a message from the Lord. I must tell them, or be unfaithful. Their hearts are closed against Christ, they are yet in Satan's possession, under the curse of the law, under the wrath of God, under the sentence of condemnation, in the confines of hell, and will be till Christ be admitted.

3. *Observation.* Though Christ find the hearts of sinners closed against him, yet he *stands at the door and knocks*.

For explication, let us inquire, 1, what is meant by the door; 2, what by knocking, and how Christ may be said to knock; 3, what by standing, what this expression signifies. For these are all metaphorical, and something is denoted, intended, that the words do not properly signify. Christ does not stand and knock, as men do at a door when they would be let in. We must not understand any bodily approach, or any corporeal action or posture; for Christ, as to his body and human nature, is in heaven, there circumscribed, and will be there contained till the restitution of all things. Yet though he do not stand and knock properly as we do, yet something he does which much resembles our knocking, our standing. Some likeness there is betwixt what Christ does that he may be admitted into the hearts of sinners, and that which we do when we would be admitted into the house of a friend. There is some ground for these metaphorical expressions, and when we know what this is the words will be clear. And this is it we now inquire after.

1. By *door*, understand the heart of man, as I told you before. The heart comprising two faculties, the will and understanding; the will principally, for the two principal acts of the will, consent and dissent, are as the opening and shutting of the door. When the will consents, it opens; when it dissents, it shuts out that which moves for admission. And therefore opening here is called consent elsewhere, as Isa. i. 19. Here, if you will open, Christ will sup, &c.; there, if you will consent, ye shall eat, &c. So shutting is expressed by dissent or refusing, Isa. i. 20. So that by the door is principally meant the will. When this consents to receive Christ as he offers himself, then Christ is admitted, the soul is opened to him; he comes in, makes the opening soul the place of his abode, he walks in them, dwells in them, feasts them. When this dissents, refuses to receive Christ, &c.,

the soul hereby shuts out Christ, closes itself against him. Thus the will resembles a door, and therefore is so called.

The understanding, that is as a key-hole or a window to the door. Through it light is conveyed into the soul, by which it discerns who it is that stands and knocks, who it is that seeks admission; and according to what it discerns so it moves, opens or shuts. If it like the person, his motion, his business, then it opens, consents, admits him; if it approve not hereof, apprehend it dangerous, troublesome, needless, it refuses, shuts him out. Thus you see what is meant by the door, and why so called.

2. By knocking, understand those means which Christ uses to draw the sinner to come and open. That is the end of knocking with us. When Christ uses means to win the sinner's consent to admit him, to receive him, then he knocks. That this may be clearer, we will shew (1.) how he knocks, what means he uses; (2.) why he knocks, wherefore he uses such means to draw the soul to open.

(1.) For the first, the means are diverse. We will reduce them to these four heads. He knocks, [1.] by checks of conscience; [2.] by acts of providence; [3.] by the ministry of the word; [4.] by the motions of his Spirit. I beseech you, observe them. It much concerns you to know Christ's knock; for what more powerful motive to open than to know that it is Christ that knocks? Christ when he knocks is little regarded, because men consider not, take no notice that it is Christ that knocks. The everlasting gates are not opened when it is not minded that the King of glory knocks thereat. When Samuel knew not the Lord's voice, 1 Sam. iii. 4, he runs to Eli. Thus sinners, not discerning that Christ knocks, run another way, and many times further from him, instead of running to open to him. Durst sinners be so bold as to shut their hearts, if they effectually considered that it is Christ that knocks there? Oh no, they have this for their excuse: We never heard, we never remembered, that Christ came and knocked, and yet was shut out, was not admitted by us. Just like those on Christ's left hand, Mat. xxv., when Christ charges them that when he was hungry they gave him no meat, &c., ver. 42, they have an answer as ready as any obstinate sinner amongst us, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered?' &c., ver. 44. Oh no, far be it from us. We never saw thee in such a condition, else we should have been as ready to relieve thee as those righteous ones. We never saw thee; otherwise, if we had not relieved thee, that heavy sentence, 'Go, ye cursed,' had been too light for us.

So when Christ now in the ministry, &c., charges sinners with refusing to open to him, I come, and stand, and knock again and again, and yet ye shut me out, how readily will many answer as they, 'When saw we Christ?' &c.; we never saw Christ in such postures; we never heard him knock, and shut him out; if we had, then were we wretches indeed to shut out Christ. Why, but is it so indeed? Did ye never hear Christ knock? Why, sure, then, ye know not when Christ knocks.

Well, we will leave no room for this excuse, when I have shewed you how Christ knocks. There is not one of you but must acknowledge that Christ has long, has often knocked at your hearts. Whether you have opened to him must be referred to your own consciences. Most certain it is Christ has knocked longer, oftener at your hearts than ever man knocks at your doors; for he knocks,

[1.] By checks of conscience. When the sinner's heart smites him, then does Christ knock. Conscience is Christ's deputy; when he employs it to smite the sinner, he then knocks at the heart. When the weight of sin is felt, and the conscience smarts in the sense of the sinfulness of unlawful

practices, Christ is then knocking; the wounds of conscience are as dents in the door, they argue forcible knocks. Hereby Christ would draw the sinner to open; for there is no way to remove guilt, and silence an accusing conscience, but by letting in Christ. If he be not admitted, that which now but pricks will gnaw the soul to eternity as a never-dying worm. These checks of conscience, these knocks of Christ, should move the sinner to make haste to open. This was the effect of it in Peter's hearers. When his sermon had awakened them, and brought them to the sense of sin, it is said they were 'pricked in their hearts,' Acts ii. 37, and forthwith they were willing to open; they cried out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Now how long, how often has Christ thus knocked at yours? I hope there are none of you in that desperate condition, as to have your conscience seared, and made past feeling, past sense of sin. And if you be not cauterised past feeling, you have often felt the checks of conscience, your hearts smiting you for sin. Why, this is Christ knocking; he hereby seeks admission, and would draw you to open. As often as conscience checks, Christ knocks; and as often as you suppress, neglect those checks of conscience, so often as you disregard Christ, so often you refuse to let him in.

[2.] By acts of providence, whether they be acts of bounty or acts of severity. For the former, all your comforts and enjoyments, all your deliverances and preservations, all the acts of his patience and longsuffering, are as so many knocks at your hearts; Christ hereby would stir you up to open to him. Oh that you would mind them! All the expenses of the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and longsuffering, should draw you to open to Christ. This should be the issue of them, Rom. ii. 4, 'Lead to repentance.' What is that but leading you to open to Christ? For the great sin you are to repent of is your shutting out Christ, refusing to receive him, admit him. When this is repented of, the heart opens to Christ. And this is it that goodness should lead you to; it calls, it knocks for this.

Now, how much, how long, has Christ thus knocked? Can you reckon up the good things you enjoy? Can you give an account of all your deliverances? Are they not more in number than the hairs on your head? are they not past numbering? Why, then, so often, you cannot tell how often, Christ has knocked all your lives. No day, no hour, no minute, but he has been knocking at your hearts. Oh, how does it concern you to look that he be let in!

For the latter, he knocks by afflictions. The knock of mercy makes small impression, hardened sinners little regard it. Therefore Christ knocks in another method,—he lets fly afflictions upon the sinner, and these are as so many stones cast at the door. When the sinner minds not Christ's gentler knockings, he takes his rod (and his rod can make the rocks to open) and beats upon the door, makes the heart of a sinner shake under the weight of his strokes. If ye will hear nothing else, 'hear the rod,' says he, Micah vi. 9. He has variety of rods wherewith he knocks at the hearts of sinners. If no other will prevail, he will take his rod of iron, and knock so as he will make the foundations of the house to shake. This was his method with Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10, 11. 'In their afflictions they will seek me,' Hos. v. 15. Christ knocks and seeks to them before, and they will not regard. Ay, but if he take his rod, he will make them seek to him; make them run trembling, as the gaoler, open and beseech him to enter. Now, has not the Lord often thus knocked at your hearts, with one rod or other—by sickness, losses, wants, disappointments, crosses, or other afflictions? If you open not, take heed of his rod of iron. If you belong

to him, he will make you regard his knocks, or you shall smart for it, if you sink not under it.

[8.] By the ministry of the word, preaching of the law and of the gospel. This indeed is the principal means whereby Christ knocks. When he knocks the other ways without this, his meaning is not understood, and so sinners open not. The heathens have both checks of conscience and acts of providence to awaken them; but wanting the word, they know not the meaning of those knockings, and so they prove ineffectual. But though these be not effectual without the word, yet these are good enforcements of the word where it is enjoyed. Secure sinners are apt to slight the word, make nothing of it. But when the Lord awakens them by checks of conscience, and some sharp dispensations, the word, shewing Christ's meaning herein, hereby becomes more regarded; it is brought to remembrance, the dent of it is deeper. These joined fall with more force and weight upon the heart, and the sinner hears Christ's knock to purpose. Hence the word is called a hammer, Jer. xxiii. 29.

Christ knocks by the law. This discovers sin in its colours, and the dreadful wrath of God as the sinner's portion, and eternal torments into which he is sinking. And as the law was at first delivered with thunder and lightning, so now it falls upon the heart as a thunderbolt, a terrible knock indeed. The experience of many thousands who have opened unto Christ bears witness to it, though carnal hearts will either deride it or not believe it.

The knock of the law sounds thus in the ears of a sinner: Wretched creature, the fire of God's wrath is kindled on thy soul, thy sins are a continual fuel to it; if thou open not, that Christ may quench it, it will burn to the bottom of hell.

Thus Christ knocks by the law at the heart of Laodicea: ver. 17, 'Thou sayest, I am rich,' &c. Thou thinkest (and this is the very thought of most unrenowned sinners) thy soul is rich and happy enough, thy condition for eternity is good and safe enough. Thus every natural man before the law knocks at his heart. So Paul says of himself: Rom. vii. 9, 'I was alive without the law.' I had good conceits of my soul's condition, and made no question of life. Ay, but when the law came, when that discovered the sinfulness of his nature and life, and the wrath of God due to him for sin; why then, says he, I died, all my good hopes and high conceits they withered and died,—one knock of the law overthrew them all; and I then looked on myself as a dead man, even at the gates of eternal death. And so must every sinner before he will open to Christ; he must apply to his soul what Christ applies here to Laodicea. Thou knowest it not, thou wilt not believe it; but as sure as Christ is true, this is the truth of thy soul's condition. Thou art wretched and miserable, as blind as the prince of darkness can make thee, as naked as he that has not a rag to cover his nakedness, as wretched and miserable as the curse and wrath of God can make thee. Thus thou art, and thus more and more thou wilt be everlastingly, if thou shut out Christ, and shut up thy soul in this condition. Thus Christ knocks by the law.

He knocks also by the gospel. This discovers Christ, and the riches of his love, and the all-sufficiency of his redemption, and the overflowings of pardoning mercy through his blood. And this bears upon the heart with a sweet and heavenly violence; and if the sinner open not at this knock, his case is desperate. Thus he knocks by the gospel at the heart of Laodicea, ver. 18. The knock of the gospel sounds thus in the ears of a sinner: Thou art naked: open to me, and I will clothe thee with my own robe; thou art

blind: open to me, I have eye-salve that will cure those that are born blind; thou art poor: open to me, thou shalt share with me in my unsearchable riches; thou art wretched and miserable: open to me, and then if my love, if myself, if my blood, if my comfort, if my kingdom, can make thee happy, thou shall be happy.

And oh how often, how long, have you in this place heard Christ thus knocking! How long have you enjoyed the gospel! how has he knocked by the law! how has he knocked by the gospel, day after day, year after year! With what patience, with what importunity! Oh take heed that ye be not found in the number of those that shut out Christ, who regard not when he knocks!

[4.] By the motions of his Spirit; when the Spirit of Christ concurs with acts of providence, or with the word preached, so as these make some impression on the heart, bring the soul to some sense of its sinfulness and misery, and beget some inclinations to leave old, sinful practices, and take a new course. How frequent is this in sickness, when death is before his eyes, and apprehensions of eternity seize on him! How then will he resolve! How many promises will he make, that if he may be freed from the present danger, he will then be another man! Those that enjoy the gospel, and live under a powerful ministry, cannot but have experience of Christ's knockings by his Spirit. When sin is discovered, and the conscience in some degree awakened, and the danger of sin, the wrath of God hanging over it, apprehended, then there will be many times some inclinations, some semi-purposes, to abandon sin. These are the issues of Christ's knocking by his Spirit.

So when the necessity, the excellency, the all-sufficiency of Christ is discovered, the happiness, comforts, glory that sinners may receive from him apprehended, there will be some half resolutions to close with him. When you find these, you hear Christ knocking. These inclinations, semi-purposes, they are as it were an opening half way to Christ; but the suppressing of these motions is a shutting the door against Christ when he is entering; as I may say, a thrusting him out when he is half way in, a throwing the door upon his face. A most high affront, a grievous provocation; and yet what more ordinary? Have ye never, while ye have been hearing, praying, found such motions, inclinations? Sure they have hardened their hearts as the adamant that have no such experience. I will not suppose any here given up to such a reprobate sense, or rather the senselessness of reprobates. Well, then, when you find such motions, &c., Christ is knocking; and so powerfully, as you are brought to open in part to him. Oh, but do these motions, &c., vanish? Do the cares, the employments, the pleasures, the thoughts of the world, choke them? Why, then, when Christ is as it were coming in, you shut the door against him; when his foot is within the threshold, you thrust him out. This ye do by suppressing these motions of the Spirit, and suffering them to come to nothing. This is resisting the Holy Ghost, when he is striving to get possession for Christ. Oh how dangerous is this provocation! Verily there is but a step betwixt you and that dreadful sentence, 'My Spirit shall no longer strive,' &c. Oh take heed, this is Christ's knock!

Thus you see how many ways Christ knocks. And now I dare appeal to you, if there be any room for that excuse, I would have opened if I had heard Christ knocking. What sinner is there at whose heart he has not knocked many years? There is none wait so long, so often at his posts, the posts of wisdom, as he waits, as he knocks at your hearts. Oh how does it concern you to look that he be let in!

(2.) Why does Christ knock? what need is there of it? That is the next. And so you will have both the manner how, and the cause why, and thereby a satisfying account of Christ's act. Why, what needs this? There is great need every way; if Christ should not knock, we would never open, Christ could never enter. Such is the condition of every man by nature. Unrenewed sinners are not so well affected to Christ, they have no such mind to admit him, as to watch at the door that they may be ready to open at his first approach. No; there is by nature a strong antipathy against him, and wonderful disaffection to him; but of this formerly.

To shew you why Christ knocks, what necessity there is for him so to do if he will enter, let us a little follow the metaphor. It is needful, because,

[1.] Sinners by nature are far off from Christ, far from opening. When we come to a man's house whom we know to lodge in many rooms from the door, we knock, and knock aloud, else we cannot expect he should hear or open. Why, this is thy condition, the state of every sinner by nature; you lodge many rooms from the place where Christ stands. Sin has set every man a great distance from Christ. All are far off, at like distance with the unrenewed Ephesians, ii. 12: *οι πορὶ ὅρας μακρὰν*. Sometimes; when was that? Why, till they opened, &c. It is the privilege peculiar to those who open to Christ; they are a people, as Israel, near unto God. Till sinners open, they are far off, whatever be their accomplishments, privileges, enjoyments. It is true there is a latitude in this distance, some are farther off than others. The heathens that enjoy not the gospel, they are farthest off; those that have apostatised, outrun their holy profession, they are at a woful distance indeed; those that, by refusing Christ and long resisting his Spirit, have caused him to withdraw from them, these are farther off than at first, their latter end in this respect is worse than their beginning. Yet though some be farther off than others, yet all by nature are far off, and so far off as they are out of hearing, would never be drawn to open but that Christ vouchsafes sometimes to knock with an almighty force. Since sinners are at such a distance, Christ must knock, or else not enter; they will not hear him, not open to him.

[2.] Sinners are very busy. Their heads, and hearts, and hands are full of business; such a crowd, as leaves no room for thoughts of Christ. He may stand long enough, if he knock not, before he be admitted. They have something else to do than to wait for Christ's approaches, so as to be ready to admit him, without putting him to the trouble of knocking. They are so taken up with the world or their lusts, as it must be some loud importunity that will draw them to the door.

When we come to a man's house who we know is full of business, we expect not to be admitted till we knock again and again. Sinners are full of business, even those who seem least employed; Satan will be sure to find them employment enough, on purpose to keep them from attending Christ's approaches. One is busy in the world to get and increase an estate; his thoughts, his affections, are all taken up. Another has a design to be great and eminent; his heart is filled with this. Another, making provision for the flesh, &c., plotting, contriving how to satisfy a worldly, unclean, revengeful lust. Here is such a crowd of business, such a noise, as it is a wonder if Christ be regarded when he does knock; he might stand long enough unregarded if he did not. The sinner thinks much to leave his business and run to the door, till the loudness, the frequency, of Christ's knocking, enforced with his mighty power, draw him to it. He is too busy to open to such as will not knock.

[8.] Sinners are at rest; they are asleep; yea, in a dead sleep. This is

their condition by nature, which I express by this gradation. The Scripture holds it forth in these expressions, to shew a sinner's carelessness of Christ and of his soul's concerns; his loathness to rise out of it, his impotency to open, till he be roused and awakened by Christ's knocking. He is at rest, stretched upon the bed of security. He is at ease, well contented with his natural condition; takes pleasure and delight therein; fancies his spiritual estate safe, good enough; counts it a needless trouble to rise out of it; thinks it a disturbance to leave his present repose to go and open to Christ. When he in the parable was desired by his friend at midnight to open to him, Luke xi. 5, the man counts it a trouble, ver. 7. It is midnight with every sinner in the state of nature; he is in darkness, sees not his miseries, however they encompass him; he lies down on the bed of security, and is at rest, and now it is a trouble to him to rise and open; it must be no easy knocking, or little importunity, that will draw him to it. If it was thus with the spouse when Christ came to give a special visit, much more is it thus with natural men. But thus it was, Cant. v. 2. Thus Christ came, thus he knocked, thus he entreated, but he is put off with excuses: ver. 3, 'I have put off,' &c.: Oh what trouble is this! 'I have washed:' Oh what disturbance is this! If it were thus with the spouse in a fit of security, oh how much more is it thus with sinners in the state of nature! They are well enough, so they conceive; they have ease, quiet, repose enough in their outward accommodations, worldly enjoyments; it seems unseasonable, it is night, a time of rest and darkness too. Alas! they see not the necessity of Christ; it is a trouble, &c. Things being thus, Christ must knock, and knock to purpose, before they will come and open.

