

SINNERS UNDER THE CURSE.

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—GAL. III. 10.

THE way to Christ lies through the sense of misery. The foundation of our misery is sin, sin original and actual ; of original sin, the corruption of our natures before. The words hold forth a sinner's misery by reason of actual sin.

The coherence stands thus : the apostle is endeavouring to bring the Galatians into the way of truth and life, out of which they were bewitched. He endeavours to persuade them that justification is by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law. He brings many arguments to prove this ; one of them abundantly demonstrative you have in this verse. It lies thus : our present observance of the law leaves us under the curse, *Ergo*, it cannot justify. The consequent is evident. The antecedent he proves by an artificial argument, the testimony of God : 'It is written.' Every imperfect performance of the law is cursed ; but all our observance of the law is now imperfect. No man continues in all, &c., and therefore every man, without some other provision than the law affords, is cursed.

The words are a categorical proposition ; the parts of it are the subject and the attribute, which, that we may explain, we will briefly consider them apart. And,

1. The attribute, 'cursed.' This curse is the penalty of God's violated law, and so an evil of punishment. This evil of punishment being assigned by divine justice, must be proportionable to the evil of sin. If it be proportionable to the evil of sin, it can be no less than the everlasting wrath of God. The product of this everlasting wrath is the sinner's eternal death, begun here and consummated in hell. This death was the penalty of the first covenant, 'Do this, and live ;' fail of performing this, and thou shalt die ; die every way, spiritually, temporally, eternally. The expression in the text is according to the tenor of that covenant, so that the curse here is death, especially eternal death, and they are cursed who are under the sentence or execution of it. Now, who these are the other part of the proposition discovers, 'Every one who continues not,' &c.

2. There is the subject expressed as fully and pregnantly as anything in Scripture. Here is no less than a threefold universality ; it extends to all persons, times, things.

(1.) It is extended to all persons, every one. It is not *some*; for so, many might escape. It is not *many*; for so, some might escape. It is not the *greatest part*; for so, a considerable part of mankind might be excepted. It is not *all*; for that might be taken *de generibus singulorum*, for some of all sorts; for so, some of every sort might be exempted. But it is *every one*, simply and absolutely; universal, without restriction, without exception; every one, Jew and Gentile.

Adam himself not excepted; the curse seized upon the root, and so diffused itself into every of the branches.

Nay, the second Adam, Christ himself, is not exempted; he taking upon him our sins, came under our curse.

Sin and the curse are inseparable. Wherever sin is, the curse will be, even there where sin is but by imputation. Conclude but all, every one, under sin, and this conclusion will prove an argument to conclude all under the curse.

(2.) It is extended to all times. 'That continues not.' It is not enough to begin well, it is not enough to persist long, if at length there be any desisting from a practical observance. There must be a continuance, without the least moment's interruption. Wherever there is a breach, the curse enters. If a man should punctually observe the law an hundred years, and at last fail but a moment. A moment's intermission in a life of Methuselah's continuance exposes to the curse; the last* moment's discontinuance of a perfect observance lets in the curse; for so it runs, 'that continues not.'

(8.) It is extended to all things: 'In all things that are,' &c. If a man should avoid all things forbidden, yet if he do not all things commanded. Suppose a man should commit no sin, if he should omit any duty; suppose a man should do many things, as Herod, yet if he do not all; suppose he should do the more important things enjoined, the *βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου*, the weightier things of the law, if he neglect but the least, he is nevertheless cursed.

The neglect of performing duty, as well as of avoiding sin; neglect of some, as well as neglect of all; neglect of anything, as well as the neglect of everything; the neglect of the least things, as well as of the greatest, exposes to the curse. Not only neglect of sections and paragraphs, the great momentous things of the law, but neglect of iotas and tittles, things which seem of smallest concernment, brings under the curse. How small soever they seem, if they be but written, it is enough. The largeness of the expression brings in all; cursed is all and every person that continues not in all and every moment, to do all and every thing, great and small, written in the law. Hence take this,

Obs. The sin brings the sinner under the curse. Any sin whatsoever, the least sin that can be committed, exposes the sinner to the everlasting wrath of God, and makes him liable to eternal death.

1. The least sin deserves everlasting wrath. Eternal death is due for the least sin, and that by the determination of divine justice.

2. The least sin is under the sentence of eternal death, is condemned already by the sentence of the judge of heaven and earth.

8. And the least sin will, if not prevented by the course prescribed in the gospel, bring the sentence into execution, and actually plunge the sinner into everlasting burnings. To be under the curse includes all this, either expressly or by implication. The desert of the least sin is eternal death; sentence according to desert, and execution according to the sentence. There needs no more for explication. In the process, I shall observe this

* Qu. 'least'?—ED.

order: I. Premise something by way of caution; II. Bring some arguments to confirm it; and, III. Apply it.

I. That the expression may not be mistaken (when I say *the least sin*) observe, there is no sin absolutely little. Every sin is big with guilt and provocation. Ποῶν ἁμαρτημα μικρὸν τολμήσει τις εἶπεν; who dare call any sin little, since it is committed against the great God? If we speak absolutely, every sin is great; but if we speak comparatively, some sins are greater than others. And so those that are not the greatest, we call them less, not because they are small in themselves, but because they are not the greatest. Astronomy teaches us that the earth, compared with the heavens, is of no sensible magnitude, it is but like a point; yet considered in itself, we know it is a vast body, of a huge bulk. Compare an idle word with blasphemy, it will seem small; or a vain thought with murder. Ay, but consider these in themselves, and they are great sins. There needs no other proof of this than what I am to undertake in the next place. They make liable to eternal death.

I shall insist the more upon the proof of this truth, because its usefulness depends upon the belief of it; and if we regard the practice of men rather than their profession, there is little faith as to this point in the earth, there are too few that effectually believe it.

II. The arguments I shall draw: 1. from general testimonies of Scripture; 2. from instances in some particular sins which pass for small in the world; 3. from the object against which sin is directed; 4. from the continuance of that law, which at first made eternal death the penalty of the least sin.

1. Argument. We have the Lord's testimony to this truth, which is more to faith than any demonstration to reason: Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death.' Of sin in general, and therefore of every kind of sin; for that which belongs to the *genus* belongs to every *species*. The least sin as to essence and formality is as truly sin as the greatest; for degrees do not vary the species. If death, then, be the wages of sin in general, it is the wages of the least sin. Death, that is, eternal death, as appears by the antithesis in the latter clause of the verse. It is that death that is opposed to eternal life. Eternal death is the wages of the least sin, as due to it as wages are to a hireling, as due as a penny was to him who had wrought all day in the vineyard. The Lord, in point of justice, is engaged to repay the least sin with eternal death.

