

## UNCONVERTED SINNERS ARE DARKNESS.

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*Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord : walk as children of light.*—Eph. V. 8.

HAVING given you a general account of these words before, I come to take a particular survey of them in the several parts.

You may look on them either as an argument, &c., the premises, conclusion ; or as a description of the state of the Ephesians. He tells them what they were before conversion, *darkness* ; what they are by the conversion, *light* ; what they should be and do after conversion, *walk*.

These three parts offered us so many observations. From the first, their state before conversion, 'ye were darkness ;' and what they were, that are we, and all men, till converted. This is not peculiar to the Ephesians, but common to all mankind since the fall ; till conversion, all are darkness.

*Obs.* Those that are not converted are darkness. All and every one of the sons and daughters of men, till they be changed, converted, are darkness.

For explication, let me shew you what must be understood by conversion, what by darkness.

By conversion is meant that universal change which I described, &c. Let me only add this, that in Scripture, conversion, regeneration, vocation, renovation are the same thing, expressed by divers terms ; the difference rather verbal than real, rather in word than reality. Conversion is the same thing with the new birth, with effectual calling, with renewing of the whole man, the planting of the principles of holiness.

So that, when I say, he that is not converted, &c., it is all one as if I said, He that is not born again, or born of God ; he that has not the image of God repaired in him, that image which consists in holiness ; he that has not Christ formed in him.

Not converted ; i. e. he that is not effectually called, he that continues in unbelief and impenitency ; he that answers not the call of Christ in the gospel ; when he calls for faith, does not believe ; when he calls for repentance, abides in the love and practice of sin ; when he calls for obedience, lives as a child of disobedience.

Not converted ; i. e. not renewed throughout in body, mind, and spirit, in heart and life ; he that has not a new heart, a new spirit ; he that is not a new creature, a new man, both inwardly and outwardly.

He that is not thus born again, thus called, thus renewed, is not converted ; and he that is not converted is in darkness. But what is that ?

You must not take it for outward darkness, the absence of that light which the eye, the outward sense, sees ; you must not conceive so grossly of it. It is spiritual darkness which is here meant, and the Holy Ghost expresses an unconverted state frequently by this term, 1 John ii. 9, 11, *i. e.* not born of God, 1 Thes. v. 4, John xii. 46. You have descriptions of conversion, where darkness and light are made the terms of it, Acts xxvi. 18, 1 Peter ii. 9, Col. i. 13.

But what is it to be in darkness ? What is this unconverted state that the Holy Ghost so often calls darkness ? Take it in these four particulars.

To be in darkness is (1.) to be in sin, the work of darkness ; (2.) to be under Satan, the prince of darkness ; (3.) under wrath, the fruit of darkness ; (4.) near to hell, the place of darkness. The Scripture by darkness ordinarily expresses some or all of these. When an unconverted state is called darkness, we are to understand by it a most sinful and miserable state.

(1.) In sin, the work of darkness. Sin is called in this chapter a 'work of darkness,' ver. 11. And he that lives in sin acts that work ; he is said 'to walk in darkness,' 1 John i. 6. He that is not converted, he is wholly in sin, under the power, the pollution, the guilt of sin.

All the qualities and motions of his soul, all the acts of his life, are sinful, John iii. 5, 6. He that is but once born, not born again of the Spirit, owes his being to no other birth but that of the flesh ; he is flesh, he is so wholly, only. By flesh is meant the corruption of sin : 'is flesh,' *i. e.* wholly corrupted by sin ; his whole soul is full of sin, mind, conscience, will, affections ; all are tainted with it, possessed by it, overspread with the pollution of it, Titus i. 15. There is nothing in his soul but what may be called flesh, *i. e.* sinful and corrupt, no principle of holiness.

Such a soul is sunk into sin ; he is encompassed and quite covered over with sin. Hence that of the apostle, Rom. viii., 'in the flesh.' Nothing that they have, nothing that they do, can possibly please God, because all they have or can do is sinful, and so abominable to God. The state of Simon Magus is the condition of every unconverted sinner, Acts viii. 23. And why was he in this state ? Because, though he was baptized and professed faith in Christ, yet he had neither part nor lot in regenerating, converting grace, ver. 21.

A sinner, till converted, is so held in the bond of iniquity as he can do nothing but sin. Baptism and the profession of faith cannot free him from this bondage to sin ; nothing but converting grace can break this bond by which he is held in such slavery, as he can do nothing but sin : John xv. 5, 'Without me,' *i. e.* out of me ; till ye be in me, united to me, ye can, &c. Now a sinner is never brought to union with Christ till conversion ; till then he can do nothing that is spiritually good, and if so, he can do nothing but sin.

Even his sins are but a better sort, a more grossy\* kind of sins, *splendidi peccata*. 'The sacrifice of the wicked,' Prov. xv. 8, 9, xxvi. 9.

And further, though he can do nothing but sin ; and so every thought, word, act, is put in the number of sins, by the Lord's account ; yet not one of these sins can be pardoned till conversion. For there is no pardon till faith and repentance, and no repentance till conversion ; till then he lies under the guilt of every sin. This is to be in darkness, to be in sin, the power, pollution, the guilt of it. He that is not converted is under sin, the work of darkness.

\* Qu. 'glossy'?—Ed.