Further, they are not only at rest, lain down, but asleep. No opening, till they be awakened, and no awakening unless Christ knock. The state of nature is a night, a state of darkness, and sinners in that state are answerable thereto, said to be asleep, 1 Thes. v. 5, 6. Though they be busy as to natural employments, and the things of the world, yet to anything that is spiritual they are asleep. The steam, the gross vapours that arise from the corruption of our natures, obstructs all passages, so as there can be no conveyance, no operation of the Spirit, and consequently all the senses are bound up. A sinner in this state can no more, in a spiritual way, hear, see, smell, relish spiritual things, than a man asleep is sensible of outward objects. He must be awakened, else no opening, and nothing can awake him but Christ knocking, therefore he knocks. The sinner is asleep.

Nay, further, he is in a dead sleep; a sleep indeed which is no less than death in a spiritual sense. A dead sleep has seized on every sinner, such a sleep as the Holy Ghost calls death, Eph. v. 14. His sleep is so deep, as he is counted amongst the dead. Stand up from the dead! It must be a loud knock indeed, that will rouse a man out of a dead sleep; a powerful knock, that will raise a man from the dead, a knock from an almighty arm. Why thus must Christ knock, else sinners cannot, will not hear, much less open, John v. 25. Great need to knock, and knock aloud, when those that should open are in a dead sleep. This for the second.

8. What by standing? We must not conceive anything outward or corporeal in this posture of Christ. He speaks to our capacities, and vouchsafes to represent himself after the manner of men. But what are spoken of God, of Christ, who is the mighty God, ἀνθρωποπαθεῖς, we must understand Θεοειπεῖς. What he speaks after the manner of men, we must conceive in a way becoming the majesty of God. Thus standing imports some or all of these five things:

(1.) Christ's condescension. He stoops low indeed, when he vouchsafes

to stand at our door. It is infinitely more than if the greatest prince in the world should humble himself to stand at the door of a beggar. He is wonderfully gracious, when he will stand, when he will wait to be gracious. But of this in the first.

(2.) His approach. He is come near to a sinner, when he stands at his door, stays at his heart, and knocks. Nor does this disagree from what I said formerly. Those may be absolutely far off who are comparatively near. All are far from Christ by nature ; but he is nearer unto those to whom he comes in the ministry of the gospel, than to those whom he leaves to sit in darkness, &c. When the gospel comes to a people, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and Christ the prince of that kingdom does approach. Yet are sinners far enough from the kingdom, far enough from Christ. While he stands but at your hearts, he is not near indeed absolutely till you let him in. Though he stand at your hearts, and the kingdom of heaven in the gospel come to your doors, yet shall ye never enter into it unless you let Christ enter into your hearts. Christ coming so near, nearer to you than others, if you let him not in, will cast you further from him in hell than others. Outer darkness is for them who shut out greatest light ; and the greatest destruction from Christ hereafter for them to whom he came nearest here, and was excluded. For the present, here is a blessed opportunity, Christ is near you, he stands at your hearts, he is at hand. This is the second intimation of this posture.

(8.) His desire ; his readiness to enter. He is even at the door, so near he is come, there he stands. If any man will open, he is willing, he is ready to enter. What more can be expected on his part, to shew him willing to come in ? If you see one standing at your door and knocking, how can ye interpret this, but that he is willing, desires to enter ? Christ is more ready to come in to sinners than they are to open to him. There is no bar, no backwardness on his part ; he is at the door, and there he stands and knocks. That which keeps him out is the unkindness, the obstinacy of sinners, who will not open. That Christ is thus ready to enter, is unquestionable, in respect of those whom he has purposed from eternity to take possession of. How it holds in respect of others, we may have occasion to shew hereafter. And what a strong motive, what a great encouragement should this be to open ? Christ stands at your hearts, ready to enter, to take possession, if you will but admit him.

(4.) His patience. This posture denotes the exercise of patience. He stands at the door. When he comes to the heart of a sinner, though he find it shut against him, he does not presently depart in a fume, as he might justly, to see himself thus slighted, and all the happiness that attends his presence disregarded ; he does not instantly for all this leave the heart, but he stands. Though those who resolve to open are slow in coming, though others put him off with delays and excuses, nay, though some give him plain denials, yet he stands. Though this be the voice of sinners generally, yet a little more sleep, &c. He stands notwithstanding, and that long. Sometimes whole days, yea, day and night ; sometimes whole years, yea, sometimes many years : ' All the day long do I stretch out my hand,' &c. ; ' These three years have I come, seeking fruit ; ' ' Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.'

(5.) His readiness to depart if he be not admitted. Though he stand long, he will not stand always. As his standing shews he is ready to enter, if the sinner will open, so it shews, if the heart be obstinately shut against him, he is as ready to be gone. He sits not, as though he would make a continued abode before the hearts of rebellious sinners ; he stands, and that

implies a readiness to depart, if admission be denied. Though the patience of Christ be wonderful, and his condescension to sinners exceeding great, yet he is more tender of his honour than to endure it should be always slighted. If ye will not open to him, he will be gone. When he had stood some hours knocking at the door of the spouse, Cant. v., and she put him off with excuses, he stands no longer, but departs; though she opened, she found him not, he was gone, as she sadly complains, ver. 6. And if Christ deal thus with his spouse, the people of his love, engaged to him by marriage covenant, what may they expect who have no interest in him, no such affection to him?

It was a day he waited on Jerusalem, a long day indeed. But when they would not make use of the light of it to discover their concernment to entertain Christ, away he goes and leaves them in darkness. That happy sight should be for ever hid from their eyes, they should never see him standing more; instead of Christ's visits, they should be encompassed with devouring enemies. Utter desolation should succeed the day of their despised visitation, Luke xix. 41, 42, &c. Christ came often, and stood long, to gather Jerusalem, to take possession of them, but they would not be gathered, Mat. xxiii. 37. But what follows? That house that will not entertain Christ shall be left desolate. Desolate must that place be that Christ forsakes. Those that will not see Christ standing shall find him departing, and so departing as they shall see him no more, ver. 39. When he had come unto the fig-tree three years, and found it still barren, what follows? Luke xiii. 7, 'Cut it down.' When he had stood forty years waiting on the Israelites, and they still grieved him with hardening their hearts against him, what is the issue? 'They err in their hearts,' and a fatal error it is to shut Christ out of the heart, while Satan and base lusts are shut in. 'They have not known my ways,' they consider not effectually that Christ was come to them. They considered not, so as to open to him, to hear his voice. 'Wherefore he sware,' &c.

Oh consider this. Christ now stands, but if you open not, he is ready to be gone. Has he not stood many hours, even till his head be filled with dew? &c. He will not stand always, the spouse herself cannot expect it; he will be gone, and then, though ye seek him, ye shall not find him, and whither he goes shall ye not come.

Has he not long sought to gather you? &c. Well, if ye will not be gathered, your souls that will not entertain him shall be laid desolate; shall become cages for unclean birds, dens for the devouring lion. Ye shall no more see him till he appear in the clouds to render vengeance for this disobedience.

Has he not long stood, discovering to ye in the gospel the things that concern your peace, of which this is the sum in short, to admit Christ? If ye will not know, if ye will not obey, the day will come when desolation and misery shall seize upon those hearts that would not give Christ possession. This day of Christ's visitation, wherein he stands at your hearts, will be turned into a dismal night, wherein Christ shall be hid from your eyes.

Has not Christ come to you these three years, yea, many threes, seeking fruit? If he find not this the fruit of his coming, of his standing, if the issue of it be not your opening to Christ, that dreadful sentence will follow, 'Cut them down.'

If you will still harden your hearts, if this error still prevail, Christ is admitted far enough, more of him in your hearts and lives is needless. If you will not know his ways; his ways of conversion and regeneration, wherein Christ is admitted; his ways of holiness and gospel obedience,

wherein Christ is entertained and honoured, his patience will end in wrath. He will swear, those sinners that will not let Christ enter into their hearts, shall never enter into his rest.

Now he stands, this is the day wherein Christ draws near your hearts ; if ye will not know, &c. Christ the light of life, of hope, of glory, of happiness will be gone, you shall see him no more. He stands now for your answer, and his posture tells you, if he be denied, he is ready to depart.

Use 1. Information. This observation acquaints us with several other truths, which, as so many corollaries, follow from it :

1. The riches of the goodness and compassion of Christ to sinners. Does he, though he find the hearts of sinners shut against him, yet stand and knock for admittance ? Oh what riches of mercy are here ! It may justly seem much that the Lord, after such an affront, should vouchsafe but a look to such sinners ; how much more to come, &c. It is more than such wretches could expect, that the Lord should send to us, how much more that he should come himself, &c. For what can the Lord expect from us, or what advantage can he gain by us ? That he should come, draw near to us so full of provocations ; that he should stand, shew himself willing to come under our roof ; that he should wait to be gracious when grace is contemned ; that he should knock, use all means to gain admission, knock so long, so loud, so often !—Oh the riches of his goodness, the wonders of his condescension, the greatness of his mercy, the infiniteness of his patience ! What like proceedings do we find amongst the sons of men ? The Lord's ways are not as our ways. The Lord leaves not himself without a witness ; gives clear testimony that he is abundant in longsuffering, not willing that sinners should perish, but that they should come to repentance ; that they should be as happy as that which is the happiness of heaven, as the presence of Christ can make them.

2. This shews the heinousness of their sin who do not open unto Christ. Oh that ye would consider it and be affected with it ! The light of this observation discovers it to be loaded with those aggravations that make sin exceeding sinful, exceeding grievous. Since Christ stands and knocks, if you do not open, you sin against means, against mercy, against knowledge, and that wilfully and inexcusably.

(1.) Against means. Christ comes and knocks ; what means is there that he uses not to gain admission ? He knocks by checks of conscience, by acts of providence, by mercies and afflictions, by the ministry of the word, by the law and by the gospel, by the motions of his Spirit. Here is a burden of aggravations in one bundle, able to oppress any soul that has but any competent sense of sin. When you open not to Christ thus knocking, you sin against conscience, against providence, against mercies, against judgments, against law, against gospel, against resolutions and purposes raised in you by the Spirit of grace, and against that Holy Spirit itself, grieving, opposing, resisting it. What could the Lord have done more to you, that he has not done ? as he says of his vineyard. See the issue, Isa. v. 5, 6.

(2.) Against mercy ; mercy in its choice appearances and manifestations to the world ; against not only the mercy of God, but the indulgence of Christ. What more grievous offence than that which is against love, against mercy ?

[1.] Condescending mercy : he stoops so low as to stand at a polluted heart. [2.] Preventing mercy : against Christ drawing near you, coming to you, standing at your heart. [3.] Free mercy : against Christ, ready, willing to come in. [4.] Forbearing mercy : Christ waiting to be gracious.

If ever the Lord open your eyes to see sin in its own colours, this will make it appear exceeding sinful. How does the Lord aggravate Solomon's sins from such a consideration ! 1 Kings xi. 9. Was he angry because he had appeared to him twice ? Oh, how do you provoke him to anger, to whom he has appeared so often, who have so long, so often, both heard and seen him, seen him standing, heard him knocking !

(3.) Against knowledge. You have heard, you have been convinced, that Christ hath both stood and knocked at your hearts. If you would deny it, your own consciences will accuse you. The providence of God in many acts testifies it. The gospel, preached so long amongst you, bears witness of it. The Spirit of Christ, that has so long strived with you, brings in this evidence. It remains as writ with a pen of iron and point of a diamond, writ in great, and large, and lasting characters, in characters of greater, larger guilt. If you open not to Christ, you sin against all this light ; and you know how near a sin against knowledge borders upon that sin that leads irrecoverably to outer darkness, John ix. 41.

(4.) Wilfully. Christ comes and stands ; he stands and knocks. Why does he not enter ? Why, you will not open. He stands, he is ready to take possession ; why is he yet without ? Why, you will not give it him. If Christ did not stand, did not knock, you might pretend a better reason why ye do not open. But when he stands ready to enter, what can be alleged why he is not admitted, but because you will not open ? Oh, methinks any sensible heart should tremble to come so near the brink of that dreadful place, Heb. xii. 26, 27.

(5.) Inexcusably. Christ standing and knocking leaves the sinner that opens not to him without excuse. 'If I had not come to them,' John xv. 22. If Christ had not stood and knocked, your sin had been less ; there had been some excuse why you did not admit him. But since he has come so often, stood so long, knocked so loud, and yet is not admitted, now there remains no more cloak. There is no excuse will be sufficient to cover this sin, so great is it. The height and depth is such as you can say nothing, can do nothing, to cloak it.

If a heathen should be asked at the day of judgment, why didst thou not open to Christ ? why didst thou not entertain him ? Alas, may he say, I never heard of him ; he came not, he stood not, he knocked not at my heart ; the gospel never discovered him to me in this posture. Ay ! the heathen have a fair excuse ; the Lord will proceed with them upon some other account. Oh, but when the Lord, the Judge of heaven and earth, shall turn his speech to thee ! Thou enjoyedst the gospel, thou sawest me standing, heardest me knocking at thy heart so many Sabbaths, so many years together, why didst thou not open to me ? Why didst thou shut me out ? What answer canst thou make ? Surely, then, thy case will be like his in the parable. Thou must needs be speechless ; here is not the least colour of an excuse for thee. If Christ be not admitted now, nothing will be left thee then but a fearful expectation of judgment and fury. Oh consider it before it be too late ! You see the grievousness of the sin ; though it seem light now, it will lie heavy one day, and every of these considerations will lie upon thy soul as a mountain. Oh make haste to prevent it by making haste to open to Christ !

This shews a reason why the Lord's wrath falls heavier upon those that enjoy the gospel, those at whose hearts Christ stands and knocks, than upon others ; why he makes their plagues wonderful ; why he appears more terrible, both in his threatenings and executions, against them than the rest of the sons of men. Here is a sufficient plea to justify the Lord's severity.

He does more for them: he stands and knocks to be admitted by them, and they shutting him out, it is a righteous thing with the Lord, upon this account, to pour more vengeance upon them.

Obj. We see those who live in drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, profaneness, disobedience, contempt of the gospel and its ministers, despising of holiness, and hereby they shew they shut out Christ; we see them enjoy health, peace, plenty, and prosper in the world as much as any.

Ans. It is true. God may exempt them from temporal judgments a while, for the elect's sake who are amongst them, who have been persuaded to open.

But in the mean time he curses their blessings, Mal. ii. 2, Zech. v. Besides, he sends a plague into their hearts; he gives them up to spiritual judgments, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, searedness of conscience, a reprobate sense. And these are the greatest plagues on this side hell; and however the sinner be senseless of them, they are the portion, and will be of every one that perseveres to shut out Christ.

Moreover, he gives Satan a commission to load their souls with chains of darkness, to make them sure against the judgment of the great day. So they lie fettered, and then the furnace of everlasting burnings will be heated seven times hotter for them. This is, and will be, the doom of all that continue to shut out Christ.

Use 2. Exhortation. The light of this observation leads us to several duties; it calls for several things from all of us.

1. Does Christ stand? And will you sit still in your evil ways, not move towards him when he waits at your hearts? Will you lie down on the bed of security, take your rest in carnal enjoyments, wallow in the pleasures of sin and the world, and not stir out of your old posture, your old courses? Is this all the respect Christ must have from you: to sit still when he stands, to lie down when he stays for you, to rest yourselves in the embraces of the world and your lusts? Must these be entertained while Christ stands without? Must Christ stay your leisure if he will be admitted? Must he stay till you have done with the world, till you have your fill of sin? Is this all you care for Christ? Have you dealt thus with Satan, with the world, with your lusts? Did they stand and wait so long before they had entertainment? Oh, well were it with sinners if they were as averse, as disrespectful of sin, yea, of Satan himself, as they are of Christ! But oh, what guilt is here, what a wickedness is here in the mean time! Christ shall stand without when these are let in. Oh, will you continue in this wickedness? Will you increase this guilt? Will you run farther off when Christ comes and stands so near you? Oh he is patient, says the wretched heart, though I neglect him a little, and follow my worldly sinful humours; he will not be gone, he can bear with sinners and wait long. Oh the dreadful abuse of Christ's indulgence! Is this all the use you make of his patience, to encourage you to let him still stand without? Will you thus provoke the Lord? Will you thus turn his grace into wantonness? When mercy and patience abounds in Christ, will you make your sins superabound? How can you do this great wickedness, and sin against Christ? Far be it from you thus to requite the Lord. Since he stands, cast off sin, cast off the world, cast off every weight that so easily besets you, that is so apt to hinder you. Arise, make haste towards him!

2. Does he knock? Take heed, then, you neglect not his knocking. Will you stop your ears that you should not hear him? Will you busy yourselves so in the world, as the noise of your employments shall make you deaf to

Christ's knock? Or, if you hear it, will you turn aside to such cares, thoughts, delights, as shall make you forget it, regardless of it? Beware of this, if either Christ or your souls be dear to you.

Take care you neglect not, when Christ knocks by conscience, of refusing Christ, of going on in sin against checks of conscience. If you do, and persevere so doing, one of these will follow: your conscience will either be wounded or seared. One of these you may expect. The Lord can send a hell into the conscience, and set that soul a-fire that shuts him out. We have sad instances of it, and for what, but going against conscience? Or else the Lord will give thee up to a seared conscience. That conscience that will be senseless, shall be senseless. That will be Christ's sentence, 'He that is unjust, let him be so;' he that is senseless, let him be so: so without sense, as if seared with a hot iron, 1 Tim. iv. 2. As Christ has his seal whereby he marks his people, 2 Tim. ii. 19, so Satan has his; and those that are thus seared, the Lord gives them over to Satan. He hereby brands them, marks them for his own. Beware your disregard of Christ's knocking by conscience; end not thus.

Neglect not Christ's knocking by providence, especially by mercies. These are as sweet-smelling myrrh, which he leaves upon the handles of the lock, as the spouse expresses it, Cant. v. 5. If ye will not regard when Christ knocks by the hand of mercy, you will provoke him to take his rod, his rod of iron: a knock with this may break you to pieces, Ps. ii.

Neglect not Christ knocking by afflictions. If Christ enter not, after promises, resolutions, either you will provoke the Lord to change his rod into one more weighty, more smarting, and to double his strokes, and to punish yet seven times more, as he threatens, and make your plagues wonderful; or else to give you over as desperate, and to say, He will afflict no more, he will knock no more. And though blinded sinners, not acquainted with the Lord's paths, think that a good condition to be freed from affliction, yet is there scarce any dispensation that speaks more wrath than when the Lord says, as Isa. i. 5, 'Why should ye be smitten any more?' It is as if a father, after all means used to reclaim a rebellious son prove ineffectual, should resolve to trouble himself no more with him, should say, He regards not me, &c. Let him take his course, let him run on till he comes to the galleys. How can a man testify more anger than thus? Why thus the Lord, as the extremity of his indignation: Hosea iv. 14, 'I will not punish your daughters,' &c.