But that which is but indefinitely delivered here, is universally expressed, Rom. i. 18, ἐπὶ πάντων ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδίκειαν; against all, without exception, without distinction; and where the law does not except and distinguish, we are not to do it. Against all; every deviation, the least declining from the rule of righteousness is unrighteousness. And therefore since it is declared against all, it is declared against the least sin; since the least is unrighteousness as truly as the greatest, in respect of its formality, though not equal in respect of degree.

But that which we do but collect from this text is express, Mat. v. 19, 'He shall be the least,' i. e. he shall not be there at all. The following verse justifies this exposition; he shall have no more place in heaven than the scribes and pharisees, who shall in no case enter into it; if he receive according to the demerit of the least sin, no place will receive him but hell.

2. Arg. I prove it by some instances of those sins which the world count least. Those sins which men make light of are burdened by the Lord with threatenings of everlasting wrath. I will shew this in five particulars, which will be sufficient to make an induction.

(1.) Omissions of good. These pass for venials, for *peccadilloes*, with many. If they escape the gross pollutions of the world, they promise themselves exemption from the curse, though they omit or neglect the duties of holiness, the exercise of godliness in their families or in secret. Whereas we see in the text the curse is expressly directed against omissions, against those who do not and continue not to do what is written. The wrath of God will be poured out upon those families, not only who blaspheme and profane his name, but those who call not upon his name, those who set not up the worship of God in their families, Jer. x. 25.

Men are apt to think they shall escape well enough, if they misspend not their time in gaming and lewd practices, though they do not lay it out for the great concerns of eternity ;

If they employ not their parts against God and his people, though they employ them not principally for him ;

If they spend not their estates in drunkenness, uncleanness, and like excess of riot, though they lay not them out for God, the support of his truth, the maintenance and propagating of his gospel, and comfort of his members ;

If they grossly abuse not their talents, though they bury them, or improve them only for themselves, not for their Master's advantage.

But oh, ask the unprofitable servant what a delusion this is ! Why was he cast into outer darkness ? Mat. xxv. 80 ; why, not because he did wickedly abuse his talent, but because he did not employ it for God, he hid it in the earth, ver. 25.

Who are they who must depart into everlasting fire ? Mat. xxv. Not only who persecuted, reviled, abused, the people of Christ, but those who did not clothe, and feed, and visit them, and entertain them, ver. 42, 43. For mere omissions they are cursed, and turned with the devil and his angels into hell,

(2.) Secret evils, those that are confined to the heart, and break not out into visible acts. Men are apt to think that the Lord is such a one as themselves, that he will take little notice of those things which men cannot take notice of, and therefore are secure if no pollutions taint their lives, whatever evils lodge secretly in their hearts. But this is a delusion too, Eccles. xii. 14. Why will he bring them into judgment, but that justice may have its course against them ? Time will come when you shall be arraigned before the Lord's tribunal for the most secret and retired motions of your hearts, arraigned in order to condemnation. If a man would so live as the world could never take notice of any sin in his whole life, yet if he gave liberty to the motions and secret acts of an evil heart, here will be matter enough at judgment to condemn him for ever. It may be thou wast never guilty, as to outward act, of murder, atheism, blasphemy, adultery ; ay, but if there be any motions, any secret tendency to these in thy heart, this is enough to make thee liable to the curse, to the condemnation of murderers, &c., Mat. v. 28. A wanton glance, though none perceive it, a lascivious motion, though it pass no further than the secret of thy heart, is enough to render thee an adulterer in the sight of God, and to involve thee in the condemnation of adulterers. And it is as true of the other abominations.

So specious was the outward deportment of the pharisees, as their conversation, by the testimony of Christ, did appear to be really beautiful ; but because they tolerated many secret corruptions in their hearts, see with what indignation he falls upon them : Mat. xxiii. 83, ' Ye serpents,' &c. That interrogation is a vehement negation. Though there be no scandalous act in your lives, the very secret corruptions of your hearts, if cherished, if tolerated, will make it impossible you should escape the condemnation of hell.

(3.) Idle words, how fearless or careless soever ye are of them, are suffi

cient to bring you under the curse, Mat. xii. 36, 37. You must not only give an account before the tribunal of Christ of corrupt, lascivious, blasphemous, profane, revengeful, injurious, spurious, but even of idle words, of 'every idle word,' of such discourse as is unnecessary, unprofitable, unedifying, though not otherwise offensive. Why must we give an account of these, but because they are debts; such debts as, if they be not forgiven, if satisfaction be not tendered, thou shalt be delivered to the judge, and the Judge will cast thee into that prison, out of which thou shalt never come till thou hast paid, that which thou canst never pay, the utmost farthing?

(4.) Vain thoughts, the unaccountable vagaries of the cogitative faculty, the mere impertinencies of the mind, are of no less concernment to the soul than everlasting condemnation, Acts viii. 22. What need he pray so doubtfully for pardon, but that these thoughts had brought him under the sentence of condemnation? Isa. lv. 7, those thoughts which denominated their subject *אִישׁ חַטָּא* a man of iniquity, must be forsaken, at least as to resolution and endeavour, or else there is no pardon, no mercy. Evil thoughts, while not forsaken, are unpardonable, they are such as infinite mercy will not pardon; and what then remains for these but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation? But, it may be, the thoughts in these two instances were more than vain. See, then, Jer. iv. 14; Jerusalem's heart must be washed from wickedness, else she cannot be saved. This wickedness (if the latter part of the verse expound the former, as is usual in Scripture) is made up of her vain thoughts; whilst these have free entertainment, there can be no admission into heaven, no salvation. 'Wash thy heart from these,' &c.

(5.) Motions to sin without consent. Such motions as, arising from our corrupt natures, are suppressed, stifled in the birth, these expose to the curse. For the law requires a conformity to itself, both in qualities, motions, and actions, but such motions to sin are a nonconformity to the law, therefore sinful, and consequently cursed; for the penalty annexed to the law is due to every violation of it.

Besides, that which pollutes and defiles the soul makes it incapable of heaven, but such motions pollute and defile the soul. The corruption of our nature is as an ulcer, these motions to sin are as the putrefaction issuing out of that ulcer. Such corrupt matter defiles the man, however he be offended at it; consent is not necessary to make it a defilement; and, being a defilement, till it be removed it leaves the soul in an incapacity for heaven and glory; Rev. xxi. 27, there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles; and there is no place for those who are excluded heaven but the bottomless pit. This is the second argument, which, if we gather up its parcels, runs in this form. If omissions of good, secret evils, &c., then the least sins expose to the curse, for amongst these are the least sins we can discover. But omission, &c., expose to the curse, *ergo* the least sins expose to the curse.

8. *Arg.* The least sin is infinitely evil. And we usually ascribe infiniteness to these two: God the greatest good, and sin the greatest evil. God is infinite essentially, sin is infinite objectively; infinitely evil because against him who is infinitely good, because injurious to an infinite God; an offence of infinite majesty, a contempt of infinite authority, an affront to infinite sovereignty, an abuse of infinite mercy, a dishonour to infinite excellency, a provocation of infinite justice, a contrariety to infinite holiness, a reproach of infinite glory, an enemy to infinite love. It is infinitely evil, and therefore deserves to be infinitely punished, for justice requires that the punishment should be proportionable to the offence. A punishment intensively in-

finite cannot be inflicted, because a finite creature is not capable of it, therefore it must be infinite extensively, and what it wants in degrees must be made up in duration. Because the infinite treasures of wrath cannot be laid out at once upon a finite creature by reason of its incapacity, therefore justice will be expending thereof by degrees to all eternity. The least sin, being infinitely evil, deserves infinite sufferings, infinite in respect of duration, *i. e.* everlasting sufferings.

4. *Arg.* From the continuance of the law. The law which was first given to mankind, obliged to perfect obedience, and consequently prohibited the least sin, the least imperfection, and the penalty was eternal death. When this law continues in force, eternal death is due to the least sin. But this law is still in force, for neither did Christ repeal it, neither is the gospel an abrogation of it. Christ did not repeal it; he professes the contrary, *Mat.* v. 17, 18. The gospel does not abrogate it; the apostle testifies the contrary, *Rom.* iii. 31.

The preceptive part, whereby it obliges to perfect obedience, and the avoiding of the least sin, this continues inviolable. Only the sanction whereby it engages hereto under the pain of eternal death, this is not so peremptory. The tenor of the law is still the same, and to this day runs: 'He that continues not in all things to do them' is cursed, shall die eternally; but the gospel brings an exception, he shall die except he believe and repent.

But as for those who continue in impenitency and unbelief, the law is in full force against them, neither the obligation is removed, nor the rigour of it mitigated.

Those that do repent and believe, they have the advantage of the gospel exception; but it is upon this ground that the law is first satisfied, both as to the obligation and penalty, though not by themselves, yet by their surety.

So that the law is abrogated to none at all, mitigated but to few, and the mitigations as to them respects not the demerit, but the event of their sin; it makes not their least sin not to deserve death, but prevents the execution, so as they receive not what sin deserves, their surety having suffered according to their demerits.

So far was Christ from altering the constitution of the law which makes death due for the least sin, as he would not so much as hinder the execution of it; nay, rather than the penalty denounced should not be suffered, he would suffer it himself.

To conclude. Since the law is not abolished but established by Christ, and since this law, thus established, makes eternal death the penalty of the least sin, it necessarily follows that the least sin exposes the sinner to eternal death.

III. *Use* 1. For conviction; 1, To gross sinners; 2, To formal professors.

1. To gross sinners, in whose lives the characters of wickedness are so large and visible, as he that runs may read them. These words should be to you as the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, *Dan.* v. 6. They should make your countenance change, your thoughts troubled, your joints loosed, and your knees smite one against another. Is he cursed who continues not in all things to do them? How will the curse fall upon him who continues in all things to transgress them?

Does the least sin expose to the curse of God? Oh then how heavily will the curse of God fall on you for your great enormities!

Is the wrath of God due for the omissions of good? Oh what wrath will be revealed from heaven against your abominable practices!

Is everlasting death the wages of secret evils? Oh what shall be the

wages of your open wickedness! your drunkenness, uncleanness, injustice, profaneness! How shall these escape the damnation of hell?

Must ye be accountable for idle words in order to condemnation? Oh, what account will ye give of your oaths and imprecations, of your scoffs, slanders, and reproaches, of your lascivious and corrupt communication?

Do vain thoughts hazard salvation? How just then will be your condemnation for your contemplative wickedness, your covetous, lustful, revengeful thoughts?

Are the motions to sin, without consent, enough to damn the sinner? How shall you escape with your beloved sins, your plotted mischief, your contrived wickedness?

Will the least sins, which ye count but as atoms, sink the sinner into hell? How then can you stand under gross evils, which are as mountains in comparison?

If hell be kindled for small sins, sure it will be made seven times hotter for them. 'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall they appear?' Why, where they shall 'call to the mountains,' &c., that they may have neither appearance nor being.

You that persist in gross sins, you discern here the state of your souls. If God be true, if there be any truth in the word of truth, this is your condition, you are under the curse, you are condemned already; for anything you know, the execution may be the next day, the next moment; there is but a step betwixt you and death, your souls and eternal death.

2. To formal professors; those who think their condition good because they are not so bad as others; think they shall escape the curse merely because they have escaped the visible pollutions of the world, who are apt to say with the pharisee, Luke xviii. 12, 'I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' As if this were sufficient to justify them, to exempt them from the curse! Oh remember the Lord often condemns those who justify themselves, and denounces a curse against those who are ready to engross to themselves the blessing.

It may be thou dost not act that wickedness which is frequently perpetrated by the sons of Belial amongst us. Oh, but let thy conscience answer, Dost thou not omit the exercise of holiness and mortification? Dost thou not omit, in whole or in part, the duty of religion and godliness? Or when thou performest them, is it not negligently, as though thou performed them not? Oh consider, there is a curse denounced against those who perform the work of the Lord negligently. How can they then escape the curse who neglect to perform it? It may be thou performest those duties but by fits unconstantly; oh remember, the curse reaches those, not only who do them not at all, but continue not to do them.

It may be thou wholly abstainest from open wickedness. Thy conversation may be as unblameable as the apostle's was while a pharisee, Philip. iii. 7. It may be, *ἀμωμος, ἀμειπτος*, such as a captious censorious man cannot justly challenge, either for visible commission or omissions. Ay, but dost thou not freely entertain or peaceably tolerate some secret corruptions in thy heart? Are there not some secret invisible lusts which thou dost not constantly bewail and endeavour to mortify? Why, then, though thy conversation be as a whited sepulchre, as a gilded monument, and appear beautiful indeed outward, yet if there be any dead bones, any rottenness, any tolerated corruptions within, thou canst no more escape the curse than the pharisees, upon whom the Lord Christ showers down curses. If thou art indifferent, so thy outside be clean, whatever fill thy heart, be sure the curse will be one ingredient. Open wickedness makes a large breach

for the curse to enter ; ay, but any secret allowed lust will open a door to let it in. *All things* include both externals and internals, and the words run so, 'Cursed is every one,' &c.

It may be thou tremblest at blasphemy, and fearest a profane oath, and art offended at unclean, lascivious speeches, and abhorrest injurious slanders and false accusers ; ay, but dost thou make no conscience of idle words ? Dost thou not, as to these, set a watch before thy mouth and keep the door of thy lips ? Why, then, thou leavest it open for the curse to enter, for that reaches all, even every irregular word.