Especially, neglect not Christ when he knocks by the word. If the sound of the gospel move you not, there is little hope for you. If you neglect this, expect that one day Christ will as much neglect you, Prov. i. 24, 28.

Neglect not Christ's knockings by his Spirit. These motions are Christ's messengers; they are sent to prepare his way, to try what entertainment the Master may expect. If you resist, suppress, quench, choke these, Christ will look for no better at your hands, if himself were in your power. When men look upon Christ's message by his Spirit, as Elisha did upon the king of Israel, and use these motions as he did the messenger, how, think you, does he resent it? 2 Kings vi. 32. If, when Christ's messengers come, these motions of the Spirit, ye do give order to shut the door, take care to hold them fast at the door, and for this reason, because the sound of his Master's feet, &c.; if you shut out the harbingers, and use them so coarsely, Christ knows what himself may expect, he will not trouble you with his company. Take heed this be not the issue of your quenching motions, suppressing inclinations, suffering resolutions to vanish. If you use his harbingers, those

that bespeak his entertainment, he may interpret it thus, it is because the sound of my master's feet, &c. Oh how will this provoke Christ! As you would not be found quenchers of the Spirit, resisters of the Holy Ghost, take heed of neglecting, suppressing these motions of the Spirit.

8. Does he stand and knock? Oh make haste to open to him. I shall urge this more largely when the text leads me directly to it. Now a word of it briefly. Why does he stand and knock, but that he may be admitted? Will you still shut him out? Will you still frustrate the gracious intention of Christ? Will you do your endeavour to make him come short of his end? Shall he stand so long, shall he knock so much in vain? Shall all his patience, all his condescensions be in vain, except it be to render you more miserable, to vindicate the righteousness of his wrath in destroying you, and to leave you without excuse in the great day of account? Christ will secure his glory; he will take care it be not in vain to him, whatever you may render it to your own souls.

If the issue of his patience and longsuffering be not the glory of his mercy, in making you happy with his presence, it must be the glory of his justice in making you miserable, by departing from you. And will you provoke him to depart? Shall sin and the world be dearer to you than Christ? Must Christ be excluded, that these may still have entertainment? Oh what horrible unkindness is this to Christ, what cruelty to your souls! Heaven and earth may be astonished at it, if hardened hearts, if careless sinners will not; and to these the Lord appeals, Jer. ii. 12, 13. You hereby forsake Christ, the fountain of living waters, &c., joy, comfort, peace, glory. You forsake the fountain; and when the spring of all would place itself in your hearts, you shut it out. This is one great evil: and withal you hew cisterns; you prefer the cistern before the fountain, earth before heaven, sin before Christ; broken cisterns before the eternal fountain; cisterns that will hold no water all, before the fountain that flows everlastingly with waters of life. If you will not consider this, if you will not be afraid of such a dreadful evil, if you will not be astonished at it, heaven and earth may be astonished, and greatly afraid, to see their great Creator set at nought by a wretched man. They may be horribly afraid, lest a provocation of this nature should move the Lord not only to destroy man, but the whole creation; and in his just wrath turn heaven and earth, and all wretched man has benefit by, into confusion and nothing. If man will be so senseless as not to consider this, the senseless creatures will rise up in judgment and condemn him. If sinners will make no answer, take no notice of Christ standing, knocking at their hearts, the dumb creatures will find a mouth to justify God, when he sends him to eternal ruin, when he casts him into everlasting burnings.

Oh consider this! Let the wonderful patience of Christ in standing, let the gracious importunity of Christ in knocking, lead you to repent, lead you to the door, persuade you to open. The Lord makes use of the wonderful strangeness of his condescension as a motive, and oh that it might prove a powerful motive to open to him, Jer. xxxi. See how his bowels yearn to wretched sinners; and suppose him, while he stands at thy heart, to express himself as he does to Ephraim, ver. 20; and then hear him expostulating, wondering at thy delay to open to him, ver. 22; and then consider what a motive he adds to enforce thee to open. 'For the Lord hath,' &c. That Christ should stand and knock, that Christ should seek to thee, it is a new thing, a thing so strange and wonderful, as the like is seldom seen on the earth. It is as if a woman should offer love to a man. **תסובב** *ambit*, does solicit, does woo, does seek love, when she should be sought to; forgets herself, her sex,

her condition, against all custom, against all nations on earth. Thus far does the Lord stoop, thus strangely does Christ condescend, when he comes and offers love to sinners. It is as if a woman should compass, &c. ; it is he that should be sought to, yet he seeks to thee. It is his love that men and angels should desire above life; yet he offers love when it is not desired. He seems to forget himself (if we may so say) when he so strangely condescends to seek to sinners, to stand and knock at their hearts. This is a new thing, a wonderful thing; and since his love herein is so strange, so admirable, it should be a strong motive to sinners to entertain it. Oh how long wilt thou go about, O backsliding sinner? How long shall Christ stand and knock, before he be regarded? When wilt thou open to him, who has stooped below himself to come to thee? Remember, as his condescension is strange and wonderful in seeking admission, so his indignation will be strange and wonderful if thou dost not open. Since Christ comes and stands, make haste to open.

So we pass from the positive proposition, the first part, to the conditional promise, the second part of the text. Herein consider both its form and matter.

1. The form. It is propounded conditionally. Christ's presence and communion with him is offered upon condition.

2. As to the matter of it. It consists, as do all hypothetical propositions, of two parts; the antecedent and the consequent. In

(1.) The consequent, we have the things promised. These are two; [1.] Christ's entrance, 'I will come in;' [2.] His entertainment, and that is mutual. He will entertain the soul, and will accept of the entertainment which he enables the soul to provide for him: 'and will sup with him, and he with me.'

(2.) In the antecedent, we have the conditions upon which these things are promised, and these are two: [1.] Hearing, 'If any man hear my voice;' [2.] Opening, 'and open the door.' Of these in order.

1. From the form of the proposal, in that these things are promised conditionally, take this

Obs. Some gospel promises are conditional. Not only promises of outward blessings, common mercies, but promises of spiritual, special, and distinguishing mercies. Not only promises of the law, which belong to the covenant of works, but promises of the gospel, special branches and articles of the covenant of grace. Such is this in the text, a promise of Christ, of the gospel, of spiritual and special mercies, of the presence of Christ and communion with him. These are offered conditionally; and the promise is plainly, expressly, and in *terminis* conditional. 'If,' &c. I shall not insist long on this, nor enter into the controversy started in this age, but rather explain it in such a way as may prevent mistakes, and leave no room for any controversy; for those who would walk with a right foot in the way of the gospel, and prefer truth and peace before contention, must be careful to avoid controversy.

Those things that are annexed to gospel promises in the form of conditions, they are not conditions in these five respects; remove but those ingredients from them, which indeed the Lord never mixed with them, and there need be no scruple at all in granting the promises to be conditional. They are not conditions in respect

(1.) Of merit. When the condition is performed, we do not thereby deserve the Lord should bestow the mercy promised. 'When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants.' Such conditions are a popish imagina-

tion, they never entered into the Lord's thoughts, they are a high disparagement to the freeness of grace, and stain the glory of it.

(2.) Of dependence. It is not in the will, in the power of man, to perform by his own strength what is annexed to any gospel promise. If he that does promise and require did not give strength to perform, neither promise nor condition would be performed for ever. He requires we should hear his voice and open to him, but we can do neither without him; it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do. Conditions depending upon man's will and power are the proud inventions of Pelagians; there is no place, no ground for them in the gospel.

(3.) Of inducement. When that which is annexed to the promise, in form of a condition, is performed through the strength of Christ, the Lord is not hereby moved, induced hereby, as we are, to accomplish the promise. It is inconsistent with his divine perfections to be moved by any thing *ab extra*, without. Those expressions which seem to intimate our moving of God are after the manner of men; and when we speak properly, they must be explained in a way becoming the perfections, the majesty of God.

(4.) Of uncertainty. Man, when he propounds a condition, is uncertain whether or no it will be performed. But there is no such uncertainty with God; he knows from eternity who will hear his voice, who will open to him. The accomplishment of the promises is not suspended for the uncertainty of the condition, as it is amongst men, but for the incapacity of the subject, because, till they perform what he requires, they are not capable of what he promises.

(5.) Of obligation. When we perform that which is required in the promise, God is not thereby obliged to accomplish the promise, without the interposal of pardoning mercy, *e.g.* when we hear, when we open, this lays no engagement upon Christ to enter. Our slowness to open does more disengage him, more provoke him to depart, than our opening, accompanied with such provocation, obliges him to enter. These things I might easily open and prove at large, if I thought it seasonable; but let this suffice at present. If you take not conditions in such a sense as is made up of one or all these respects, it casts not the least shadow upon the glory of free grace to grant some promises to be conditional.

By a condition, understand no more than a necessary antecedent, or a duty to which the Lord will enable his people before the performance of his promise; and there need be no scruple, no controversy about the terms, the promises may be counted, with safety enough, to be conditional.

2. And so we pass from the form to the matter of this proposition, and in it first take notice of the antecedent, containing the conditions of this promise; the first whereof is hearing Christ's voice, 'If any man hear.' Here we might observe, that opening depends on hearing, and that men are backward to hear Christ's voice; hence he makes an *if* of it, 'If any man;' as also that Christ not only stands and knocks, but calls at the heart, makes use of his voice to procure admission. But to waive a particular discourse of each of these, we shall comprise the sense and meaning of these words in this, and a little insist on it.

Obs. Those that will have Christ to come into them, must hear his voice. It is the means to this end, it is the condition of this blessed privilege, and so proposed in the text.

'Hear, and your souls shall live.' Christ's entering into the soul, is as the soul's entering into the body. As that is life to the body, so Christ is life to the soul, when he enters, unites himself to it, and becomes its life, the fountain, the principle of spiritual life. Now the way for Christ to enter is

by hearing: 'Hear, and your souls shall live.' So Christ comes not in till the heart be open, and it opens not till it hear the voice of Christ; so that those who will have Christ to come in, must hear his voice.

Two things explained will make this truth clear. (1.) What is the voice of Christ? (2.) What is it to hear his voice? For the

(1.) Christ's voice is that which you hear principally in the gospel. He gives some intimation of his will by conscience, by providence; but in the gospel he speaks out, there his voice is heard clearly, distinctly, there he speaks aloud; particularly, there you hear

[1.] His voice of command. He exercises his authority as King and Lord of the world, sends out his royal edicts, his commands. And this is the sense of them, that sinners would open to him, Isa. lv. 1; come and open that the waters of life may flow into your souls, that the spring of life, and joy, and happiness may seat itself in your hearts.

Oh, but these waters are precious, they cost dear, &c.

He has left his commands on record in the word, in the Scriptures, and he sends his messengers daily to publish them. To disobey him, is to affront him in his highest dignity, in his royal office, to rebel against the King of kings, &c.

All the commands to believe in Christ, are commands to open to him; for to believe in Christ is to receive him, and to receive him is to open to him. This is the great command of the gospel, to open to him, John xiv. 1, vi. 26. Christ, who might exercise his sovereignty, &c., had rather shew it by commanding. The whole creation is at the command of Christ; there is not one creature in heaven or earth but punctually obeys him, except wretched man only. And wilt thou be one of these rebels, worse than the plants and trees that grow at his command, worse than the beasts and birds that move at his command? Wilt thou be worse than the beasts that perish? Wilt thou be a rebel especially in this point? Wilt thou shut out the King of glory when he commands thee to open to him? It is no great matter he commands; it is but to open. Nor is it any loss to thee that he commands; it is to open to him whose presence will make thee happy. Oh that you would hear Christ's voice commanding. This is his voice of authority.

[2.] The voice of Christ threatening. He sets an edge upon his command, and that it may not be slighted, enforces it with threatenings. If thou wilt not hear him now, and open, he threatens he will not hear thee hereafter. Thou wilt find sooner or later a day of distress, when thou wilt have need of Christ, at least death is not far off, &c., and judgment is approaching. How much soever you neglect it now, you will be glad to call to Christ then. Ay! but if you will not hear him now, he threatens he will not hear you then, Prov. i. 27, 28. If you will not open to him on earth, he will not open to you in heaven; if you will shut him out here, he will shut you out there. Time may come when, with the foolish virgins, you may knock and cry, 'Lord, open to us;' but those that regard him not now shall have their doom then, 'Depart from me, I know ye not.' Christ would now entertain, 'I will come in and sup,' but if ye shut him out, the same thing he denounces to you which he threatened, Luke xiv. 24, 'Not one of them shall taste of my supper.'

If you will not open to Christ, who brings with him unsearchable riches, your debts can never be paid; justice will seize on you and cast you into prison, into outer darkness, till you have paid that which can never be discharged, till you have paid the uttermost farthing. If you will not admit Christ, who would make you happy with his presence, you shall be punished

with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. If you will not open to him who brings you life, ye shall die in your sins, John viii. 24. Thus the Lord lifts up his voice and threatens sinners, in case they will not open to him: Oh that you would hearken! If ye will not suffer Christ to enter into your hearts, ye shall never enter into his rest. This is his terrible voice; it can rend the rocks, and cause the mountains to tremble. Oh, be not you senseless of it!

[8.] The voice of Christ promising. This is Christ's voice in the latter part of the text. There he promises his presence and fellowship with him to all that will open to him; all the joys, the comforts, the bliss, the glory, that the presence of Christ can afford, or communion with him.

The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, he dwells not in temples made with hands; yet if thou wilt open, he promises thy heart shall be his temple, 'I will come in.'

The presence of Christ is the glory and happiness of all that are happy and glorious; this is it which glorifies the saints, and makes the angels blessed, yet this thou shalt have if thou wilt open.

The presence of Christ is light in darkness, and plenty in want, relief in all distresses, comfort in all sad exigencies, life in death, all in all; yet all this thou shalt have, the presence of Christ, and all its blessed attendants, if thou wilt hearken unto him and open.

Communion with Christ is the very heaven of heaven, and that which can make a dark habitation on earth to be as a corner of heaven; but this thou shalt have, if thou wilt hear his voice and open. But of this more fully when we come to the latter part of the text. This is Christ's still voice, the sweet voice of promise; oh that you would hearken to it!

[4.] The voice of persuasion. This is it he counsels, this is it he advises; and he urges it, enforces his counsel with many motives and arguments. This is Christ's voice in the verses before the text, ver. 18.

[5.] The voice of entreaty. He beseeches sinners with a loud voice to open. He who commanded heaven and earth to issue out of nothing; he who commands the winds and the seas, and they obey him; he who commanded the apostate angels out of his presence, and shut them up in the bottomless pit; he who commanded the earth to open her mouth, and swallow those rebellious sinners, Korah and his accomplices; he who could command thee immediately into hell, and shut thee up in outer darkness: he vouchsafes to beseech thee; this is his voice, 2 Cor. v. 20. Upon what terms an ambassador treats with another state, if by way of threatening, or, which is more strange and unusual, if by way of entreaty, it is as if his master did it. So it is interpreted by us. Ministers of the gospel are Christ's ambassadors; they are sent, employed, authorised by him. He gives them instructions to pray, to beseech sinners, and they do it *ὡς ἑαυτοῦ*, i. e. 'in Christ's stead.' It is as if Christ himself should do it; it is as if he should with his own mouth pray, beseech, entreat you to open to him. When the minister comes and entreats you, beseeches, importunes you to abandon those sins that keep out Christ, it is as if Christ himself should do it in person. So it is in our account in embassies amongst men, so it is in Christ's account. It will be in vain to say at the day of judgment, I never heard Christ use any such language, he never entreated; the ministers that we disregard are but men. Ay, but they are Christ's ambassadors, they speak in Christ's stead; and what they speak according to his instructions, he owns it as though it were spoken by himself, and will accordingly vindicate the contempt of it and disobedience to it. You shall then hear what you will not now regard: 'He that heareth you, heareth me;' 'Inasmuch

as you did it to one of these, you did it unto me.' It is Christ's voice you hear when you are entreated to open. If you will have him enter, you must hear. And the wonder of Christ's condescension in stooping so low as to beseech you, should be a strong motive to open, or will be a great aggravation of your wickedness if you open not.

[6.] The voice of reproof. This is Christ's voice too, and that which he frequently makes use of when sinners are so slow, so backward to open to him. It is Christ that speaks, Christ the Wisdom of the Father, and there frequently called Wisdom, Prov. i. And that which he speaks is reproof: ver. 23, 'Turn you at my reproof.' He tells sinners how they offend, what the nature of their offence is, how sinful, how provoking, how heavily aggravated, when they refuse to open, when they retain those sins that keep out Christ. The Spirit of Christ in the Scriptures abounds herein; take but briefly three or four instances.

He shews it is a grievous contempt of Christ, a most unworthy slighting and undervaluing of him. The sinner that shuts out Christ (as every one does that lives in sin) values him no more than he that sold him for thirty pieces of silver. For which of you would not open your door were it but to gain thus much? And yet will not open to Christ! Do ye not clearly manifest you think Christ less worth, value him not so much? A goodly price indeed that Christ is prized at by you! Zech. xi. 12. Hereby you shew you value him no more than that wretch that betrayed him; you value him no more than a slave, Exod. xxi. 32. Oh what ground is here for reproof! Will you thus set Christ at nought, and shew yourselves as bad as Judas? Why, this is the way you condemn him as you would do a slave,—nay, as one would not do a slave,—when you will not open to him.

This is against all your relations, engagements, professions as Christians. You call Christ Lord; but what a servant is that who will let his lord stand and knock, and call at the door, but will not stir to open to him! You call him Father; but what a child is that who shuts his father out of doors! Mal. i. 6. While you do thus, whatever you speak of Christ as related to him, that you love him, would obey him, are his servants, his children, these are but pretences and dissembling words. You shew plainly you are gross hypocrites, whatever you say or think, so long as Christ is shut out. Can any without blushing call Christ his Saviour, while he will not open his heart to him? Do ye really count Christ so? or does it not hereby appear it is a mere pretence? Will any man shut his Saviour out of doors? All your pretences to Christ are but hypocritical till this be done.

Further, this is a preferring the devil and the lusts of your hearts before Christ. These, though the vilest evils in earth or hell, have more respect, more honour, more service, more obedience from you, than Christ. When Satan does but intimate his pleasure by some wicked suggestion, forthwith he finds admission; but though Christ call and cry, lift up his voice like a trumpet, command, promise, threaten, persuade, beseech, reprove, he is shut out. When a lust gives but an inkling, insinuates by some sly motion, this is instantly, daily entertained, while Christ stands without. Here is a great respect shewed to Christ indeed, when his mortal, deadly enemies are admitted, entertained, and himself refused, rejected! What iniquity, may he say, do ye find in me, that the devil, and that which is worse than the devil, your lusts, should be preferred before me?