It may be thou entertainest no atheistical, adulterous, or bloody thoughts ; ay, but dost thou endeavour to wash thy heart from the wickedness of vain thoughts ? If these quietly lodge in thee, the curse will rest on thee, for *all things* include all acts, words, thoughts, that are not exactly conformable to the law : and 'cursed is every one,' &c.

It may be thou dost not plot wickedness upon thy bed, nor study how to make provision for the flesh ; ay, but dost thou bewail the involuntary motions of thy soul unto evil ? Do not these lead thee to the spring-head, the corruption of thy nature ? Does not this deep call effectually for deep sorrow and humiliation, for the pollution and woful degeneracy of thy nature ? Why, then, though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked out before God (though no eye see it), and thou art marked out for the curse ; it will cleave to thee as the leprosy of Naaman to Gehazi, which will continue on you while you continue in this state.

Use. 2. Exhortation ; 1, To those that are under the curse ; make haste for deliverance. You that live in gross sins, you that have gone no further than to an outward conformity to the letter of the law, hearken to this word as that which infinitely concerns you. Either you have continued in all things written in the law to do them, or have not. If you say you have continued, &c., you grossly, you wofully deceive your souls, and the truth is not in you. If you have not continued in all things, then either the word of God is false, or you are cursed ; either you must give the lie to the Spirit of truth, or believe that the curse, the everlasting wrath of God, hangs over you.

Since you are under the curse, either you must bear it yourselves or some else must bear it for you ; the justice of God can admit no *medium*. Bear it yourselves you cannot ; alas, it will sink you into the bottom of hell, and there oppress you to all eternity. No creature can bear it for you ; the heavens mourn for it, the earth groans under it, a great part of the angels are pressed down by it into the bottomless pit ; and for men, every one must bear his own burden. What, then ; is there no relief for a woful cursed sinner ? No deliverance from the wrath of God ? No redemption from the curse of the law ?

Here comes in the glad tidings of the gospel : 'The Lord has laid help upon one that is mighty,' upon Christ, who was only able, who was only willing to bear man's curse, who is both able and willing to deliver sinners from it ; but then you must come to him for deliverance, in a way honourable to him, prescribed by him. You must believe his word, the word of the curse ; you must apply it, you must be affected with your misery by reason of it ; you must be willing to accept of him upon his own terms. As he is willing to bear your curse, you must be willing to take his yoke. You must shake off security, self-confidence ; renounce your sin, your dearest lusts ; those which have brought the curse upon you, abandon them as cursed things. You must resign up yourselves wholly unto Christ, as your king, your redeemer.

This is the way. Why linger you? Why do ye not make haste to get into it? Is this a condition to be rested in? Can you live at ease while you are every moment in danger of everlasting death? Can you take comfort in any enjoyment while the curse of God is mixed with it? Can you sleep securely while your damnation sleeps not? Oh give no rest to your souls, no rest to your eyes, till you find rest from Christ. The fiery serpent, the curse of God, has stung you, death is seizing on you; oh look up unto the brazen serpent, look up to Christ, else there is no hope of life! The avenger of blood, revenging justice, pursues you; oh make haste, fly for your life unto the city of refuge, unto Christ the only refuge from the curse! Make haste, escape for your life, lest justice overtake you, and you perish without remedy.

2. To those that are delivered from the curse. You whom Christ has redeemed from everlasting wrath, you whom he has saved from going down into the pit, you whom he has rescued from these everlasting burnings, oh praise, admire, adore, rejoice in your Redeemer. If the curse of the law have stung your consciences, how sweet, how endearing, will these two expressions be! How will they draw out your affections to Christ! Gal. iii. 13; 'And Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come,' 1 Thes. i. 10. Oh, was he content to bear the curse rather than I should bear it, to be cursed that I might inherit the blessing, to lie under the wrath of God rather than it should sink me into hell! Was he content to die that he might save my life, and to drink up the dregs of divine vengeance that I might not taste of the second death? Oh, love the Lord! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Oh how wretched had I been if Christ had not been so wonderfully gracious! How cursed and miserable, if Christ's love had not been so infinite! Every act, every word, every thought of mine had been cursed; every ordinance, every enjoyment, every relation of mine had been cursed. I had been cursed in my going out and coming in, in life and at death, cursed here and cursed for ever hereafter. Had it not been for Christ, I had been of all creatures most miserable. Say, Oh why am I not under the same curse, in the same condemnation with others? Why am I not in their woful condition, who continue under the curse, and continue senseless under it; who dance upon the edge of eternal ruin, and sleep upon the brink of the bottomless pit, every moment in danger to drop into the lake of fire? Oh the wonderful love of Christ! Oh the wonders of that distinguishing love, which has set my feet upon a rock, when others are split upon the curse, and wreck their souls in the gulf of eternal wrath! Oh, what shall I render unto Christ for this love? This should be your constant inquiry, and the answer to it is the work of eternity.

8. To all. If the least sin bring under the curse, then look upon the least sin as a cursed evil. Let your apprehensions, affections, actings, be answerable. Say not of any as of Zoar, 'Is it not a little one?' &c. Hate the least sins as you hate that which is destructive, that which will destroy the whole man. Fear them as you fear the curse of God, everlasting death; resist them as you would resist a mortal enemy, the wounds of a cruel one; avoid them as you would avoid the wrath, the indignation of the Most High; bewail the pollution wherewith they stain the soul, as that which the Lord is of purer eyes than to endure: 'Avoid all appearance of evil,' 1 Thes. v. 22. As we shun not only the possession of Satan, but the appearance of the devil; as you not only shun the embracements of a serpent, of a toad, but startle at the approach, at the appearance of them; Jude 23, 'Hate the garments spotted with the flesh.' Not only the flesh, or the spots thereof,

but the garments spotted. As you are afraid not only of a plague-sore, or of a person infected with the plague, but of garments of an infected person; anything, the least thing, that may convey infection. Marcus, bishop of Arethusa, he would not in the leastwise countenance sin, not to save his life. The terrors of death could not move him to give *ne obolum quidem*; not a halfpenny to re-edify an idolatrous temple.

The Christians, in their contests with the Arians, would not countenance their error by yielding to them the least letter, so much as an iota; they would not change their *ὁμοούσιος* into the Arian *ὁμοιούσιος*, no, not to avoid the fury of a persecution. They were so far from quitting the thing, as they would not so much as quit the word. I might bring a cloud of like examples, but I will not be prevented.

This is the way to shew you love Christ entirely. That love to Christ is great indeed that will not offend him in the least.

This is the way to evidence your sincerity. Hypocrites and formalists may avoid gross sins, open wickedness; but that is an upright heart indeed that will not decline in the least. That is a heart after God's own heart that will fulfil *πάντα τὰ θελήματα*, all his wills, every part of it. Hypocrites and formalists shall be clothed with shame and confusion, but then shall not you be ashamed when you have respect to all God's commandments. Then has Christ, then has grace, an absolute sovereignty in the soul, when not only the arch-traitors, but the petty *Bouteveys*, are quelled; when both great and small are brought into subjection unto Christ.

But to enforce this more distinctly, let me represent to you the heinousness of the least sins in some particulars. Nor will I digress; the considerations will be such as have a near affinity with the truth, and such as do tend to confirm and illustrate it.

1. There is something of atheism in these small sins. It is atheism to deny there is a God, to deny the Lord to be God. Now, these less sins are a denial of God; if not expressly, yet by interpretation; if not directly, yet by consequence; for he that denies any excellency to be in God which is essential to him, denies him to be God. If that rule be true, which is received without contradiction, *quicquid in Deo est Deus*; if every perfection be God which is essentially in him, then he that denies any perfection which is in him, denies him to be God. Even as he that denies a man to have a reasonable soul, to have a will and intellect, denies that he is a man; or he that denies that the sun is a luminary, denies that it is a sun; or he that denies a piece of metal to be gold or silver, thereby denies that it is current money, when nothing else is current money amongst us.

But these less sins deny many perfections, which are essentially in God. His omniscience, truth, holiness, justice; nay, they deny all in one, denying him to be the chief good.

Why do men venture more freely upon secret sins than upon open wickedness, but that they say in their hearts, God sees not? Is not this to deny his omniscience?

Why are men so bold with these smaller sins, but that they believe the least of them do not bring under the curse of the law, will not expose them to the everlasting wrath of God, though he expressly affirm this? And is not this to deny the truth of God?

Why do men so little regard these lesser sins, but that they think the Lord does not much regard them, is not much offended with them? And is not this to deny his purity and holiness?

Why do men think it harsh to be restrained from these lesser evils by such dreadful menaces and penalties, but that they in their thoughts represent it

as *summum jus*, extremely rigorous. And is not this to question the justice and righteousness of God?

I might shew you how the least sin denies several other perfections, but it will suffice to instance in one, which denied divests him of all at once.

The least sin denies God to be the chief good. To clear this, observe that the chief good and the last end are convertible. He that denies God to be the last end, denies him to be the chief good. Then further, every human act has an ultimate end, this is clear and granted; then the least sin being an human act, must have some ultimate end; so that if the Lord be not the last end of that sinful act, he is thereby divested of this prerogative; he is denied herein to be the last end, the chief good. But the Lord cannot be the end of any sin whatsoever; it can in no wise, in no respect, be referred to him as its end; therefore the least sin can be no other than a denial that the Lord is the chief good; and if it deny this, it denies him to be God. See here the desperate tendency of the least sin, and tremble at it: 'The fool has said in his heart, There is no God,' Ps. xiv. 1. This folly is bound up in every heart. It is bound, but it is not tongue-tied; it speaks blasphemous things against God, it says there is no God. There is a difference indeed in the language: gross sins speak this louder, there are crying sins; but though less sins speak it not so loud, they whisper it. But the Lord can hear the language of the heart, the whisperings of its motions, as plainly as we hear one another in our ordinary discourse. Oh how heinous is the least sin, which is so injurious to the very being of the great God!

2. There is something of idolatry in these small sins. For idolatry, Rom. i. 25, *μετάθεσις τῆς προσκυχῆως ἀπὸ τοῦ πεποιημένου ἐπὶ τα κρίματα*, Naz. Orat. 33. Now, the acts of the soul are the principal acts of worship; those of the body are but inferior and subservient thereto. Then is the Lord honoured with the highest act of worship, when he has the pre-eminence above all in our minds and hearts; and therefore when any other thing has the pre-eminence of God, we make an idol of it, and give it that worship which is due only to the Most High, which is flat idolatry.

But now, in admitting these small sins, we prefer other things before God, and so give that worship to others which is due only to God, and hereby become in effect idolaters.

He that will offend God, to please himself in the least sinful indulgence, he prefers his pleasure before God.

He that will do that which deserves the loss of God's favour, to gain any temporal advantage,—the less the worse,—prefers his profit, advantage before God.

He that will hearken to Satan suggesting the least sin, rather than to the Lord forbidding, threatening, dissuading from it, prefers the devil before God.

He that will hazard the loss of communion with God (as the least sin does, considering its demerit), rather than abandon his sin, he prefers his sin before God. He prefers these before God, they have the pre-eminence of him; he gives that worship to pleasure, profit, Satan, sin, which is due only to God. Now, I beseech you, should we not tremble at this apprehension? What idolatry is it to worship the devil; to worship sin, which is worse than the devil! And yet, the premises considered, it will evidently appear that such idolatry there is, virtually and interpretatively, in the least sin that is deliberately acted.

3. There is something of murder in admitting the least sin. The least is a deadly evil, of a bloody tendency, as to the life of the soul, Ezek.

xviii. 20. He says not, 'that sinneth thus and thus, that sinneth in this or that degree,' &c., Rom. vi. 21. No matter how small the seed be, the fruit is death. The least is a deadly evil, and that should be enough to make it formidable. A spider may kill, as well as a lion; a needle run into the heart or bowels may let in death, as well as a rapier or cannon bullet; a small breach neglected may let in the enemy, and so prove as destructive as if all the walls and fortifications were thrown down.

Sin is compared to poison, the poison of asps, Ps. cxl. 8, and the venom of dragons, Rom. iii. 8, Deut. xxxii. Now a drop of such strong poison may kill as well as a full draught. The tongue is but a little member, says the apostle, James iii. 5, yet he calls it a world of iniquity, ver. 6. This little member he calls a fire, ver. 6, and yet 'behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth,' it 'sets on fire the whole course of nature.' You know what a spark will do, when it falls into gunpowder; it often fires it as effectually as a brand. What less than the sting of a adder? Yet what more deadly? Such, so destructive is the least sin. Sin is expressed hereby, 1 Cor. xv. 56. An error, a sin in opinion (counted by some in these times a small sin), is compared to a gangrene, 2 Tim. ii. 17. Now what is more dangerous, what more destructive than a gangrene? Yet this you have occasioned by the prick of a pin.

Look upon the least sin as the Scripture represents it, as full of deadly poison, as a spark in powder, as the sting of a serpent, as tending to a gangrene, and you will see more reason to dread it, because it is deadly, destructive, than to slight it, because it seems small.

4. The least sin is a violation of the whole law, and therefore more heinous, of more dangerous consequence than we are apt to imagine: James ii. 10, he that offends in the least, offends in one; and by offending in the least, becomes guilty of all. You may think it strange, that an idle word, &c., should make one guilty of blasphemy, idolatry, murder, adultery, and all other abomination, but the apostle affirms it, and so it is unquestionably true.