Finally, the whole creation may rise up in judgment against such as ex-

clude Christ, and may condemn them. Christ doth whatever he will in heaven and earth; he opens, and no man shuts; he shuts, and no man opens; he finds no resistance, no opposition, till he come to the heart of man. There is not the least creature in the world but will cast in something to make the judgment of that sinner heavier who opens not to Christ, to aggravate his condemnation who shuts out Christ.

To this effect doth Christ reprove the generation with whom he conversed, Mat. xii. 42. If she would come from the uttermost parts of the earth to see Solomon, sure if he had come so far to visit her, she would with all joy have admitted him. And yet, lo! a greater than Solomon is here excluded. Christ comes not from the uttermost parts of the earth, but from the highest heaven; not to visit the court of some glorious king, but to seek entrance into a wretched defiled heart; and yet is excluded, it shuts itself. Here is not the queen of Sheba, but the King of glory, excluded; not king Solomon, but Solomon's King, is affronted, excluded by a wretched sinner, by a sinful heart. For this he reproved the Jews then, for this he reproves you now; he comes to his own, and his own receive him not: to his own, to those who have most need of him, most reason to own him. He comes and owns you, by coming to you when he passes by the rest of the world. 'He comes to his own, &c.

Oh what ground is here for a sharp, a cutting 'reproof! This is another way wherein you may hear Christ's voice. Oh let it not be said, ye would have none of my reproof!

(2.) What by hearing. It includes these six things:

[1.] Attendance. When he attends diligently to the word preached. When he is serious and conscientious; not as before, customary and careless. When he listens to it as to the great, the eternal concernment of his soul. When he desists from those things that have hindered him from listening diligently to the word in times past. When Christ's voice puts him to a stand. For example: a man riding, running, or otherwise busied, hears some voice that concerns him; he stops his course, stands, and listens. Thus, when Christ speaks to the heart of a sinner, if he hear his voice to any purpose, it puts him to a stand; it takes him off from his immoderate following the world, from his eager pursuit of his lusts; he hushes those cares, thoughts, delights, and that business which made such a noise before, as Christ's voice was not heard or not regarded.

Thus, when Saul heard Christ's voice from heaven, he fell to the earth, Acts ix. His former designs were nonplussed. It is true that voice was extraordinary; but whenever Christ's voice is heard, it has some like effect. The sinner is stopped in his career; his mind and heart are at least for the present taken off from sin and the world; he stands and listens. And till he be put to such a stand, though he may seem to hear, he hears not indeed; his hearing is to little purpose. He that will open unto Christ must thus hear.

[2.] Belief. He that hears so as to open, believes it is the voice of Christ he hears. While he counts the word preached the voice of man, he finds many evasions, so as he keeps it off from his heart and conscience. Till he believe it is the voice of Christ, he hears as though he heard not; it is to little purpose, to no great effect, leaves small or no impression. But when he hears it and hearkens to it, as the voice of Christ speaking to him from heaven, then, and not till then, he hears so as he is in the way to open. The men that were with Saul, they 'heard a voice, but saw no man,' ver. 7. They knew not whence it came, nor who it was that spoke. But Saul knew it to be Christ's voice: the voice satisfied him of

that ; and hence the different effect in them and him. Saul opens, embraces Christ ; we read no such thing of them. ' It is the voice of my beloved,' says the spouse, Cant. v. 2. If she had not perceived this, she had lain still and not opened to him. While you are filled with conceits that it is but man that speaks, and that he speaks his own thoughts only, and such as prejudice against you, or ill apprehensions of you lead him to ; while Satan thus persuades you, he cares not how much you hear. He knows, till you hear the word preached as the voice of Christ, your hearing is as good as no hearing, you are far enough from opening. Till Samuel knew it was the Lord's voice, he run the wrong way.

[3.] Application. If thou wilt hear so as to open, thou must hear Christ's voice as directed to thee in particular. Thou must not put it off to others, and say the word met with such a one, it fell foul upon such a man's sin, was suitable to his condition ; but bring it home to thy own heart and conscience, and hear Christ in the ministry of the word speaking to thee, as if he singled thee out and spoke to thee by name. Apply what is delivered in general as though thou heardest Christ telling thee, as Nathan did David, ' Thou art the man,' 2 Sam. xii. 7. It is I Christ intends, it is myself he speaks to ; this is my sin, my guilt. It is I that have shut out Christ ; it is I that have been so eager on my lusts, so busy in the world to neglect Christ. He now speaks to me, he now calls upon me to open. Till you hear thus, till you thus apply what you hear, you will never open. The voice of Christ, till thus applied, gives but an uncertain sound (as the apostle in another case) nor will you ever prepare to open.

[4.] Consideration. Hear it so as your thoughts may work upon it, as though ye were always hearing. Christ's voice should have such place in your hearts, should be fixed there by frequent meditation, serious consideration of it, as if it were still sounding in your ears. How many souls has non-consideration cut short of Christ ! When you mind but the word while it is preached, it slides away as water falling on a rock ; it must stay upon the heart, else it will not open. Remember it when you lie down and when you rise up, whatever ye do, wherever you are ; let your thoughts represent Christ as still lifting up his voice and calling on you to open to him, as that ancient said of the voice of Christ at the last day, &c. What you hear must stay in your thoughts as though ye were always hearing, as though the voice of Christ were still in your ears, ' Arise and open !' Thus you must hear if you will open.

[5.] Conviction. If ye will hear so as to open, ye must so hear as to be convinced of an absolute necessity of opening. Be convinced that thou art lost, undone, condemned, till thou open to Christ. So Christ tells Laodicea, ver. 17. And it is the condition of every man till Christ be admitted : ' Thou art poor, and blind, and wretched, and miserable ;' if death knock before thou open to Christ, there is nothing but hell to be expected, nothing but the wrath of God to seize on thy soul, nothing but the bottomless pit to open and swallow thee for ever. This conviction, which sinners are so backward to admit, which Satan uses all means to put off, is the first step to the door. Till the sinner thus hear as to be thoroughly convinced of his misery while Christ is excluded, there is no hope of opening.

[6.] Persuasion. Then the sinner admits Christ, when he so hears his voice as to be fully persuaded to open to him. The former are but motions towards it ; when it comes to this, the heart is open. A sinner's judgment may be convinced that he is miserable while Christ is excluded, and yet the will not persuaded to admit him. For the will has three powers : to con-

sent, to refuse, to suspend its acts. When the understanding is convinced that he is miserable if Christ be not admitted, the will so far follows the understanding as it cannot consent to exclude him, it cannot refuse to admit him, yet it may hang in suspense. But when it so hears as to be persuaded, it hangs off no longer, but opens unto Christ. This is the hearing that Christ calls for, to hear so as to obey, to listen to Christ's voice so as to comply with it; Heb. iii. 8: 'To-day if ye will hear my voice,' &c. When the sinner hears but does not obey, he hears but so as to harden his heart; his heart is stone against Christ; no passage for him through it, no entrance by it. But when he so hears as to be persuaded, so hears Christ's voice as to obey it, to open to him when he calls, then he hears so as Christ enters. Thus you see how many ways Christ makes his voice audible, and how you may hear so as Christ may enter; by which the observation is clear.

Use. Information. This shews the sad condition of many amongst us who profess Christ. Many there are who bear the name of Christians, who yet shut Christ out of doors, who never opened their hearts unto him. Such are they who care not to hear his voice, such are they who are careless in hearing it. The light of this truth discovers these to be such as shut out Christ. If he enter not but by hearing, then those that will not hear, care not how they hear, how seldom, how carelessly, do hereby shew Christ is yet without, he never yet came into them. They are not yet under the influence of this promise, they are far from the condition of it; and consequently without Christ, without life, without hope, without God in the world. Particularly,

1. Those who neglect to hear when Christ speaks, who will not take the opportunities to hear his voice, so often as they are offered. A small occasion will keep them from hearing the word preached; though Christ speaks here, in the ministry of the word, if his voice be to be heard anywhere in the world. Divers there are who think once a day enough (though they have but this day once a week), nay, so profane are some, they think it too much; yet such will think themselves wronged if they be not counted Christians. Do they deserve the name of Christians who shut Christ out of doors? Let your consciences judge. And do not they shut out Christ who will not so much as hear his voice when he calls upon them to open? How often has Christ, by his unworthy messenger, reprov'd this sin, this woful contempt of Christ in this place! And yet the thinness of our assembly is a sad testimony the voice of Christ is little regarded, the reproof of Christ is set at nought.

Can you shew more contempt of Christ than to refuse to hear him when he speaks? And does he speak more plainly otherwise to the world than in the ministry of the word? What! not hear a voice from heaven, not hear the voice of Christ speaking from heaven; not hear the voice of Christ speaking to you, not hear the voice of Christ calling on you to open to him! Shall Christ stoop so low as to utter his voice in all kind of expressions? Shall he threaten, promise, reprove, complain, yea, entreat vile worms? And will they not so much as give him the hearing? Do ye not affront Christ enough by shutting him out? Will you not so much as hear him when he beseeches you to let him in? Oh the wonder of Christ's patience, that some remarkable judgment does not cut off such a Christ-contemner! It is a sad complaint he makes, that his report was not believed. More grievous may his complaint be, that his report is not so much as heard.

But it is like many of those whom this concerns are not now in hearing. Well, they will not hear Christ now; but time will come, if reformation

prevent it not, when they shall hear Christ speak in another tone. No more 'Open unto me,' no more of that; but 'Depart from me; depart, ye cursed.' In the mean time this is your misery,—you shut out Christ now, and Christ will shut you out hereafter; you will not hear him now, he will not hear you hereafter. Here is misery enough for them, and grief enough for those whom Christ sends to them,—that which was the prophet's of old: 'If ye will not hear,' &c., Jer. xiii. 17.

2. For *conviction* to those who hear indeed, but so as it is evident they do not open, Christ does not enter. It is not every kind of hearing that makes way for Christ's entering, but that described, that intended. Those, therefore, do not open, Christ does not enter,—

(1.) Who hear carelessly, as though they heard not, as though it were not of such concernment as indeed it is; who hear customarily, negligently. When Christ enters, the blessing enters; but there is a curse hangs over those who do the work, &c., Jer. xlviii. 15. If they who are negligent in destroying God's enemies are blameworthy, then sure those who are negligent in saving their own souls are much more so, to which hearing Christ's voice is so necessary.

(2.) Who hear it, but not as the voice of Christ. There is a power, a majesty, in the voice of Christ; and those that hear it as such will hear it so, so as they would attend to what is powerful and majestic. See how it is described Ps. xxix. If you hear it as the voice of the Lord, it will be evident by like effects; it shakes, you will tremble at it. If you never so heard it, Christ never yet entered. It is such a heart which the Lord chooses for his temple, Isa lvi. Your hearts are not yet Christ's temple, you never had such respect to him as to open to him, if you do not so respect his word as to tremble at it. He never had such respect to you as to enter, as to take possession of you, if his voice have not been so powerful as to make you tremble at it.

(3.) Who hear it, but apply it not. Christ comes not home to your souls till the word be brought home to your hearts. While you put it off, you shut Christ out; while you do not apply the word to yourselves, as directed to you in particular, Christ comes to your ears, he comes not into your hearts. If the word abides not in you, Christ abides not in you, he comes not there. Now it is so far from abiding, as it has no entrance unless it be applied.

(4.) Who hear, but consider not, make it not their meditation. Where Christ is entertained, he is not contemned. But what contempt is this of Christ, to cast his word behind your backs, and mind it no longer than it is sounding in your ears! Are not the words of Christ worthy to be thought of? Those that shut out the thoughts of his word, so as not to make them their meditation, it is plain they shut Christ out of their hearts. Shall he lift up his voice to the unworthy sons of men, and shall not what he speaks be remembered? Shall it not be laid to heart? So far will he be from blessing you with his presence, as he will even 'curse your blessings,' Mal. ii. 2. Not only those who refuse to hear, but those who hear and lay it not to heart, are under this curse. Their blessings, their enjoyments, even the gospel itself, will prove curses to such. That is the bitterest curse, which curses our blessings. A blessing turned into a curse is the most dreadful curse. Yet this is their portion who lay not the word to heart; instead of enjoying Christ, they inherit the curse. It is a cursed heart, &c., a heart that Christ never entered into. Though you will not think of his word, Christ will remember. Though you will not find time to meditate on it, Christ will find time to call you to an

account for it; for thus slighting him, not giving entertainment to his word in your thoughts, you shut him out of your hearts.

(5.) Who hear not so as to be convinced of their necessity of opening; will not be convinced of their sin, their misery, which should possess them with apprehensions of a necessity to open; will not believe but they have opened already, though the temper of their hearts and course of their lives testify against them; shut their ears against that voice which tells them of sin and wrath; think this is the way to be miserable, when it is the first step out of it; look upon him who would lead them to the sight of their misery, while they live in sin, and so without Christ, as he did on the prophet, 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?' judge him uncharitable, no friend to them, count him their enemy because he tells them this truth, that they are wretched till born again, miserable while they live in sin, because Christ lives not in them.

When thoughts of sin and misery seize on their hearts, they make not use thereof to lead them to Christ, they are not quiet till they have stifled them. While you thus shut out conviction, you shut out Christ, Heb. xii. 18. This is the property of God's word, the efficacy of Christ's voice. And this effect it must have before you enter into his rest; as the connection with the 11th verse shews, before Christ enter into you to give you rest. Till this conviction of sin and misery have emptied the heart of high thoughts, good conceits of its natural estate, it is too full of them to open, there is no room for Christ in such a heart.

(6.) Who hear not so as to be persuaded to open; listen to the voice of Christ, but obey it not, comply not with it. This is no hearing, in Scripture language. He that obeys not, hears not. So inseparable should these be, as one is put for the other.

Then you hear Christ's voice to purpose, when you are persuaded to admit Christ upon his own terms, so as to thrust out every sin, so as to take his yoke, so as to resolve upon all the ways of holiness. Till then you do not hearken unto Christ's voice, for these are joined, Ps. lxxxi. 13. And while you thus hearken not to Christ, you reject him, ver. 11. You declare hereby you will none of Christ, you shut him out. Christ enters not till his voice be thus heard. And if you thus hear it not, it is plain you have not yet opened, Christ has not yet entered.

Pass we from the first condition, hearing, to the second, opening. 'And open the door.' Hence take this

Obs. Those that would have Christ to enter must open to him. It is not Christ's ordinary way to come in to sinners as he came to the disciples, when the door was shut. No; he requires us to open if we will have him to come in; the everlasting gates must be lift up, &c., Ps. xxiv. 7, 9. The Lord there calls upon his people to prepare for the admission of Christ; their hearts are these everlasting gates; not like those of the material temple, which endured but for a season, but these are immortal, must endure to everlasting; these must be lift up; he repeats the command. And this repetition denotes two things, as we learn, Gen. xli. 82; it was doubled for the certainty, the celerity of it. It signifies the like here, certainty on Christ's part; he will surely enter if admission be granted. Celerity on our part, we must speedily open that the King of glory may enter.

Quest. But what is it to open the door? In what manner must we open? These explained, the truth will be clear. For the

1. Take it in these severals.

(1.) He that will open must come to the door; no opening at a distance.

All by nature are far from opening. If ye will lift up these gates, ye must come to them.

They, then, are far from opening, who lie down securely in their natural condition ; who are at rest there, and cry Peace, peace to themselves, whatever the word say to the contrary ; who are asleep in a sinful state, and there dream with Laodicea, that they are rich, &c. This was her condition when Christ here calls upon her to open ; and it is the condition of all men by nature till the voice of Christ awaken them. They say, as those, Jer. ii. 81, ' We are lords,' &c. These are far from coming to the door ; this is not the way to open.

Those also that sit in the seat of wickedness, fix themselves in their evil ways, will not be removed out of them ; will not leave intemperance, worldliness, profaneness, swearing ; neither mercies nor judgments, neither promises nor threatenings, neither commands nor entreaties, neither Christ's rod nor his word will make them rise out of sin ; they sit still, they are far from opening.

Those also, who, when they are roused, awakened, and seem to be in a fair way of coming to open, instead of coming forward, go backward, run another way. Such are those, who, having some sense of sin and misery, some trouble of mind, some disquietment of conscience, instead of coming to open to Christ, turn aside to the world, or run to their merry companions, or quiet their hearts with some outward comfort, or build up some unsound peace upon unsafe grounds. So their latter end is worse than the beginning. They ran well at first, what hindered them ? What turned them backward ? These are further from opening than before : they run further from the door instead of coming to it.

Those that come but half way. Such are those who, having got some knowledge of Christ, of gospel truths, and having taken up a profession of Christ, and performing some outward duties, such as may quiet their consciences, and get the repute of Christians, they set up their rest here. Oh, but you must go further, else you will never come at the door, never open to Christ. This is but, with Agrippa, to be almost persuaded to be a Christian. You are yet a great way from the door ; you must come to it if you will open.

(2.) He that will open must take away the bars, remove those bolts which make fast the door. No gate in the world can be so bolted, so blocked up, as a sinner's heart is against Christ. Satan is the porter, the strong man armed, he keeps the door. There is a Cerberus in every man's heart ; he must be removed, cast out, else no opening.

Then there is the world, that blocks up the door ; it is as a rampart of earth cast up against it to secure it. You must make your way through this, turn it aside, that you may come to open to Christ. The thoughts, cares, delights, desires, love of the world and the things of it, how do they block up the way ! These must be digged through, cast off, else no opening, no passage to Christ or for him.

Then there is the flesh and all the lusts of it, every one a strong bolt to make the heart fast against Christ. A worldly lust, or proud, or unclean, or intemperate, or revengeful ; any one of these, or those many more than can be numbered, is enough to keep the heart shut. Each of these must be plucked out of the heart if it open, if Christ enter.

Then there is blindness of mind, ignorance, spiritual darkness. This is a great security to the door ; the sinner cannot find it, and so he is not like to open. He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes.

Then there is hardness of heart, a heart of stone, as it is called. This is a stone wall raised against the door to strengthen it. This rock must be

divided, this stony temper must be dissolved if Christ enter. The heart of stone that has so long continued in thy flesh, that has so long resisted the word, the Spirit, it must be broken that Christ may enter.

Then, to mention no more, there is self-sufficiency, self-dependence, self-confidence, self-conceitedness, imaginations and conceits of his good name, good meanings, honest dealings, religious performances; the heart is so filled with these, there is no room to open, no room for Christ to enter. The heart must be emptied of these, they must be whipped out, before he make thy heart his temple. This course Christ takes with Laodicea that she may open. Whatever thou thinkest, thou, &c. These imaginations are strongholds which make sure the passage against Christ; these must be battered, cast down, and the heart laid low in his own thoughts. Here is need of ordnance to make a breach, here is need of those weapons which are mighty through God, 2 Cor. x. 4. All these bolts and impediments that block up the way must be removed, &c.