The law, with its several precepts, is like a copulative proposition; though it consist of ten or twenty several parts, yet if one fail, the whole becomes invalid; he that denies one, denies all. The reason is, because the truth and validity of such a proposition depends upon the copulation or connection, which by the default of one part is dissolved. There is a concatenation of duties in the law, they are linked one to another; break but one link, and the whole chain is broken.

The reason why one violates all is drawn, ver. 11, from the authority of the lawgiver; the precepts of the law, they are as a string of pearls, they are strung upon the authority of God; break but the string in any part, and they all fall. The authority of God is as a pillar that supports the tables of the law; pluck but this from them, by the least tassel, and the tables fall, the whole law is broken.

Or the least breach is a violation of all *dispositivè*, because the least sin may dispose the sinner to every sin. (The authority of God is as a bank to secure the law from sin's encroachments; make a break in this bank, though you intend it but for a little water; yet the whole river may find the passage, and overflow all.) A sip of pleasing tempting liquor may tempt a man to drink, and that may incline him by degrees to large draughts, till at length he come to wallow in that which at first he did but desire to taste of. So it is in sin; the least degree leaves a disposition to a further, a higher degree, and so, if it be not quashed betimes, is apt to carry on the sinner to height, and breadth, and depth of excess.

There is in the least sin, as in plants (and other creatures) a seminal virtue, whereby it multiplies itself. The seed at first is a small inconsiderable thing, but let it lie quietly on the ground, it will take root, grow into a bulky stock, and diffuse itself into variety of branches. Sin is like that grain of mustard seed (a comparison used by Christ in another case), Mat. xiii. 31, 32, which indeed is the least of all seeds, &c. It grows till at length it becomes a receptacle for Satan to nestle in, where he may hatch all manner of wickedness in the branches of it.

A sinful motion (if not stifled in the conception) will procure consent, and consent will bring forth into act; and one act will dispose to others, till custom have begot a habit, and a habit will dull and stupefy the conscience. And when the modesty and purity of the conscience is violated, it is in the highway to prostitute itself at every solicitation, and to entertain all comers, lies open to all wickedness.

Oh the danger, the prodigious fruitfulness of the least sin, which can multiply itself by degrees into all the wickedness that the law forbids! The least is, in this respect, a violation of the whole law. Oh take heed of admitting any, though it seem small. Stand upon your guard; if you open the wicket to one, you may have a whole army rush in upon you; the guilt of the least may involve you in the guilt of all.

5. The least part of the law is more valuable in God's account than heaven and earth; a tittle of the law of more account than the whole fabric of the world. He had rather heaven and earth should perish, than one iota of the law, Mat. v. 18. First, heaven and earth shall vanish, rather than the least letter, one *iota*, rather than the least apex, the least point, one *xípsilon* of the law shall pass away. So much more valuable is the law, &c., as he seems more tender of the least point of this, than of that whole fabric. But lest this should seem a paradox, let us a little inquire into the ground of it.

The end has the pre-eminence in point of value and dignity; it is more valuable than all the means; and of all the means those are most valuable which contribute most to the attainment of the end. Now the supreme and sovereign end of all is the glory of God; that therefore is most valuable, wherein he appears most glorious, wherein most of his glorious perfections are displayed.

In the fabric of heaven and earth the power and wisdom of God appears; in this respect they declare his glory, by shewing his mighty power and wisdom, Ps. xix.

But now in the law of God there is a more ample and glorious appearance, there is an effulgency of more divine excellencies. This not only declares his wisdom in proportioning rewards and punishments to obedience and disobedience, and his power in giving law to the creatures, and to execute and accomplish what he has threatened and promised; but herein also is displayed his sovereignty and authority, his mercy and justice, his holiness and righteousness. His holiness and righteousness in the preceptive part, his mercy in the promissory, his justice in the minatory, his authority and sovereignty in all. Behold, here shines forth, not a single star or two, but a constellation of divine excellencies, and this of the first magnitude. Well may the Lord be so tender of the law, when it so much concerns his glory.

Besides, that is more valuable which comes nearer to the highest excellency, which most resembles the idea. That is the best, the fairest copy, which comest nearest to the original. But the law has in this respect the

pre-eminence of heaven and earth. In earth there are some dark shadows of God; in heaven (the visible heaven) there are some plainer, some more visible footsteps of God. Ay, but the law is his image. Why was man said to be made according to the image of God, but because he was made according to the pattern in the mount? The law was writ in his heart. The Lord did, as it were, stamp the law, wherein was engraven his own likeness, upon the soul of man, and so left thereon the impressions of holiness and righteousness, the lineaments of the divine nature. The conformity of man to God, both in the first creation and second, consists in his conformity to the law of God.

Moreover, consider the great things of God, τὰ μεγάλα τοῦ Θεοῦ, the great things, both of creation and redemption, were ordered in a subserviency to the law of God, and this does exceedingly enhance the value of it. Earth, that was made for man as a convenient place for the observance of the law; heaven (the third heaven), as a reward of obedience to the law; hell, that was created as a punishment of disobeying the law; the gospel, that was published to establish the law, Rom. iii. 81. Nay, Christ himself, he was sent, he came to fulfil the law. This was the end of his glorious undertaking, the end of his obeying, of his suffering, ver. 17. This is assigned as the ground why the law is preferred before heaven, &c., ver. 18. Christ, his spotless holiness was to fulfil the precept of the law; his death and sufferings were to satisfy the threatening of the law; both life and death were that the promise of the law might be accomplished. The Son of God must live as a man, and die as a slave, rather than one iota of the law should not be fulfilled.

No wonder, if heaven and earth must perish, rather than one tittle of the law fail, since the Son of God must become man and die, rather than the least part of the law shall not be accomplished; sure the Son of God is of more value than heaven and earth.

Now, since upon clear grounds the least part of the law is more valuable than heaven and earth, consider what ye do when you sin, when you offend in the least. It is better, more tolerable to do that which tends to the destruction of heaven and earth, the ruin of the fabric of the world, than to violate the least command, than to offer violence to the law by the least sin.

Oh what weight does this lay upon the smallest sin! In the respect fore-mentioned, God has more dishonour by the least violation of the law, than if heaven and earth were turned into nothing.

6. The least sin is the object of infinite hatred. The Lord infinitely hates the least sin; he hates it, is not only angry for it, offended with it, grieved at it, but he hates it; he hates it perfectly; there is not the least mixture of love, liking, or approbation, nothing but pure hatred. The will of God as to sin is pure hatred in the abstract; he hates it eternally; possibly he may be reconciled to the sinner, but never to the sin. Whilst he is himself, whilst he is God, he hates it, i. e. from everlasting to everlasting; he hates it infinitely, for the hatred of an evil object is proportionable to the goodness of the subject where this affection is seated. Now God is infinitely good, and therefore his hatred of evil must be proportionable; he must hate it infinitely. When I say infinitely, I say he hates it more than tongue can express, than heart can conceive, more than men or angels can either express or imagine. 'Who knows the power of his wrath?'