(8.) He that will open, must put to his hand and lift up the latch: there must be the hand of faith; this is the essence of the act we speak of. To open, is to be willing to admit Christ upon his own terms; to consent to receive Christ, &c. What those terms are, I have shewed heretofore.

Obj. But it appears by the premises, that sinners of themselves are not able to open, the heart is too fast shut. There are so many difficulties, so much opposition from within and without, that it exceeds a natural man's power, especially since he is without strength, without spiritual life, not only unable to do this, but to will it. And therefore it seems strange the Lord should make this the condition of a promise, that he should call upon men to do that which they cannot do. Why does the Lord call upon sinners to open, who of themselves cannot open? This seems strange and to no purpose.

Ans. 1. Sinners were once able, but they have disabled themselves; they had power, but have wilfully lost it. The Lord enabled man in his creation to hear his voice and obey it. We all had power in Adam to obey Christ's voice, but in him we sinned that power away. Though we have lost power to obey, no reason to think God should lose his power to command. The proceedings amongst men makes this apparent: if you entrust a man with a sum of money, and he go and spend it in gaming, drinking, and unwarrantable courses; will you not, therefore, think it reasonable to demand it of him? Will you lose power to ask what he owes ye, because he has prodigally spent it? Shall it be thus amongst men, and is not the Lord as righteous in this proceeding? He entrusted us with power to do what he requires, we have sinned it away; no such prodigals as sinners. But shall this hinder the Lord from demanding what is due? No; nothing more reasonable, nothing more righteous; the Lord has many wise and holy ends in thus proceeding.

It may be said, the case is not alike, for he, of whom the debt may be lawfully demanded, did willingly and deliberately spend the money entrusted with him; but the sin whereby our first parents lost the power which we want, was not actually consented to by us, for we were not then in being.

I answer, A loss or penalty may justly and reasonably fall upon those who never actually consented to the fault for which it was incurred, nor were in being when it was committed. For instance, a man has an estate given on these terms, that if he be faithful to the donor, he and his heirs shall enjoy it for ever; but if he prove treacherous, he and his posterity shall lose it in all generations. He proves treacherous, and so is deprived of it, and his

posterity in following ages have no benefit by it ; yet the proceeding is just and reasonable in the sense of all the world.

Ans. 2. The word of Christ is operative. He many times empowers his word to effect that which he calls for : not only demands this, but conveys a power with his word enabling sinners to perform what he demands. He said, ' Let there be light, and there was light ; ' he ' sent forth his word and healed them ; ' he ' works all things by the word of his power.' You think it in vain to call upon the dead, but if you could convey a power along with your voice to quicken them, it would not be in vain so to speak. Thus did Christ : he speaks to Lazarus who was dead, and had lain some days in the grave, ' Lazarus, come forth ; ' but there was a secret power accompanied the voice which made it effectual ; he spake, and it was done. He says to dry bones, Live ; but there is a quickening power in his word, and, therefore, though he speak to the dead, he speaks to purpose ; he speaks so as to make the dead both hear and live. The dead shall hear, &c., John v. 25, therefore you need not wonder that Christ calls upon sinners to do that which of themselves they cannot, because he has a power to send along with the word, when it pleases him, to enable them to do what he calls for, though as to their own power it be impossible. You need not wonder why Christ calls sinners to open, whenas they cannot do it ; the word of his power, by which he calls for this, will enable them to open. He does that by such exhortations which he exhorts to ; he puts forth his power with his word, when he pleases, and his word, so accompanied, whoever it be spoken to, never returns in vain.

When the Lord intends to enter into the heart of a sinner, he calls upon him to open in the ministry of the word ; for he deals with us as with reasonable creatures, by way of persuasion, exhortation, and argument. He not only speaks to him, calls on him by the voice of man, but he puts forth therewith the power of God : the voice we hear, the power we see not.

This is the Lord's way, to speak to our ears, but therewith to convey a power to the heart, that he that hears may open. Such calling on us, when it is thus empowered, is to purpose, though sinners that hear it be most impotent.

Ans. 3. The Lord may call upon them to open who are not able, that they may go to him to make them able. Though the Lord do not always accompany the word with a converting power, yet if he thereby convince the sinner of his own weakness, it is not to no purpose ; if it make sensible, as he, ' Lord, help my unbelief ; ' if he be brought to this, *Da, domine, quod jubes, et jube quid vis.*

It is just with the Lord to condemn men for not doing that which they have lost the power to do, because they will not be persuaded but they are able enough, and yet endeavour not, neglect him who should enable them. Are not these the thoughts of many hearts : Oh we can open to Christ when we please ; and therefore put it off till hereafter, neglect the means, think not of going to Christ for strength ? What more reasonable than to call on a man to do that which, being his duty, he thinks himself able enough to do ?

Now if this be but the issue of those exhortations, to ' hide pride from man,' to bring men to a sense of their own wretched impotency ; if it stir them up but to try what they can do, that so, having experience of their own weakness, they may go to Christ for strength ; if it bring a sinner to know and feel, and say, I am guilty of shutting out Christ, and yet how miserable am I without him ! And though life and death lie on it, I cannot open. Oh if Christ pity me not, if he break not open this stony heart, so

fast closed against him, I shall shut him out, and be shut out from him for ever. If they be but thus far effectual, they are not in vain. They tend to lay men low, and shew the freeness of grace, and discover the necessity of it. The promoting of these ends justify such means, such exhortations which tend hereto.

Ans. 4. Sinners may do more than they use to do, than they are willing to do, and therefore there is reason to call upon them. They cannot open; though they can do nothing spiritually that tends thereto, yet in a natural and moral way they may do much more than we see done by any of them. Spiritual good is above the power of nature, without Christ no such thing can be done; but that which is morally good they may do, and that which looks towards opening, though it do not reach it.

They cannot subdue the corruption of nature, nor of themselves crucify the flesh, &c.; but they can avoid the outward acts of gross sins. Mere moral men, we see, can do it, without the power of higher principles.

They cannot free themselves from the miseries into which sin has plunged them; but they can assent to a plain word discovering their misery, and consider and think of it as they do of other things which are of consequence.

They cannot enlighten their own darkened minds, nor mollify their hardened hearts; but they can place themselves in the way where the light shines, and where mollifying influences are wont to fall, and where the Sun of righteousness has appointed to rise.

They cannot meditate, nor read, nor pray, nor hear spiritually; but they can attend the ordinances, as they do any other ordinary business which concerns them.

They cannot convey a healing virtue into the waters of the sanctuary, nor put themselves in when the waters are troubled, no more than the impotent man that lay at the pool of Bethesda could do it; but they can wait at the pool, and there they are in the way where Jesus may meet them and cure their impotency, how long soever they have laboured under it.

They cannot command a gale of wind; but they can put the vessel into the channel, and spread their sails, that they may be ready to take the advantage of a spiritual gale, whenever it shall please the Spirit of Christ to blow.

It seems very hard, and they would make advantage of it, who overmagnify the power of nature to the prejudice of the grace of Christ, that the Lord should condemn men for not doing that which they have no power to do. But I take it for an undoubted truth, that amongst those who are in a capacity to use the means, he never condemns any who really do what they can to be saved; none perish who do their utmost to avoid condemnation. Amongst the most zealous asserters of free grace, I find none that question it. None who shall be found at Christ's left hand at the last day, will be able to say truly, Lord, I used all the power that I had to avoid the misery, and prevent that dreadful sentence. It may seem harsh that any should perish for not opening to Christ when they were not able to open; but there are none perish who do all they can to open to him. Though for the wise and holy ends mentioned, he may require what sinners have disabled themselves to perform, yet he condemns no man but such as neglect what they are able to do.

Obj. But may not the difficulty propounded about Christ's calling on those to open who have no power to open be better satisfied by granting that the Lord vouchsafes sufficient grace to all men, as the patrons of free will do?

Ans. To grant that the Lord vouchsafes sufficient grace for the salvation

of all and every man, is both against Scripture and the experience of the world in all ages. For divers parts of the world do not now, nor never did, enjoy the gospel; and what grace can there be sufficient for salvation without the gospel? But we grant that Christ does vouchsafe such sufficient grace, even to many of those who never open to him, as is both sufficient to remove the difficulty, and to shew that we are unjustly charged for too much straitening and contracting the grace of God. For,

(1.) We grant that the Lord vouchsafes all more grace, *i. e.* more common assistance, than ever they make use of. He enables them to do much more towards opening to Christ, and in order to their salvation, than they are wont to use, or willing to improve; and thereby he is justified in condemning those who open not to Christ, because they are able to do more towards it than they will do; and thereby his calling on them to open is justified, because they can do more in order to it than they are willing to do. If a man cannot pay all his debt, yet if he can do something towards it, it is just and reasonable to call upon him for it.

(2.) We grant that the Lord vouchsafes to those who enjoy the gospel, and to many of those who never open to Christ, all that sufficient grace which the patrons of free will contend for, and more than that to many. For all the grace which they are for, is only that which they call *suasive*; *i. e.* the proposal of such things in the gospel as have the force of arguments and motives, and are apt to persuade those who hear them. For this we acknowledge, and also some illumination of the understanding, convictions of sin and misery, some common motions of the Spirit exciting the will to yield to Christ for freedom from this misery. This is all, if not more, than their *suasive* grace amounts to; and all this we grant is vouchsafed to many that never open. But we say more is needful, and is vouchsafed to all that open indeed. So that we do not straiten the grace of God, we are not for less of it than they; but we are for all theirs, and more too.

(3.) We grant that the Lord vouchsafes, even to many who perish, grace sufficient to make their salvation probable, and their condition hopeful. And this is all the grace that they pretend to, such as makes the salvation of the best only probable and hopeful; they are for no grace, at least ordinarily, that makes the salvation of any certain.

For when grace is offered to the soul, they say such is the nature of the will, that it may either accept or refuse it, and so it is uncertain whether it may yield or not till the event shew it; for the will (by their principles) has still power to resist when the grace of God has done what it can. And if it yield to the power of grace to-day, yet it may resist it to-morrow; if it should receive it this hour, yet it may expel it or fall from it the next hour. And the Lord, as they hold, never vouchsafes so much grace, in an ordinary way, as will make the perseverance of any certain, and so never enough to make the salvation of any certain.

But we hold that the Lord disposes his grace so as to make both conversion and perseverance certain; and so as to make salvation not only probable or hopeful, but also certain to his chosen, and probable to others. So that still we are not injurious to the grace of God by straitening it, but are for as much and more of it than they. And therefore, if the grace which they are for be sufficient to justify the urging of those exhortations, then will that which we are for as much, or more, justify, and make them appear as evidently reasonable, if not more.

Use 1. Reproof. Here is a just reproof for those who open not to Christ, and those that open deceitfully.

1. Those that open not, that keep their hearts shut against him. Oh

that Christ should come, and stand, and knock, and call at the hearts of sinners; that he should condescend to come, and be so patient as to stand, and be so gracious as to knock, and be so importunate as to call; use all language, all importunity; that he should command, threaten, promise, beseech, exhort, complain: and yet be disobeyed, alighted, disregarded, denied, rejected! Oh that sinners should thus sin against Christ, thus sin against their own souls; that their hearts should be thus fast shut against Christ, when they are set wide open for sin and for the world; that the happiness of enjoying Christ, the comforts of communion with him, should be thus set at nought; that Christ's presence, which he here offers, should be refused, when all enjoyments without him tend but to make you more miserable; that fellowship with Christ, which he here promises, should be rejected, when all things else, without this, tend but to bring on that woful fellowship which disobedient, gainsaying sinners shall have with the devil and his angels!

But who are those that open not to Christ? Far be it from me to do this wickedness, will most be ready to say. Something I must answer to this, that the reproof may come home, that I may not speak to the air. I will shew you who they are who open not.

(1.) Those who are not at home when Christ knocks; whose minds and hearts are abroad; their thoughts, affections, inclinations employed about the world and outward affairs; who enter not into their own hearts, to consider seriously, frequently, effectually, what the condition of their souls is, and to provide accordingly for their eternal state; who have no mind, no heart to such thoughts, to such employments as most concern their souls, can put these off till hereafter, or think of them so slightly, as though they were of less concernment than worldly things. A sad thought it is, that men who believe they have souls, and believe that they shall be happy or miserable to eternity, according as they are provided for in this little time, should spend nothing, or so very little of this time in thinking of, in providing for eternity; should let the world, and things of less moment, carry them so far, so much from that which most nearly concerns them; should be such strangers to their soul's condition, and so little acquainted with their own hearts, and so little employed about that which is within them, that their estate, their livelihood, their bodies, what they shall eat, &c., should be more minded than their souls. Sure these men are not come to themselves, they are a great way from home, and so not like to open.

(2.) When Christ's voice is not heard. These you see are joined in the text: 'If any hear my voice.' He that will not hear will not open. Ay, but do we not hear? Truly there are too many that will not do thus much, as give outward attendance to the voice of Christ in the ministry of the word. The practice of such proclaims to the world that they shut out Christ with a high hand. But further, for those who are not so impudently wicked, you must know this, the hearing with the ear only is no evidence that you open. Hearing is no hearing in Christ's account, except the hearing of the ear be joined with a compliance of the heart. *Non esse, et inutiliter esse, pro paribus habentur.* To hear, and hear unprofitably, to hear and not obey, is no hearing in the sense of the text. You may hear so long enough before you open. If you hear Christ reproving, and be not convinced; hear him promising, and be not affected; hear him threaten, and tremble not; hear him command, and obey not; hear him exhort, and are not persuaded: you do not hear so as to open, you will never open till you hear otherwise. If you put off convictions, slight promises, evade threatenings, do what he forbids, neglect what he commands in the ministry of the word; if you

continue the same men for all your hearing, do neither more nor less, no more of what is pressed as your duty, no less of what is forbidden as your sin, are no more affected, reformed, no more careful of your souls, no more conscientious in keeping your hearts, ordering your ways, serving the Lord in your families, minding him in your affairs; if thy hearing be to no more effect than this, thou art the man that shuts out Christ.

The word of Christ is his messenger; he sends it to prepare the way of the Lord, to make his paths straight, as it is said of John Baptist, Mat. iii. 1, that he may come into his temple, that he may enter into the heart of a sinner, and make it his temple. Now, if the word prevail not, if Christ's messenger be shut out, he expects no better entertainment; when his voice is not heard, himself is shut out.

(8.) Those who think it an easy matter to open to Christ; either imagine they have already opened, though they never perceived it, though it be not discernible either in their hearts or lives, or else put it off till hereafter, to do it at their leisure, as though it were in their power to open when they list. How ordinary is it for men to think that it is easy to repent and believe! The two great hinges upon which the door moves when it opens to Christ, they make no great matter of them.

As for faith, they think they did believe ever since they can remember, ever since they had any knowledge of Christ.

For repentance. They defer it till old age or sickness. Do they not make it an easy matter to repent, who think they may do it when they please; or think it enough to be a little sorry for sinning, and ask pardon for it?

Alas! those men are far from opening, who do not so much as know what it is to open. They are not acquainted with the desperate wickedness of their own hearts; they take no notice of the stone that is in their hearts, and how they are by nature obstinately hardened against the admission of Christ. They never were convinced of the necessity of Christ, and of an almighty power to make way for his entertainment. They never had experience of the mighty workings of Christ in their hearts, which they are well acquainted with who have opened to him. They hereby declare they never yet did so much as try to open, so far are they from having opened.

(4.) Those who are under the command and the dominion of sin. Where sin reigns, Christ is excluded. While sin commands, Christ will have no admission. Those that are under the power of sin are under the power of Satan, for he 'rules in the children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. There the strong man armed keeps the house, and that is evidence enough a stronger than he is not yet come. Where sin and Satan have possession, so as to reign, they block up the door against Christ. Till the covenant with death and hell be dissolved, there can be no consent to entertain Christ. But those that are under the dominion of sin are in league with hell and death, there is a strong conspiracy against Christ to keep him out.

But where, in whom, does sin reign? Why, where it is not mortified, subdued. Where it is obeyed in the lusts thereof. When it says, Go, and the sinner goes; Come, and he comes; Do this, and he doth it. He is under the dominion of sin, who lives in the practice of sin, drunkenness, uncleanness, worldliness, profaning of the Sabbath, neglect of the word and ordinances, public or private. The Scripture is clear in this. 'He that commits sin is the servant of sin. He that is born of God sinneth not,' 1 John iii. Not that sin is not in him, or that he never is guilty of an act of sin; but it is not his delight, it is not his custom, he follows it not with full consent,

he makes not a trade of it. He that thus sins, the seed of God abides not in him; and where this is not, Christ is not. Those that live in known sins do but deceive themselves, when they think they have any part in Christ, and it is a wonder those that pretend to any knowledge of the word of God should think so, Eph. v. 6, 1 Cor. vi. 9. You may as well reconcile light and darkness, or bring heaven and hell together, as entertain Christ while you live in sin.

He that allows himself in the neglect of any known duty, public, private, secret, or in the practice of any known sin, gross or refined, open or secret, small or great, Christ is not in him, Christ is shut out by him. For he that thus lives in sin, is the servant of sin; and he that is the servant of sin, will think he owes not Christ so much service as to open to him. If it be thus with you, you are yet in the gall of bitterness, you are yet in your sins, Christ is not in you, you never opened to him.

(5.) Those that have not felt the effects of Christ's presence have not experience of communion with him. Whoever opens, Christ will enter, and sup with him. He knows what it is to enjoy Christ, has tasted the sweetness of fellowship with him. Now, what are the effects of Christ's presence? Why, principally light and holiness. Christ is the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, the bright Morning Star. When he arises, darkness is scattered, ignorance vanishes, the works of darkness find no place.

Holiness. Christ is called the holy of holies, Dan. ix. When he comes, holiness comes with him. The heart is sanctified, purity is no more slighted and derided, there appears a singular beauty in holiness. You may as well imagine Christ in hell, as in a heart destitute of purity and holiness. You may as well imagine a day without light, as holiness of heart without holiness of life. By this you may know whether you have opened. Then for communion with Christ, those that open to Christ taste the sweetness of it, an exceeding sweetness, which renders the ways of holiness wherein it is enjoyed exceeding delightful; so that the pleasures of sin and the world, those that have formerly been most delightful, are now rank and unsavoury to him that has opened to Christ. By this you may know whether you have opened.

And since it is thus, since all these, &c. do shut out Christ, how many are there who fall under this reproof! As strait is the way and narrow the gate that leads to heaven, so strait is the way, &c., that lets Christ in to us on earth, and few there are that find it; and it is to be lamented, that so many who enjoy the gospel, hear his voice, should shut themselves out of heaven by shutting out Christ.