The largest apprehension cannot measure the dimensions of it, the height and depth, length and breadth of it are, like God himself, incomprehensible.

Yet to help your apprehension a little, collect all the hatred that, since

the foundation of the world, has had place in all the creatures, suppose all this were compacted in one soul; conceive further an object offered to it made up of all hateful ingredients in earth or hell; suppose this hatred hereby sublimated to the height, drawn out and extended to the utmost: the imagination of such a hatred, such an affection, may astonish us; oh, but all this would be nothing, not so much as a drop to the ocean compared with that hatred, wherewith the Lord hates the least sin. This is infinite, this is an ocean without banks or bottom.

Now consider this seriously; will ye do that which the Lord infinitely hates? I will not do this, will a child say, my father hates it; I dare not do this, will a servant say, my master hates it. Oh, but their hatred is nothing to God's, and shall this be less regarded? Oh, tremble to do that which the Lord hates with an infinite, with an everlasting hatred. Count not that small or light, which is burdened with the infinite hatred of the most high God.

7. There is more provocation in the least sin against God, than in the greatest injuries against men. Let all the injuries imaginable be put together, the total sum of them will not amount to so much as a single unit against God. For that rule is unquestionable, *quò persona in quem peccatur nobilior est, eo peccatum gravius est*, the greater the person is whom you offend, the greater, the more grievous is the offence; the dignity of the person puts an accent upon the injury. The law makes it not so heinous to smite an inferior, as to affront a magistrate; it is more heinous to clip the prince's coin, than to kill a private person. Every degree of dignity in the person injured raises the injury a degree higher; but now the highest dignity amongst men is but finite, the majesty of God is infinite; and therefore the least sin against God is so much more heinous, than the greatest injury you can do to the greatest of men, as that which is infinite exceeds what is but finite; there is incomparably, unproportionably, infinitely more provocation in it; for *finitum ad infinitum nulla proportio*, betwixt that which is finite, and that which is infinite, there is no comparison, no proportion. It would be counted intolerable to spurn at a prince, or throw dirt in the face of majesty. Oh, but this is infinitely less than the least offence directed against the majesty of heaven. For the distance is greater betwixt God and the greatest monarch on earth, than betwixt the greatest prince and the meanest subject, nay, than the most contemptible fly or vilest worm. You would count it intolerable, if your servant should kick you, or your child should spit in your face. Oh, but you do more, that which is infinitely more provoking, in the least sin you commit against God, because your obligations to him are more, and the distance infinitely greater. The least sin is an infinite injury in respect to its object, and that is more than all the greatest, the most provoking injuries that can be offered to the sons of men. Oh that ye would consider this seriously, and look upon the least sin as infinitely injurious to the great God.

8. The least sin requires infinite satisfaction. Such an injury is the least sin, as nothing can compensate it, but that which is of infinite value; this is grounded upon the former. The least sin is an infinite injury; now the rules of reason and justice require, that what is given for satisfaction should be proportionable to the injury; nothing therefore can be a compensation for an infinite injury, but that which is of infinite value.

And since it is so, where shall the sinner find such a compensation? 'Wherewith shall we come before the Lord,' to satisfy for the least sin? (to make use of the prophet's words, Micah vi. 6, 7). Can these satisfy the Lord, for the injury the least sin has done him? Oh no! Ps. xlix. 8. The

redemption of the soul from the guilt of any sin is far more precious; if something infinitely more valuable be not offered for it, it ceases for ever, we may desist from it everlastingly as altogether unfeasible.

If the blood of all the men on earth was sacrificed to satisfy for the least sin, if all the angels in heaven would offer themselves to be annihilated for the expiation of the least sin, this would not be effectual.

If heaven and earth, and all the treasures thereof, and all the creatures therein, were put into one sum, and offered as a recompence for the injury of the least sin, this would fall infinitely short of the value of a just compensation; these would not be so much as a mite, when more than a hundred thousand talents are due and in justice required; for the value of these is finite and limited, but that which compensates the injury of the least sin must be of infinite value.

Consider what ye do when ye venture upon the least sin: you do such an injury to God as heaven and earth, men and angels, can never make amends for; you do that which may undo you for ever, which may ruin your souls eternally, though all the saints and angels in heaven should interpose to their utmost to prevent your ruin. 'Without blood there is no remission,' Heb. ix. 22. This supposes that by blood remission may be obtained; but what blood? It is not the blood of bulls and goats, nor of the cattle on a thousand hills; these are too low priced for such a purpose. It must be blood of infinite value; it must be the blood of God, Acts xx. 28; the blood of Christ, who was God as well as man—man that he might have blood to shed, and God that he might derive an infinite value upon that blood. Such is the stain of the least sin, as nothing can fetch it out but the blood of Christ.

Consider then, when thou art under temptation, when thou art solicited to a sin which thou countest small, say thus to thy soul, Either this sin will be expiated with the blood of Christ, or it will not. If it be not expiated with the blood of Christ, then it will ruin me, soul and body, for ever, without remedy, without redemption. If it be expiated, satisfied for by the blood of Christ, oh then resolve concerning it, as David of the water of the well of Bethlehem, 2 Sam. xxiii. He longed for it, his mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines to procure it for him; but when they brought it, he would not so much as taste; his reason, see verse 17. So say thou, so resolve: Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this! Is not this the blood of Christ, who not only hazarded but lost his life for me, that I should have a hand in that which shed the blood of Christ, and put to death the Lord of life.

9. The least sin is now punished in hell with those torments that will last for ever. Hell is the reward of the least sin, not only in respect of its demerit, but in regard of the event. The damned do now feel the weight of God's eternal wrath for those sins which they made light of, Mat. v. 25. The moral of the expression is this: those that will not be reconciled to God here shall be tormented in hell for ever hereafter; they shall be cast into hell, and not come out till they have paid the utmost farthing, i. e. till they have satisfied for the least sin, for every sin. Sins are debts run upon the score of justice; of these debts some are greater, some are smaller; there is the debt of talents and the debt of farthings; divine justice must be satisfied for all. He does not say he shall not come out till he have paid every talent, but till he have paid the utmost farthing. The sinner can never satisfy for the least, and therefore for the least must everlastingly suffer.

The least sin is enough to kindle that fire that never goes out. Those

sins which ye count but as wind, idle words, are enough to blow this into a flame that will never be quenched, Mat. xii.