2. It reproves those that open deceitfully. Many such there are.

(1.) Those who will let Christ in at the window, but not in at the door; into their understandings, but not into their hearts: such are those of whom we read, Heb. vi., who were once enlightened, admit the light, take some pains for knowledge, yea, and rejoice in the light; but when this light should come to be effectual upon their wills, consciences, affections, conversation, to purify their hearts, expel their lusts, quash the motions of sin, reform their conversations in their families and in the world, as becomes children of the light, here they stop; Christ must not enter here, thus they shut him out of their hearts. Light without influence, notion without efficacy.

(2.) Those who will let him in at the outer door, but not into the closet, will admit so much of Christ, as to bring them to a fair plausible compliance in the profession and outward exercises of religion. They will hear,

and pray, and read, and discourse too of religious matters. This is easily done, and they get some credit by it; and it stands not in the way of their humours, lusts, worldly interests; but for the power of godliness, the exercise of holiness, close and strict walking with Christ, in secret as well as openly, this they relish not. They will be Jews, such as the apostle speaks of Rom. ii. 28, *ἐν ᾧ παρεστῶς*, make a show of admitting Christ in their profession, discourses, and outward performance, but not *ἐν ᾧ κρυπτοῦνται*, but not let him into their thoughts to lodge there, their wills to rule, their affections to be embraced there without a rival. They will make a fair show in the flesh; but for serving Christ in the Spirit, rejoicing, submitting the whole rule of their souls unto him, here they shut him out.

(3.) Those who let him but in half-way, stand and parley with Christ; will accept of some of those terms he propounds; cannot digest all; will renounce some of their own righteousness, but not count all loss and dung; will part with some sins, those that are gross and disgraceful, those they can gain nothing by, or take little pleasure in, those that are open and out of credit. Ay! but there is some Delilah, some gainful or delightful lust, they cannot live without it; they say of this, as Lot of Zoar, 'Is it not a little one?' 'Oh let my soul live in it;' 'the Lord be merciful to me in this,' I cannot part with it; if Christ will but dispense with this, he shall be welcome. Ay! but Christ will not have a hoof left behind if he enter.

They will comply with some duties of religion, both in secret, and in their families, and in public. Herod did many things, and heard John gladly; Agrippa was almost persuaded; the foolish virgins had lamps as well as the wise. They did not a little who profess so much, Mat. vii. 22. They will go far in many duties, and so as they cannot be discerned from those that indeed open to him, in respect of external acts. Oh but for such constancy and fervency in secret prayer, such frequency in secret meditation, heart-examination, and self-judging; for such strictness, and watchfulness, and precise circumspection about their hearts and ways; for the exercises of self-denial, repentance, and mortification: these are hard morsels, they cannot down with them. If Christ will compound with them, and abate something of his demands, they will agree to admit him; they will yield far, they will open half-way. Ay, but Christ will not enter upon such terms, either all or none. He will not creep into your hearts, the gate must be lifted up, else the King of glory will not enter.

You see who are to be reprov'd. Oh that those who are guilty in any of these respects, would not deceive themselves as though they had opened already, but go about to open!

Use 2. Exhortation. Since those that will have Christ to enter, must open to him, oh be persuaded to open unto Christ. Let it not be in vain that Christ comes, and stands, and knocks, and calls, and uses all importunity to gain admission. If you shut out Christ, to whom will you open? Will you shut out him who is your life, your happiness, in whom is all our hopes, &c.? Can anything save them who shut out a Saviour? Can they find mercy, who will not open when mercy is offered? Can they expect to live, who will not admit life? Will you prefer sin before Christ, the worst thing in earth or hell, before the King of glory? Shall that dwell in you, rule over you, take up mind and heart, while Christ stands and knocks, and is excluded? Does sin love you? was it crucified for you? or will it save you in the conclusion? Nay, will it not certainly damn you, if it be not cast out, forsaken, crucified? And shall a damning evil find easier entertainment than a Saviour? Is there any love like his love? And can you

shew any greater hatred and despite of him, than to keep him out, while his and your deadly enemy is let in, and kept in to keep him out?

Is there any patience like to Christ's, who comes so often, stands so long, knocks so loud, calls so importunately? And can there be any provocation like yours, who turn the deaf ear, who will not mind, will not regard; who tell him you have let him in already, he is admitted far enough, when it is plain he is quite shut out? Sin will not be tolerated where Christ is admitted. You affront Christ, and mock him, when you say your hearts are open to him, while your lives testify there is something else rules in you; while swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, neglect of the word, ordinances, families, souls, these cry aloud, God is not here. All his knocking, calling, has not yet prevailed. Is this nothing to you, all ye that pass by? See if there be any love like Christ's love, any condescensions like Christ's, any patience, any importunity; and see if there be any hatred, contempt, neglect, unkindness, like yours. Shall Christ come to his own, and his own not receive him? Would you have him still a man of sorrows and sufferings? Shall he have still occasion to complain, 'Who has believed our report?' Who has hearkened when I have called? Who has regarded when I have stretched out my hands? Who has yielded when I have entreated? Who has opened when I have knocked? Shall it be thus still with Christ? Shall he not have a place whereon to lay his head? Ay! so it may be for you, who will give him no place in your hearts.

Where shall Christ have entertainment in the world, if not amongst us? Where shall he be admitted, if shut out where he stands and knocks? He expects no entertainment from the heathens; he knocks not, he calls not there. He expects none as yet from the Jews; they rejected his first offer, and he took them at their word, and never sought to them since. He expects none from Turks and apostate Christians, they have entertained others. Where shall Christ be entertained, if not amongst us? While you shut him out, you do what you can that Christ on earth may have no place to lay his head. Expect you to be entertained by Christ, while you refuse to give him entertainment? Will he open to those who shut him out? Be not deceived, Christ will not be mocked. Open to him now, if ever you expect to see him hereafter. Shut him not out, who has done, who has suffered so much for sinners. Be not thus unkind to Christ, be not thus cruel to your souls. Open to him as King, Prophet, Priest.

Motives. 1. Consider what danger there is in not opening; what equity there is you should open; what advantage you may get by opening.

1. For the danger. Take it in these severals.

(1.) Till you open to Christ, you are shut up in darkness. The state of nature, the condition of a sinner without Christ, is expressed by darkness, Acts xxvi. 18. Till a sinner be turned, converted, *i. e.* till his heart be opened to Christ, he is in darkness. So Col. i. 13; they are 'under the power of darkness, who are not translated,' &c.; and they are not in his kingdom, in whose hearts he rules not as king, and he rules not in them who shut him out.

Now a state of a darkness is a state of misery, a dismal, sad, woful condition. It is frequent in Scripture to express the greatest miseries on earth by darkness. It joins darkness with the valley of the shadow of death. So sad is this condition, as it is even a shadow of death, of that which is most dreadful to men. And well may all miseries on earth be expressed by darkness, since the state of darkness, the condition of a sinner without Christ, is next to hell. There is but this difference: that is outer darkness; this is

inner darkness : a hell in the heart, a little hell on earth. No better is your condition, till ye open to Christ, you are even on the confines of hell. It is true sinners are not sensible of this misery, but even this makes them more miserable. Would you not think it a sad condition to be shut up in a dungeon all your days? Such is your condition while ye open not to Christ; and more miserable, by how much spiritual darkness is more dismal than outward. The misery of it is herein evident, that those that are in it know it not, see not where they are, nor will not believe they are in Satan's dungeon.

(2.) Till you open to Christ, your hearts are possessed by Satan. They are cages, not of unclean birds only, but of unclean, of damned spirits. You are in darkness, till the Sun of righteousness arise in your hearts. Now the devils they are called the 'rulers of the darkness of this world,' Eph. vi. 12; not only of that darkness of the other world, but of this. Satan has two dungeons, hell, and the heart that shuts out Christ; he rules, he tyrannizes in both. You are under the power, in the possession of Satan, Eph. ii. 2. You see how they are; Satan has his throne in that heart that opens not; and this will be your state if you do not open. I told you this soul-possession is worse than bodily.

(3.) Till you open to Christ, the wrath of God is shut in. Children of disobedience are children of wrath, Eph. ii. 2, 3. Wrath is their portion, all that they enjoy, all that they can look to inherit, while they continue so. And who are children of disobedience, but those that open not to Christ? I beseech you, consider that expression which I have often occasion to mention, John iii. 36. It is not anger, displeasure, but wrath; it is not the wrath of a man, or of a multitude, or of a king, but of God; it is not a transient, fading passion, which, though it be high and violent, may soon be over, but it is abiding wrath. And it abides not at a distance, or near unto him only, but upon him; he that believes not, *i.e.* opens not. To shut your hearts against Christ, is as if a man should shut his doors, that nothing should come in or out, when his house is on fire; this is the way to have it consumed without remedy. The wrath of God is kindling in every disobedient heart; it is often compared to fire, and it abides there. When you shut out Christ, you shut out him who only can quench it. What remains, then, but if you so continue, it will burn to the bottom of hell?

(4.) If you open not to Christ now, he will shut you out hereafter. Time is approaching when, as Christ comes to you, so you will be glad to come to him. He knocks now, you will be glad to knock hereafter. Those who will not now open, shall fare then as the foolish virgins. Oh consider it, when all your outward comforts and supports have left you, when you must expect the sentence of life or death from Christ's mouth, will it not be sad to hear nothing from him but these dreadful words, 'Depart from me, I never knew you?' I called, and you would not hear; do ye expect I should hear you, who stopped your ears against me? I knocked, and ye would not open, and do ye expect that I should open to you, whom you shut out of doors? I stood, and ye took no notice of me, and shall I now own you? No; 'Depart from me, I know ye not.' See now whether it be better to entertain sin or Christ. You would not believe it before, now you may feel it. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; you used me strangely, and shut me out; what follows? 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' This will be the doom of all that had rather live in sin than open to Christ. Oh, as you would avoid that sad departure, that everlasting fire, that woful fellowship with the devil, &c., be persuaded now to open.

Means. What means shall we make use of that we may open to Christ?

1. Be convinced that you have not yet opened to him; for those that shut out Christ, the first step to the door is to be satisfied in his judgment that he has not opened. He that dreams the door is open while it is shut, will be so far from making haste to open, as he will wonder at, if not deride, those that call upon him to do it. This is one of Satan's devices to secure the heart against opening, to persuade a sinner he has opened already, though indeed Christ never was admitted. While you are fast in this snare, he has you sure enough. If you would escape, examine impartially by the rules before delivered. Are you not abroad? Do ye not disobey Christ's voice? Think you it not an easy matter to open? Are you not under the command of sin? Can you shew the effects of Christ's presence? Search impartially, and judge of your estates, as you expect to be judged. To deceive yourselves herein may be your ruin for ever. Follow the apostle's rule. To know you have not opened, when it is so indeed, is the first step to open.

2. Consider your misery while Christ is without. Let not the world and these outward things take up all your minds. Shew so much respect to Christ, so much respect to your souls, as to spare some serious thoughts for them. Think seriously what it is to be in darkness, in the possession of Satan, under the wrath of God, in danger to be shut out from Christ for ever. While you think yourselves safe and happy enough in your present condition, you are in danger never to open, being not sensible of your danger in not opening.

3. Be apprehensive of your inability, of your unwillingness, to open; of the desperate wickedness of your hearts, and their obstinateness, averseness to Christ. Bewail this frequently, seriously, heartily, as your greatest misery. Let this affect you, that though you be miserable, yet are you utterly unable to free yourselves from this misery. When a sinner is lost in his own apprehension, this is Christ's opportunity to be found of him. He is not valued, he is not esteemed, till the sinner see himself lost without him. He comes to seek and to save that which is lost.

4. In sense of your own inability, go to Christ for strength to open. As he comes to thee, so go thou to him; as he calls to thee, so cry thou to him; and when he knocks, importune him to open. Say, Lord, thou hast the key of David, thou shuttest, and no man opens; thou openest, and no man shuts; Lord, open this heart that has been too long closed against thee; break down these strongholds that keep thee from me; cast out sin, cast out the world, that have so long kept thee out of possession; bind the strong man armed, and cast him out. Other lords have had dominion over thee, they have made me miserable by keeping my Lord, my happiness, from me. Oh cast out these intruders, take possession of me, and let me be mine for ever! Thou callest for my heart; Lord, it is thine. Though I have dealt treacherously with thee, and given it to other things, it is thine. It cost thee dear; Lord, enter, take possession of it. Thou knockest at this wretched heart, oh why dost thou stay so long without? Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, and bless this wretched heart with thy presence. Oh it would be still resisting thee! but break it open with an almighty power, and suffer it no longer to shut thee out. Follow the Lord with such cries.

5. Wait upon the Lord in the use of those means which he makes use of to open the hearts of sinners: reading the word, conferring with others whose hearts the Lord has opened, especially hearing, this is the Lord's ordinary way, and that which he is wont to make effectual for the opening of the hearts of sinners. This is the way to open, this is the way for Christ to enter: 'If any man hear my voice, I will come in,' &c.

Pass we from the conditions to the things promised, which offer themselves in two branches : 1, 'I will come in to him.'

Obs. If any will open to Christ, he will come in to him. Those that open to Christ, shall have his presence. When the everlasting gates are left open, the King of glory will come in. Christ will vouchsafe his presence to those that will admit him. To explain this;—

Quest. Some may ask, Is not Christ in every place? Is not this one of his perfections as he is God? If in every place, he is in my heart already. How can he be said to come thither, where he is already? Coming implies he was not there before he comes, it denotes absence; but how can he be absent who is everywhere present?

Ans. There is a twofold presence of Christ: a general presence, as he is governor of the world; and a special presence, as he is a Saviour.

As to the former, since he is God, he is in every place in respect of his essence, his power, his wisdom, and other perfections, with the effects thereof. This presence the psalmist gives an account of, Ps. cxxxix. 7, &c.; hence he is said to know all things; and to uphold all things, Heb. i. 8. This is his presence as he is governor of the world, and so he is present with every creature. And in this respect he is not only with the wicked, but with the damned, as he upholds them, continues them in being, orders and proportions their sufferings to his glory. In this sense he does not here promise to come; for he is there, even in the souls of obstinate sinners already. In this respect he can never be shut out, he can never be excluded. But,

2. There is a special presence, a presence of peculiar love and special favour: when he comes as a saviour, as a redeemer; when he is present as a king, as a prophet, as a priest, to this or that particular soul; when he comes in as a friend, a brother, a father, a husband, and shews himself in a way suitable to these sweet relations. So he promises to come in the text, to vouchsafe a special presence; which I call special in respect,

(1.) Of special manifestations. When he will manifest a peculiar love, a redeeming love, the love of a dying, a crucified saviour; such a love as none taste of but his glorified favourites in heaven, and his excellent ones on earth.

(2.) Of special communications. When he communicates himself as a head to its members, as a prince to his favourites, as a husband to his spouse. When he bestows the precious fruits of his unspeakable love, the invaluable purchase of his precious blood, in light, holiness, comforts, the first fruits of glory, and such as none partake of but those that must enter into the harvest, for whom is reserved the inheritance.

(3.) Of special operations. When he walks, and works, and acts in them, as in those only whom he prepares for eternal rest, those only whom he intends to crown, and for whom he reserves an eternal weight of glory.

This is the presence Christ here promiseth. Thus will he come to those that open. And till sinners open, though they have his general presence, yet they shall never enter into the secret of his peculiar presence. He may be with them as governor of the world here, and as judge of quick and dead hereafter, but not as a Saviour. It is another kind of presence which Christ here promises than ever those had experience of who live in sin, and give up themselves to the world. And that ye may apprehend it more distinctly, and take a clearer view of what Christ offers, when he says he will come in, observe these particulars. He will come in,

(1.) To join himself to the soul; to enter into covenant and league with it, to contract the opening sinner to himself in an everlasting covenant; to unite himself to it, that it may be one with him, that it may be a member of

him, 2 Cor. xi. 2. 'The head of every man is Christ.' He comes that he may espouse it to himself, to shew it is as near, as dear to him, as the spouse to her husband. Wherein consists the union betwixt man and wife (which the Scripture so frequently uses to illustrate the union betwixt Christ and a believing soul)? It is expressed, Gen. ii. 24, 'They shall be no more twain,' &c. Such an intimacy does Christ intend, when he comes in, &c. Only it is spiritual: 1 Cor. vi. 16, 'He that is joined to Christ is one spirit.' He comes to give his own Spirit to it. And this gives some light to that expression, whereby is held forth an intimacy almost incredible betwixt Christ and such souls, John xvii. 21, 22. It is Christ's prayer for all believers; and he prays not only that they may be one amongst themselves, but one with him, as it follows, ver. 23, and so one with him, as the Father is one with him. But this must be cautiously understood. Not that they may be of the same essence as the Father and Son are, nor that they may be assumed into a personal union with himself or the Father, as the human nature of Christ is assumed into a personal union with the Godhead; but that they may be of the same Spirit, that the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Christ may be in them. Hereby they may become one with Christ, as he is one with the Father. For consider him in his human nature, and how is he one with the Father? Why, besides the union of his own nature in the person of the Son, we can conceive no other union betwixt the Father and Christ incarnate but that which consists in the indwelling of the Spirit in the human nature of Christ. Now this is it he prays for, that they may be one with him by the dwelling of the same Spirit in me and them, whereby I am one with the Father. The return of this prayer Christ brings when he comes into an opening soul, he makes it one with him as he is one with the Father, viz., by making them of one spirit. He joins himself thereto; and he that is joined to Christ is one spirit.

(2.) To express his kindness to it. We use to come to our friends for this end. But no such kindness can be expressed by the sons of men as Christ exercises to an opening soul. Before, while shut up against Christ, the soul was under the wrath of God, under the stroke of justice, under the curses, threatenings, and terrors of the law, without comfort, without God, without hope in the world. But when Christ comes it is a time of love; he expresses this love by coming, even that loving-kindness which is better than life. He tells the soul, justice is satisfied, the law fulfilled, the threatening executed, the curse removed, the Lord reconciled; and that he has effected all this out of love to it. He has satisfied justice, he has borne the wrath of God, the curse was executed upon him, he has slain enmity upon the cross, his blood has quenched the flame, his death has procured life, he has blotted out the handwriting; there is now no curse, no wrath, no condemnation. Oh, how beautiful are the feet of Christ bringing these glad tidings of good things! He was anointed for this end, and to this end he comes. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' Isa. lxi. 1.

(3.) To shine in the soul. Then may it be said to the soul as to the church, Isa. lx. 1, 2. While Christ is shut out, the heart is a dungeon, a place of darkness, a sad, a dismal place, a shadow of death; but when Christ comes, it becomes like the firmament, when the sun shines in its glory, Mal. iv. 2. Some clouds and mists there will be, but when the sun is once risen, this light will shine more and more unto perfect day. Before, the god of this world did blind its eyes; but now 'the light of the glorious gospel,' &c., he comes to 'give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ;' the veil is taken away, and now he may, as in a glass, with open face behold the glory of God, &c.

He was 'sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord.' Oh what an alteration is here! Even as in one that is born blind, on a sudden restored to sight; or as one shut up in a dungeon all his days, brought out to see the sun. Oh how are his apprehensions changed! He sees that in sin that he never saw before, that in himself which he would not believe, that in the world which he would never have been persuaded of, that in holiness which he never imagined. Oh how does he look upon Christ, his sufferings, his love, his intercession, his righteousness! He wonders that he should have heard so many times of these, and yet never see no such thing in them as he now apprehends. The light is come, the day-star is risen, the sun is up, Christ shines in his dark heart, he comes to this end.

(4.) To adorn it. Nothing so loathsome, nothing so deformed, as the soul of a sinner without Christ. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*. The best thing corrupted becomes worst of all; the most beautiful bodies, when putrefied and rotted, are most loathsome. The soul of man, when created, was the most excellent piece of the creation in this world; but corrupted by sin is the most noisome, the most loathsome. The Lord cannot behold it without loathing and detestation. Hence is this corruption by sin expressed by things most offensive: the poison of asps, the stench of an open sepulchre, the vomit of a dog, the mire wherein the sow wallows, the deformity of a leper, the putrefied matter of an ulcer, the corruption of a festered wound. Put all these together, and the soul of sinners is a more loathsome spectacle in God's eye, than such a compound, a filthy medley, would be in ours. Now, is this a place fit to receive Christ? No; but he will make it so; he comes to this end, to cleanse the soul, to purge out its filthiness, to take away its deformity, to clothe it with beauty and glory, that he may delight in it, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. He does it effectually, makes the soul a fit object of love, so as he can call it his love, his undefiled; so as he can express love to it in such a wonderful strain, 'My sister, my spouse,' Cant. iv. 1, 7, 9, 10, chap. vi. 4, 10, chap. vii. 6; so as he can rejoice in it, according to the tenor of that high expression, Zeph. iii. 17.

(5.) To enrich the soul. Christ comes not empty-handed, he brings those treasures with him that will make thee rich for ever. But what is this? thou wilt say; is it gold, or silver, or pearls, or worldly possessions? Alas! these are trash compared with it, not worthy the account, the name, of riches. It is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. Hear Christ himself asserting this, Prov. viii. 17, 18, 19, and chap. iii. 13, 14, 16. But what are these riches? What is the sum, the value of them? Do you ask this? Oh, it is far above me to tell you; nay, the great apostle, who was rapt up into the third heaven, cannot herein satisfy; nay, the angels themselves are not sufficient to express. For why, they are unsearchable riches, they are infinite, there is no end of them. Dig in these mines to eternity, you will never make a full discovery; they are unsearchable. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, &c. The eye of man has seen much, the ear has heard more than his eye has seen, his heart can conceive more than either his eye has seen or ear heard; but eye, and ear, and heart, let them see, and hear, and conceive as much as is possible, can never reach a full discovery.

But though I cannot give you a full account of these riches, yet I may point at them. There are riches of righteousness, of joy, of grace, of glory. I will but add one word more, but there is more in that one word than all the men on earth, or angels in heaven, can fathom. What is that? Why, it is himself. When he comes to thee, he comes to give thee himself, no less than himself. And this is more than all the earth, more than all the king-

doms of the earth, and the glory of them ; nay, more than heaven and earth put together. Oh happy soul, if Christ be come into thee ! Thou art far from want, thou needest never complain ; thou needest never envy the greatest, the richest, under heaven ; he is thine, who is more than heaven and earth. Go thy way and break forth into praises ; say, I have enough, I have all, he is mine who is more than all ; my lines are fallen in a pleasant place, I have a goodly heritage ; a goodly heritage indeed, for Christ is my portion. Ahasuerus his hundred seven and twenty provinces are but a small pittance, an inconsiderable nothing, compared with my possessions. Christ is come, and has given me possession of himself. 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee.' Thus bountifully he deals with every soul that opens to him.

(6.) To reign in it. That heart shall be his throne. It was before one of Satan's dungeons, a cage for unclean lusts ; but Christ comes to make it his throne. There was much riches in the former, here is as much honour in this. 'Whence is this to me,' says Elizabeth, Luke i. 48, 'that the mother of my Lord should come unto me ?' With how much more admiration may that soul say, What honour is this, that the Lord himself should come to me ; that he should choose this unworthy soul to be his throne, this polluted heart to be his temple ! Yet thus it is ; Christ comes for this end, to erect his throne there, to expel those tyrants that have so long oppressed the soul with cruel bondage, worse than that of Egypt ; he comes to make thy lusts (his and thine enemies) his footstool ; to whip out those buyers and sellers, that the soul may be his temple ; to make thy heart his chamber of presence, to walk there, to act there, to abide there. That is the seventh.

(7.) To abide there. He comes to stay, to make his abode ; not as a stranger, but as one that would dwell with thee, John xiv. 23. He will not be as a stranger, or as a wayfaring-man that turns but in for a night, but he will abide with thee for ever : ver. 16, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' If thou be unkind, unfaithful, froward, disrespectful of him, this will cloud the glory of his presence, eclipse the comforts of it, he will hide himself, seem to withdraw, but he will never utterly forsake thee, Ps. lxxxix. 80, 81, &c., Isa. liv. 7-9. When he comes to the heart, he says, This is my resting-place, and here will I dwell. Here is a covenant of peace.

Use I. For information. The light of this observation discovers the misery of those that open not to Christ ; those that are so much engaged in sin, so much entangled in the world, as Christ hath no admission. If you open not to Christ, he is not yet come in ; and if he be not come in, you are without happiness, without hopes of it, extremely miserable. For

1. You are not joined to Christ ; and if not joined to him, you are in conjunction with sin and Satan. You are not members of Christ ; and he that is not a member of Christ, is a limb of Satan. You are not one spirit with Christ ; and he that is not one spirit with Christ, what spirit is he possessed with, but that evil, that unclean spirit, which fills every heart that is not taken up with Christ ? You are not in covenant with Christ ; and he that is not so, has made a covennat with death and hell, he is in league with Satan. Indeed, every heart that shuts out Christ says to Satan, as Jehoshaphat to Ahab, 1 Kings xxii. 4, 'I am as thou art, my people as thy people,' &c. They have the same projects, carry on the same design, act the same things. 'Ye are of your father,' John viii. 41, 44. Whatever thou workest, it is the devil's work ; and all thou doest is but a promoting of his expeditions. What greater misery than this !

Besides, till thou open to Christ, he shines not into thee. Till then, the blackness of darkness covers thee. Whatever saving light shines without,

thou seest it not till Christ come and shine within. What says the apostle ? 2 Cor. iv. 8. Now the gospel is hid to thee, if the light thereof lead thee not to open to Christ. While it is hid, thou art lost ; and it cannot but be hid if Christ be not come in. He adds the reason, ver. 14. This is thy condition, the God of this world has blinded thy eyes. Oh, sad estate, to have thy eyes put out by Satan ! How woful was Samson's condition when the Philistines put out his eyes, and made him grind in the prison-house, and bound him with fetters of brass, Judges xvi. 21. This will be thy condition, till Christ come in, and far more miserable. Satan has put out thy eyes, he has bound thee with fetters stronger than brass, and he makes thee grind in the prison-house. Thy own heart is thy prison, thy own lusts are thy fetters, and thy work is worse drudgery than grinding. And it is he that is thy task-master, thou goest when he commands ; but thou art blind, alas, thou knowest not whither thou goest, thou seest not he drives thee on in the paths of death. When Israel heard what conditions Nahash offered to Jabesh-Gilead, they all lift up their voice and wept, 1 Sam. xi. 4. Why, what were those lamentable conditions ? see ver. 2. Oh, but much more reason hast thou to weep, much more reason have all that know thy condition to weep over thee. Satan has not put out thy right eye only, but both thine eyes ; not those of thy body, but that which is far more woful, those of thy soul. He has quite blinded thee ; he does not offer this, as Nahash, but he has already done it. Oh that every one that hears this to be his condition, would with Israel lift up his voice and weep ! Or if thou seest no reason to bewail it, even this shews Satan has blinded thee, that thou canst not see reason to weep, to bewail so sad a condition. Thou thinkest thy estate good enough, with Laodicea ; but even this shews, as Christ tells her, that thou art blind.

Further, till Christ come in, thou shalt never have experience of his loving-kindness, never taste that the Lord is gracious. Some things thou mayest receive from common bounty ; but these, embittered with the curse, and mixed with the wrath of God ; but the loving-kindness which is better than life, thou shalt never taste of. And if that be better than life, is not thy condition without it worse than death ? Make as much as thou canst of thy husks, thou canst not taste of the bread of life.

Till then, thy soul is deformed, leprous, loathsome, in the eye of God. Nothing in it but wounds and bruises, and putrefied sores, full of corruption. He cannot look upon thee without loathing and detestation. The temper of thy heart, and all its actings, both its complexion and motions, are all an abomination in his sight, Prov. xv. 8, 9, 26.

Till then thou hast neither part nor lot in Christ's riches, not the least dram of those treasures belong to thee ; nothing to do with his righteousness, no interest in his blood, no share in what he has purchased. Thou canst lay no claim to his person, he is not thy portion. And what then ? The curse, the wrath of God, everlasting misery, is thy portion, thou canst expect no portion but with hypocrites. Thou pretendest to Christ, but in thy life deniest him ; or if thou seem to open outwardly, thy heart is shut against him. This is the character of hypocrites, and their portion is set out in the place where there is weeping, &c.

Till then thy heart is the place where Satan has his throne ; he rules in the children of disobedience. What more dreadful than the condition of Babylon ? Rev. xviii. 2, ' It is become the habitation of devils,' &c. This is the condition of thy soul ; it is a habitation of devils, and a hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird ; of that which is more unclean and hateful than the hatefulest birds, it is a cage

of unclean and hateful lusts. So it is, and so it will be till Christ come; these unclean birds will never be chased away, but prey upon thy dead and putrefied soul; it will never be dispossessed of these foul spirits till Christ have possession; it will be the devil's habitation, till Christ come and make it his temple.

Oh that the Lord would open the eyes of every soul, who will not part with sin to let in Christ, to see his misery without Christ, that thou mayest never give rest to thy soul, till it be a resting-place for Christ!

Use. 2. For examination. By this ye may try, by this ye may know, whether ye have opened unto Christ. If ye have opened, Christ is come in: 'If any man open the door,' &c. But how shall we know whether Christ be come in? If you will be directed by the word, you need not want direction.

1. When Christ comes in, he comes as a friend. This is clear. Now, if you entertain him as a friend, you love him. But how shall this be known? Why, the Lord shews you this by the psalmist, Ps. xevii. 10. If you love Christ, you hate evil, you hate every evil way, every sin.

Now try by this. Do you hate everything you know to be sin? There is none of you but formerly have loved some sin or other, and lived in the practice of some evil or other. Now, do you hate that which you formerly loved? that which you have been accustomed to? that which you have delighted in? How shall we know we hate it? Why do you not act it? Do you avoid the occasions of it? Do you not nourish it? Do you not think of it but with sorrow and indignation? If you still act it, make provisions for it, run into the occasions of it, count it a matter of nothing, why, then, it is evident you hate it not; and if so, you love not Christ; and if so, you have not admitted him as a friend; and if so, he is not come into you.

I beseech you, deal impartially with your souls herein. It is the greatest madness in the world to deceive yourselves in a business of eternal concernment. Can you, dare you, appeal to God, as David? Search me, try me, if there be any wickedness in my heart, my life, that I act, that I tolerate, that I hate not; I am content this sentence shall be passed on me, I am not one that loves Christ, I am one that shuts him out. Whether you be content or no, the Lord in his word passes this sentence on thee, Christ is not yet come into thee.

2. When Christ comes in, he comes as a husband; if he be admitted as a husband, you give your consent. This makes the match, you consent to take Christ as he is, whole Christ; not only as he comes by blood to pardon you, but as he comes by water to purify you; not only for happiness, but for holiness; not only for justification, but sanctification. You may know if Christ be come in by the temper of your hearts in reference to holiness: where it is derided, slighted, neglected, Christ is far from being admitted; Christ himself suffers therein, for it is his image. When he comes, he plants it; it grows, flourishes, is fruitful more or less; there is a high esteem of it, a dear love to it, strong desires after it, constant endeavours to obtain, increase, promote it in himself and others; sorrow for the weakness, decays, unactiveness of it.

Be not deceived; if you be strangers to holiness, to the being, increase, life, exercise of it, you are strangers to Christ. If enemies to holiness, to deride, scorn it, under the names of purity, preciseness, dissembling, you are enemies to Christ, he is far from coming in.

8. When Christ comes in, he comes as a king; if you admit him, so you will be ruled by him; you will think it treason to run cross to his word, to cast his commands behind your backs. Briefly, are you conscientious to

practise every duty that Christ requires of you in his word? I leave this to your consciences. Is it your design and business to bring yourselves wholly under Christ's government, and more and more under it? Your minds, to judge of things as his laws represent them, that good, best, contemptible, &c., which he declares so? Your wills, to get them subdued to his will, so as when they come in competition his may be preferred; your affections, to have them move and fix as he orders; your lives, to have your conversations ordered by him in spiritual and common affairs?

4. When Christ comes in, he enters as a conqueror. Though sin be in you, though lust have abode in your hearts, they reign not. Are your lusts subdued, mortified, weakened? Do they languish, as having received a deadly wound from the hand of Christ? Are you crucified to the world? Is that as a dead thing to you, which others admire, covet? Christ overcomes the world where he comes. If it overcome you, if you be slaves, drudges to your enjoyments, to your employment; if your hearts be not dead, crucified to these things; Christ has not entered.

5. If Christ be come in to you, you have a high esteem of it, such as becomes him who has the King of glory for his guest. Those that profess themselves Christians must needs say they have a high esteem of Christ. But it is one thing to say it, another to feel it. When he in the parable had found the pearl of great price, how does he express his esteem of it? He went and sold all that he had, and bought it, Mat. xiii. 44-46. Christ is this treasure, this pearl; if you value him, all other things will be vile compared with him. Your own humours, interests, pleasures, profits, you will part with all for Christ; you will say as Mephibosheth, So did he rejoice in David's return, as his estate was nothing to him compared with it: 2 Sam. xix. 80, 'Nay, let him take all, for as much as my lord the king has come in peace,' &c. Not only part with his sins, but renounce his own righteousness, that which he formerly made the ground of his confidence so as to neglect Christ: so the apostle, Philip. iii. 7, 8. By this you may know the truth of your esteem, when Christ and other things which you have formerly valued come in competition, which of these gets the place? If you had rather displease Christ than cross your humours, rather dishonour him than decline your worldly interest, rather offend him than abate of your pleasures, rather hazard the loss of his favour than lose an outward advantage, oh your esteem of Christ is little or nothing; it is not such as will afford you assurance that Christ is come in. If he be in you, your esteem of other things will decrease, your esteem of him will increase, it will overgrow, overshadow all; that which others reject will be head of the corner, elect and precious to you that believe, 1 Pet. ii. 6-8. Those that stumble at the word are disobedient, will not part with sin when Christ commands; to them he is a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, their base lusts are preferred before him, he has no place in such hearts.

6. If Christ be come in, he has possession of you. For this end he comes to take possession of the soul, and if you admit him you will not disappoint him. Try by this. Have you given Christ possession of your minds, of your consciences, of your hearts and affections? But how shall this be known? Why,

If Christ be in your minds, they will be much taken up with Christ, there will not be so much room for other things; the world will not find such free entertainment in your thoughts. The mind is the eye of the soul; when this glorious guest is come in, your eye will be much upon him, you will be frequent and much in thinking of Christ, how full of love, how full

of beauty, how sweet in his promises to thee, how wonderful in his undertakings for thee. Such thoughts will come often, and stay long, longer than formerly; they will be welcome, pleasing, delightful; you will think of him as of your treasure, your glory, your sweetest comfort.

If Christ be in the conscience, it is purged, and you will be fearful to defile it. You will say as the spouse in another case, 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on again? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' Christ has taken away my guilt, those filthy garments, how shall I put them on again? He has washed my soul, how shall I defile it? So you will find a greater reluctancy against that which offends Christ; you will be loath to give him distaste; he that regards his guest will not lay his excrements in the place where he lodges. Such is sin in the eye of Christ; and therefore conscience, when Christ possesses it, will say, How can I be so vile, so disloyal, so uncivil? 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against Christ?'

If Christ possess the will, it will be new moulded. The will of Christ is its mould; into this it is delivered; it runs into it. Before it was hard and stiff; nor threatenings, nor promises, nor commands could move it. If it were fixed on this or that way of sin or the world, whatever was said by Christ in the ministry of the gospel, it would not move from its hold. Ay! but now it offers itself freely to comply with him: 'Behold, I come to do thy will!' 'Thy people shall be willing,' Ps. cx. It yields to what it knows, and it desires to know the whole will of Christ, that it may yield to all. It was hard before, it was a rock, would fly in the face of his messenger then rather than yield to reproofs, exhortations. Ay! but now the presence of Christ, the love of Christ, has melted it; it runs into every part of the mould, fashions itself, conforms to the whole will of Christ, moves so as Christ did. 'I come not to do my own will,' &c.

If Christ be in the affections, they all attend him. There is love to him in all his appearances. There is delight in present enjoyment; there is desire after fuller fruitions; there is fear of losing, there is grief for offending, there is hatred of what is contrary to him; there is anger that he can be no more officious, serviceable, respectful; there is jealousy lest anything should distaste Christ, cause him to withdraw. When Lot had entertained angels, how jealous was he lest the wretched Sodomites should wrong them! He would expose his own daughters rather than they should be injured. The heart that has entertained Christ, the Lord of angels, will be careful to do nothing to offend him.

Come we to the second thing promised. 'I will sup with him. Hence!

Observe. Christ will sup with those that open to him. He will feast every soul that admits. He will vouchsafe not only his presence, but sweet and intimate fellowship and communion with himself. 'I will sup:' it is a pregnant word. Let me open it that you may see what comforts, refreshments, privileges, are wrapt up in it; that those who have opened to Christ may see their happiness; that those who yet shut him out may be hereby stirred up to open. It implies,

1. Provision. Christ has made provision for every soul that will open, he has made it ready beforehand. Nothing hinders sinners from these blessed enjoyments but their not opening, Luke xiv. 16, 17. It is Christ has made a great supper, and he stands and knocks, and says, Come, open, all things are now ready. It is Christ the Wisdom of the Father, of whom Solomon speaks, Prov. ix. 1, 2, 3, 5. He sets forth this spiritual provision, these soul refreshments, by such things as we are best acquainted with. He has provided such things as will more refresh the soul than these do our

bodies. They are all ready, Mat. xxii. 4. Do these things nourish? Do they refresh? Do they strengthen? Do they delight us? Do they promote growth? Do they preserve life? Do they continue health? Are they serviceable to the outward man in these respects? Such, and much more, will Christ's provisions be to the soul; they will more nourish, strengthen, refresh, delight it; they tend more effectually to promote and continue spiritual life, health, growth. All that tends thereto are ready, Christ has provided them.