The least corruption is enough to breed that worm that never dies. We have experiments enough on earth to persuade the belief of this. We have diverse dreadful representations here of what the least sin can do in hell hereafter. Have ye not known such a sin as we count small kindle a hell in the conscience of the sinner, and make him feel the tortures of hell upon earth? Hell is enclosed in the least sin. If the Lord do but unfold it, do but lay it open to the conscience, there needs no other devil, no other tormentors, to make the guilty sinner conceive he can scarce be worse in hell. There is the materials of hell in the least sin; let but the Lord speak the word, let him but breathe on it, it will kindle in an instant, and scorch, as though it were set on fire of hell. And if the least sin be matter apt enough to kindle such flames now when it is but green, oh how will they kindle on it in hell when it is dry, when the sinner is cut down by the last stroke of justice! Look upon the least sin as thus represented, as burdened with the weight of everlasting wrath, as kindling those everlasting burnings. Judge of them not by the suggestions of Satan, not by the cries of despairing, tormented souls, and then you will see reason to fear them as hell, rather than to slight them as small.

10. The least sin is worse than the greatest punishment. The least sin is worse than hell, worse both than the tormentors and the torments. Sin is worse than the devil, for it was sin that made him a devil; it turned the angels of light into spirits of darkness. Nay, if the least sin had place in the most glorious angel now in heaven, the malignity of it would be still as powerful, as mischievous; for aught we know, it would in an instant transform the highest seraphim into an ugly fiend. The least sin is worse, too, than the greatest punishment, the greatest torments; for the least is contrary to God, opposite to his nature, will, holiness, nay, his very being, reflects dishonour upon all; whereas punishment is an act of divine justice, the proper issue of an infinite excellency, and that which, in its sphere, tends to make the Lord as glorious as the act of any other attribute.

Sin is the act of degenerate creatures, fallen men and devils as such; but punishment is the act of the holy and righteous God, and that as he is such. And is there here any comparison? Can the unrighteousness of men come in competition with the justice of God? Is there any room to question which is better, justice or injustice, light or darkness?

Punishment is but *malum creaturæ*; sin is *malum* both *Deo et creaturæ*. Sin is evil both to God and the creatures, punishment is only evil to the sinner. Now the rule, *malum quo communis eo pejus*, evil, the more extensive it is the worse it is, is true here with infinite advantage. Evil of sin is so much the worse by how much an infinite good, to which it is opposed, is better.

Punishment is evil to the creature, but it is only a physical evil; but sin is both morally and physically, in every respect, evil, therefore worse than any punishment. Punishment is for repairing of what breach sin has made; now which is better, the restorer or the destroyer?

If reason were perfectly rectified, and the will of man exactly conformed to the divine nature, he would choose *horrorem inferni*, rather than *turpitudinem peccati*, the torments of hell (abstracted from all sinful mixtures) rather than the least sin.

Consider, then, what ye do, when ye venture upon the least sin; you choose that which, upon a true, a rational account, is worse than hell.

Use 8. Information.

1. See here an impossibility for a sinner to be justified by his observance

of the law, or according to the tenor of the first covenant. The law requires to justification a righteousness exactly perfect; but the best righteousness of fallen man is as a menstruous rag. It is not only torn and ragged, but spotted and defiled. The law curses every one that continues not in all things; whereas in many things, in everything, we offend all. If man could, by the utmost improvement of his remaining abilities, spin up a garment of righteousness that would cover him, yet if there were but one hole to be found in it, the curse would there enter; whereas now, alas! it is nothing but holes and rags. If the Lord had not made other provision for the justifying and saving of man than the law holds forth, then no flesh would be saved. Oh what cause have we to admire the rich grace of the gospel!

2. See here the dangerous error of those who make account to be justified and saved by works; by their conformity to the law, or observance of it. The apostle is express, ver. 10. An imperfect observance of the law leaves the observer under the curse, but all observance of the law by fallen man is imperfect; no observance of all, no continuing in the observance of all, imperfection in both.

True, say they, it is imperfect as to the avoiding of small venial sins, but perfect as to the avoiding of gross and mortal. Ay, but the law makes no such distinction, and *ubi lex non distinguit, &c.* The law curses all without exception; the least sin exposes to the curse, wrath, death. Oh enter not into the secret of these men! They are Babel-builders; think with their own hands to raise a structure, whose top shall reach to heaven. Ay, but these words confound them and their language; this text is as a thunder-bolt, overthrows them and their structure, and tumbles both into the dust.

They have got a ladder indeed, by which they think to mount up to heaven, but the rounds of it, being the works of their own hands, are all rotten. And this text snaps them all in pieces; they that have no other footing must fall unavoidably, and fall as far as the curse will sink them, and that is weighty enough to press them into the lower hell. 'By the works of the law no flesh living can be justified.'

3. See here our necessity of Christ. All that continue not in all things are liable to the curse, and this is the condition of all. Either we must be delivered from the curse, or else we perish. Now who is there that can deliver us? Why, none but Christ, Gal. iii., Ps. cx.

The necessity of Christ to redeem from the curse due to gross sins, that is obvious, that will be easily acknowledged. Ay, but there is as great a necessity of Christ in reference to small sins. You see a necessity of Christ in respect of the sins of your unconverted state; oh, but there is as much need of him as to the sins you are guilty of since conversion. You see a necessity of Christ in reference to gross sins, blasphemy, intemperance, &c. Oh, but you have need of him in respect of the sins and failings of your best thoughts, actions, designs, prayers, &c., your holy duties, when performed in the best, the most holy, affectionate, heavenly manner. For the curse reaches the least failing; and if Christ redeem you not from the curse due thereto, the least will certainly damn you.

We should be apprehensive of our necessity of Christ, his blood, his redemption, his mediation, and our application of it, in every thought, every act, every step, every motion in the world. If Christ interpose not, the curse will meet us everywhere; in every employment, in every enjoyment, nay, in every ordinance. The curse falls upon every offence, and in everything we all offend.

There is a necessity of Christ in reference to the least failing, though it be but one. Suppose that Christ had redeemed a sinner from the curse due

to all his sins, one only excepted, and suppose that one sin were but a vain thought, or an idle word, or some dulness under an ordinance, or some wandering in a holy duty, yet this one sin, though so small, would be such a handle for the curse to fasten on, as men and angels, all the creatures in heaven and earth, could not remove it; the curse would drag that soul to hell without recovery. Oh, then, what need have we of a Saviour! Get lively apprehensions of your necessity of Christ. Walk continually under the sense and power of these apprehensions, and be often making applications of the blood and mediation of Christ to your souls.

So hath the Lord ordered the way to salvation, as that every one should see a necessity of Christ; a continual necessity of him, and a necessity of him in all things. And it is evident upon this account, because 'cursed is every one that continueth not in all things to do them.'

END OF VOL. II.