2. *Plenty.* The Jews used to make their greatest entertainments at supper, and this may be the reason Christ says not I will dine, but I will sup, to denote the plenty of soul-refreshments he will afford those that open. He has spared no cost, no pains; he thinks nothing too good, nothing too much for those that open. If we consider the price, what these refreshments cost Christ, we shall not wonder that they are so many, such abundance of them. They were not bought with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of that Lamb without spot. Where shall we expect, where find bounty, if not in the King of glory? It is for the honour of his majesty that those whom he entertains should have no reason to complain of want. No good thing will he withhold. 'He that cometh unto me,' &c., John vi. 85. He will fulfil the desires. Let the heart be never so empty, never so capacious, he brings enough to fill it, to fulfil it. Let it be stretched out by intense desires to its utmost capacity, he will satisfy it, he will abundantly satisfy it, Ps. xxxvi. 8. The things of the world, get as much of them, as many of them as you can, will never satisfy, the heart is too large for them. But Christ has provided enough to fill, to satisfy, Isa. lv. 1, 2. The whole world cannot fill the heart of man. Christ's provisions are more in this respect than the whole world. Here is plenty indeed, Ps. xxiii. 5; fulness of joy, &c.

3. *Variety.* There may be plenty where there is not variety. There may be enough, yea, too much of one thing. But it is a feast that Christ promises. He has variety of ordinances, variety of promises, and there are variety of comforts, variety of refreshments in every one. Nay, what is it that Christ offers in these but himself? Now, when he offers himself, he offers all. Here is variety indeed. Can ye have more than all, than he who is all in all? When he comes in, he is yours, and you are his; and what does the apostle infer from this? 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23. Christ only is that object, that can please and satisfy every faculty. To the mind he is the highest truth, to the will he is the chief good, to the conscience he is peace that passes all understanding, to the affections he is the most lovely, the most desirable, the most delightful object. Here is food for the mind, he that is truth itself. Here is a feast for the conscience, he that has slain enmity, he that brings the peace of God. Here is satisfaction to the will, the fountain of goodness. It need not lose itself in searching for drops, and following shallow streams, and digging broken cisterns; here is the spring-head. And here is food for the affections. Love may satisfy itself in embracing the chiefest of ten thousand, fairer than the children of men, the sun of beauty, where all the scattered rays meet and shine in the brightness of their glory. Desire may here satisfy itself in clasping the Desire of all nations. Delight may here bathe itself in rivers of pleasures that are at Christ's right hand. And when Christ sups with thee, thou sittest by him, thou art not far from his right hand. Here is variety.

4. *Delicacies.* It is a feast, a feast of Christ's providing. You will expect no ordinary fare when the King of glory entertains you. Here is choice rarities, such as the world affords not. 'I have meat to eat that ye

know not of,' John iv. 32; 'Not as the world giveth give I unto you,' John xiv. 24. The world are strangers to such refreshments, as Christ affords an opening soul. A stranger does not enter into his joy. Such fare does Christ provide as will not only satisfy but get a stomach, such as will not only continue life where it is, but raise to life where it is not. Such as taste of it shall never see death: hidden manna, angels' food, bread from heaven, the fruit of the tree of life which grows in the midst of the paradise of God. Adam longed to taste it, but then it was forbidden; now Christ brings it into the soul that opens. Himself is the tree of life, Rev. xxii. 2. He comes into thee that thy soul may taste him and live for ever, John vi. 81, 82, 83, 85. The virtue of this provision is everlasting, it far exceeds the manna in the wilderness; that did preserve life for a season, but it could not secure from death. But he that feeds on this can never die, not spiritually, not eternally, ver. 47, 48, &c. It is called water, but it is water of life; he that tastes but a drop shall find it become an everlasting spring in his soul. He that tastes it need not thirst after carnal refreshments; he need not go to the world, to the creatures, to draw, this shall satisfy him for ever. So Christ tells the woman, John iv. 10, 13, 14. He * will let thee drink of the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What think ye of this manna, of the fountain* of the tree of life, of that water that proceeds out of the throne of God? Is not this worth your opening? Would you taste of those grapes that grow in heaven, those fruits which grow in the land of promise? And now, when you are in this dry and barren wilderness, does thy soul long to taste of those dainties which that city affords, whose maker and builder is God? Why, Christ offers this; he that opens to him shall sup with him. He will set before thee some clusters of those grapes which grow in Canaan. He will give thee the first fruits of heaven. Thou shalt have some taste of the pleasures of his father's house. Here are rarities indeed; the world knows them not, and will not believe them. But those that have opened to Christ know what I say. They are hidden enjoyments, Rev. ii. 17; the earnest of the Spirit, the peace of God, the riches of assurance, the joy that is unspeakable and glorious, the hidden manna, the water of life. These are enjoyments that differ but in degree from those in heaven. And those that open to Christ, that sup with him, do taste of some or all these.

5. Familiarity. Christ will deal familiarly with thee as with an intimate friend. We take it as a great argument of intimate friendship when one will say to another, I will come and sup with thee. When David would aggravate the disloyalty of Ahithophel, he does it in these terms, 'It was thou, my familiar.' And how was he his familiar? Why, it was 'he that ate bread with me,' Psa. xli. 9. Thou hast been a stranger to Christ, lived without him in the world, at a great distance from him. Thy hatred of him and rebellions against him have provoked him to shew himself an enemy; but now he is upon terms of kindness and friendship with thee: if thou wilt open, he will come and sup with thee. The mighty God, the Prince of the kings of the earth, will stoop so low as to shew himself kind to thee. When David would express the remembrance of a friend to Jonathan, he thus expresses himself, 2 Sam. ix. 8. It was an exceeding great kindness, the kindness of God, that David would shew. And how does he shew this kindness? see ver. 7. 'Thou shalt eat bread at my table.' This is it, and more than this, that Christ offers; if a sinner will open, he will shew the kindness of God to him, a wonderful, an exceed-

* Qu. 'fruit'?—Ed.

ing great kindness. And how? He shall eat bread with me, I will sup with him. Oh what intimacy, what familiarity does this denote, especially when to one far inferior! Mephibosheth, though a prince's son, was astonished that David should offer him such kindness: ver. 8, 'What is thy servant?' &c. Oh, how should sinners run to entertain such kindness from the King of kings! How should those that enjoy it wonder at it! 'What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am!' What kindness, what friendship, what honour! What is this to me, that the Lord of glory should come and sup with me?

6. Complacency. Christ will shew he much delights in the soul that opens to him. This we learn by their posture at meat, in use amongst the Jews. They, like the Romans, had beds about their tables, on which they lay when they went to eat, so that those which lay on the same bed, the one did rest his head in the other's bosom. So it is said of John, John xiii. 23. So that when Christ promises, I will sup with him, it is as much as if he should say, he shall lay his head in my bosom. He that opens to Christ, he shall have the place of the beloved disciple. So much delight will Christ take in him, as in one whom he will admit to rest in his bosom. Oh blessed posture! Oh happy soul, whom Christ will take so near to himself, whom he will lodge in his bosom! Well may it be said of Christ, that his delights were in the sons of men, when he will shew he takes so much delight in them, as to lay them so near his heart, to take them into his bosom. Well may he say, 'As the Father loved me, even so love I you,' John xv. 9. And yet if he had not said it, what worm amongst us could have presumed, could have believed a love which seemed so incredible? As the Father loves me, &c. There is not an equality, but there is a similitude. And as in other things, so it holds in this. Such is the Father's love to Christ, as he is said to be in the bosom of the Father, 1 John i. 18. And such is Christ's love to thee, such his delight in thee, as if thy heart be opened, thou art in the bosom of Christ. If thy heart be opened, it is Christ's banqueting-house, he will sup there. His banner over thee is love, as Cant. ii. 4. With what delight mayest thou lie down under his shadow! How sweet will the fruits of his delight be to thee, while his right hand does embrace thee, and his left hand is under thy head, thy head rests in his bosom! Oh what sensible soul will not be transported to think of this with believing thoughts! What delights can the world afford like unto these! when, as the spouse expresses it, Cant. i. 13, Christ lies betwixt thy breasts like a bundle of myrrh, and thy head rests in his bosom! Thus will it be when Christ sups with thee; and he will sup with thee when thou openest to him. Then will he shew as much delight in thee as if thou wert admitted to rest in his bosom.

Use. Exhortation. 1. To those to whom Christ is come, whom he feasts, to whom he vouchsafes communion with himself. Be careful to continue in this happy condition. Be afraid of whatever may provoke Christ to withdraw, what may interrupt this communion. Be careful to abide in this blessed fellowship. Use all means to continue this communion with Christ, that he may still feast you, and you may continually sup with him.

Quest. But what means shall we use to this end, to continue? &c.

Ans. 1. Make him welcome. Shew by your joy and cheerfulness in his presence that you count it your happiness to enjoy him. Let him see that you delight in him above all things, that you prefer him before your chief joy, that he is the head, the chief of your delights. Set him against all other things that worldlings rejoice in, Ps. iv. Shew that you count his presence a sufficient supply of all wants. Christ is better unto me than

friends, children, riches, honours. These are miserable comforts if I taste not the sweetness of Christ in them ; and there is enough in him to rejoice me when all these vanish. As too much delight in outward things does disparage Christ, so does sadness and uncheerfulness in the want of these things. Say, is not Christ better to me than all these ? 1 Sam. i. 8, 'My soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Saviour.' Then do you magnify him when you count other things small in comparison of him. Then does your soul rejoice in him when you delight more in him than in all outward comforts. Thus to magnify him, thus to rejoice in him, is to make him welcome, and that is the way to continue him with you.

Ans. 2. Entertain him. He brings provision enough for you, will you provide nothing for him ? It is true, indeed, you can provide nothing worthy of such a guest, but something he expects, and something there is he delights in and will accept.

When the three angels came to Abraham, how careful, how active is he to entertain them ! Gen. xviii. It is the Lord of angels that comes to sup with thee ; oh how careful shouldst thou be to provide that which he loves, wherein he delights ! Why, what is that ? I will but point at it. It is a humble, a broken, an upright heart. This he loves, this he delights in.

(1.) A humble heart. A heart humbled in sense of Christ's excellency and its own vileness. He beholds the proud afar off, but the humble he beholds with delight, and will delight to continue with it. See what sweet promises he makes thereto, Isa. lvii. 15. None so precious to Christ as those that are vile in their own eyes. He that is poor in spirit, though no man regards him, and though he do not regard himself, the Lord has a special respect to him, Isa. lxvi. 1. Those that have high thoughts, good conceits of their own righteousness, parts, performances, the Lord will overlook them, he stays not there ; it is the humble spirit that he looks at, that he dwells with.

(2.) A broken heart. A heart broken from sin, and broken for sin ; a heart that melts and bleeds, when it remembers how it has wounded, how it has dishonoured Christ ; a heart that yields to Christ's motions, and receives his impressions. A stubborn, stony heart, that is insensible of sin, that is hardened against the word, that is not moved by all the melting manifestations of Christ's love, but continues in sinful ways, notwithstanding all the knocks of the word : this heart is an abomination.

Oh, if the Lord have broken your hearts, made them tender, take heed they be not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. If you would entertain Christ with that which he loves, give him a broken, a contrite heart ; this will be more acceptable to him than all sacrifices, than all the rarities thou canst provide, Ps. li. 16, 17.

(3.) A sincere heart. A true and upright heart. This Christ delights in. 'Thou lovest truth in the inward parts,' Ps. li. 6. He loves a whole, an undivided heart. That is a sincere heart that is wholly Christ's. 'Αντιδιψυχος, 'a double-minded man' he cannot endure ; one that has a heart and a heart ; says he has a heart for Christ, when his heart is for the world ; pretends Christ has his heart, when he has a heart for his lusts. He that will entertain Christ with a divided heart, divides himself from Christ. He will not endure the arbitrament of the harlot, 'Let it be divided.' If he have not all, it is as bad as if he had none at all. Give your heart wholly to Christ ; if you entertain him with such a heart, he will like his entertainment, it is the way to have him stay with you.

Ans. 3. Let him have good attendance. If you be careless, disrespectful of him, how can you expect his company ! Let every part of your souls wait upon Christ. When you tender him any service, offer up your souls

with it. If you tender your outward man, without your souls, in ordinances where Christ feasts his people, it is as if you should bid your servant wait upon your guest, and withdraw yourself; this is a disrespect. Is not Christ worthy you should attend him in person? Take heed of these neglects.

Ans. 4. Let him have your company, be always in his presence. If you depart from him, wander after others, no wonder if he depart from you. Be always with him. How? Your minds with him, by frequent thoughts of him, Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18; your wills and hearts, by inclinations to him, the bent and tendency of them upwards, a bias leading you still; your affections on him, as the most lovely, delightful, desirable object, Ps. lxxiii. 23, 25; and with him in your daily converse; by ordering your conversation so as it may be a walking with God: Gen. v. 25, 'Enoch walked with God,' and so Noah, Gen. vi. 9. Labour to see him, to enjoy him in all, to act as in his sight, to order all for him, to dispose of all in subserviency to him.

2. Branch of the exhortation. To those that have not yet opened to Christ; to those who have not feasted with him. You will never have fellowship with Christ, you will never enjoy this happiness, you will never taste how sweet, how gracious the Lord is, till you admit him. He only sups with them that open to him. Oh then make haste to open.

Quest. But who are those that have not opened, that do not feast with Christ, that yet enjoy not fellowship with him? How shall I know whether this be my condition?

Ans. This we will briefly resolve, that the exhortation may be seasonable and forcible. You may know it,

1. By your appetite after spiritual enjoyments. Those that feast with Christ have a strong appetite to those spiritual dainties that he provides. He fills the hungry with good things. Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness, after holiness, after spiritual knowledge, after a clearer sight, a fuller enjoyment, of Christ? You know when you hunger and thirst after bodily nourishment there is a sense of emptiness; this emptiness of the stomach is a pain and anguish to you; you are restless till you be satisfied. Is it thus with your souls in reference to spiritual enjoyments? Are you sensible of a soul-emptiness? Is this your grief, your soul-affliction? Will nothing satisfy but Christ, more holiness, nearer communion? Do you pant and breathe after this in every ordinance? Can you truly say, 'As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my heart after God'? Do you sigh and mourn in the sense of your soul's poverty and emptiness, Christ's withdrawals and estrangement? Is this the voice of your heart, 'Oh when shall I come and appear before him?' when will he appear, &c.? When carnal men think the Sabbaths and spiritual employments long and tedious, whereas they say, 'When will the Sabbath be done?' is it the voice of your soul, When will the Sabbath come, that I may see him whom my soul loves, that I may see his face, and hear his voice, and be satisfied with the pleasure? &c. Does your soul breathe after Christ in prayer? Do you desire the word as new-born babes, &c.? When you can withdraw from ordinances, think them tedious, have no more than some faint wishes after spiritual enjoyments, this argues Christ does not feast with you: 'He fills the hungry,' &c.; 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come,' &c.

2. By your delight in the presence of Christ, and those spiritual enjoyments wherewith he feasts his people. If he feast with you, you will take such pleasure herein, as will dead your affections to unlawful pleasures, as will moderate your affections to lawful delights. If Christ feast with you, if you enjoy fellowship with him, the pleasures of sin are rank and unsavoury

to your souls. Those stolen waters which were formerly sweet, will now be as the waters of Marah; your stomach will rise against those things that formerly you have swallowed with delight. The word will be sweet to your taste. Secret prayer, and meditation, all those spiritual duties wherein Christ feasts his people, will be your delight. The provisions wherewith Christ entertains you will make you vomit up those forbidden morsels, wherewith sin and the world fed you. You will not henceforth count them sweet; you will have no more mind to return to sinful pleasures than to swallow up a vomit, or to wallow with the sow in the mire. If intemperance, good fellowship, uncleanness, unseasonable sports, or any way of wickedness, secret or open, be sweet to you, you may fear Christ is not yet come to feast with you; you have not tasted of those delights which are enjoyed in communion with him.

9. If Christ feast you, your souls will grow, thrive, and be well liking. This will be the fruit of these spiritual refreshments; they will make you more lively, strong, active, fruitful, in the ways and acts of holiness. You will grow in grace, &c.; go from strength to strength. Your souls will be as watered gardens, the fruits of the Spirit will flourish there. Your hearts, sometimes like a desert, will now be as Sharon; and that which was a wilderness, nothing but weeds, briars, and thorns—worldly, unclean lusts—will now be as the garden of God. The spices thereof will flow out: love, and zeal, and self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world. These will be on the growing hand, you will be outgrowing your distempers, prevailing more and more against corruption, and increasing with the increase of God. Oh, but where there is no spiritual life manifested in holy duties, no strength, no opposition, no effectual resolutions against prevailing and endeared sins, there is no sign that Christ is come in. Your souls would be in a better plight if Christ did feast them.

Thus you may know if Christ sup with you. And if the Lord bring these home to your consciences, the exhortation will be more seasonable. If you have not yet opened to Christ, if he do not sup with you, oh make haste to open. To stir you up hereto, consider the misery of those who have not this fellowship with Christ. If you have not fellowship with Christ,

1. You have fellowship with unclean spirits. These, though you perceive it not, feast with you, feed in you. The heart where Christ is not, is a place swept and garnished for Satan, fitted for his entertainment. There is no such refreshment to Satan in the world as the lusts of a carnal heart. These unclean spirits feed rank; your sins are their feast; it is their meat and drink to have you continue sinning. You cannot provide him any choicer delight than unmortified lusts. He sups with you till Christ come in. Your communion is not with the Father, but with him who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

2. You have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Your lusts, proud, worldly, unclean, revengful, these feed on you, they are always gnawing upon the inwards of your souls. You feel it not indeed; no wonder, till Christ come you are dead. You have seen vermin crawling in, and feeding on a dead carcase; this is the very emblem of a soul without Christ. Unmortified lusts, like so many vermin, prey upon your souls. The worm that never dies breeds here; if Christ come not in and kill it, it will gnaw upon you to eternity.

8. You can have no fellowship with Christ hereafter. Those that acquaint not themselves with Christ by entertaining him, by communion with him here, he will not know them hereafter. If you admit him not, if he sup not with you here, he will say to you, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.'