(2.) Under Satan, the prince of darkness. That is his title. The whole world is divided betwixt these two potentates, Christ the prince of light and life, and Satan the prince of darkness. Those that are converted, they are free subjects of Christ; those that are not converted, they are the vassals of Satan. He is their ruler, Eph. vi. 11, 12. These principalities and powers are the devils, and they are the rulers of the darkness, &c., i. e. of all those sinners that are yet in darkness, that are not yet converted and turned from darkness to light. The following words shew that those who are not thus turned are still under the power of Satan. He acts them, he commands them, he rules them, he possesses them, he challenges them as his own; till by conversion, they be 'translated from the power of darkness into,' &c., till then sinners are his children, John viii. 44; his instruments, Eph. ii. 2; his captives, 2 Tim. ii. 26. They wear his badge and livery, do his work, obey his commands. The image of Satan, the impressions of darkness, are on their souls; by this he challenges them as his own. If you pretend to Christ while unconverted, he may ask, Whose image and superscription is this? If prevailing lust, unsubdued corruption, speak it his, why, then, give unto Satan the things, the persons that are Satan's; he will not lose his due. If the image of Christ, the image of light and holiness, be not on your souls, you bear the image and superscription of Satan, and nothing can raze this out but converting grace. Till conversion, you are under Satan, the prince of darkness.

(3.) Under the wrath of God, the fruit of darkness. The day of God's wrath and indignation is called a day of darkness, Joel ii. 2. And this dismal day will never end until conversion, in respect of temporal or spiritual judgments. The favour of God is called light, 'the light of his countenance.' Till this light shine on a sinner, he cannot but be in darkness, and this light never shines until conversion.

To be in darkness, then, is to be under the Lord's indignation, under the curse of the law, under the threatenings of the word, under the sentence of condemnation, under the stroke of revenging justice. These are the expressions of wrath, which make the state of an unconverted sinner a state of darkness. All the calamities and miseries that are the effects of the Lord's wrath are called darkness in Scripture, Eccles. v. 17, vi. 4. To be in an unconverted state is to be exposed to all the expressions of wrath.

(4.) Near to hell, the place of darkness. That is 'a land of darkness, as darkness itself.' It is called 'utter darkness,' Mat. viii. 12, 22; xii. 25, 30. So near is an unconverted state to hell, as it joins to it as an outer room; there is but a small, a weak partition betwixt them. If conversion do not bring the sinner out of this state, the partition will be broken, death will overthrow it, and then no passage, but into the outer room, into utter darkness. Hell is called the 'mist of darkness,' 2 Peter ii. 17. While a sinner is unconverted, he is in fetters, though not in chains; and his fetters will be turned into chains, if the power of converting grace break them not. He lies under the guilt of those offences for which the damned are adjudged to these chains. He is but under a reprieve; the sentence will be executed, if converting grace prevent not. Until thou be converted, thou art a child of darkness; this is thy portion, it is reserved for thee, thou art every moment in danger to fall into the woful possession of it. Thou canst lay claim to no other portion, canst hope for no other inheritance until conversion. To be in darkness is to be in danger of hell; it is a state bordering upon hell, it is in the confines, in the suburbs of it.

*Use.* Information. This shews the misery of an unconverted state. It concerns all sorts to take notice of it: those that are converted, that they may

rejoice in their Redeemer, and be thankful for deliverance from this woful condition; those that are not converted, that they may bewail their misery, and thirst after deliverance.

The misery of an unconverted state is so great, as even this darkness will discover it. Let us follow the metaphor a little, the better to discern it.

1. Darkness is uncomfortable. So is the state of an unconverted sinner. How sad was the condition of Egypt, when the Lord plagued it with darkness that might be felt! Exod. x. 21. Alas! the darkness that overshadows thy soul is more lamentable. That might be felt; the misery of this is so great, it can scarce be understood. That was but for three days; this will be to the days of eternity, if conversion prevent not. How sad would the condition of the world be, if that which is metaphorically spoken were really effected; if the sun should be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood! Who would not be weary of his life upon earth, if the sentence of continual darkness should pass upon it? Alas! more miserable is thy condition if unconverted, because the want of spiritual light is a greater misery than the want of sensible light. The very light that is in thee is darkness. Oh how great then is that darkness!

This is one aggravation of the lamentable condition of Paul and his companions, in danger of shipwreck: Acts xxvii. 20, 'Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared.' Far worse is thy condition if unconverted; no sun, no star appears. The Sun of righteousness, the bright Morning Star, has never appeared in thy soul since thou wast born, nor ever will until born again. Thou livest in a woful region, thou sittest in a region of darkness, and in 'the valley of the shadow of death.' The sun shines not on thee; it is another world, another kind of men that enjoy it, those that are *antipodes* to thee.

It is true when the Lord is about the work of conversion, when a sinner is in the pangs of the new birth, or when a soul converted is deserted, he may be in such a condition as the prophet describes, Isa. l. 10, he may for a while 'walk in darkness, and see no light.' Ay, but such a one has some comfort, some support; he may 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself,' &c.; as the mariners, 'though they saw neither sun nor stars,' Acts xvii. 20, yet 'cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for day.' They had anchors, though no light; and hopes of it, though it was not yet day. So has a soul in this condition, if converted or converting; he has anchor-hold, he may trust, &c.

Ay, but while thou art unconverted, thou hast neither light nor support; and though thou mayest strike some sparks out of worldly enjoyments, and compass thyself in them, yet 'for all this thou shalt lie down in sorrow.' Thy darkness is too great to be scattered with such sparks, ver. 11. How can they choose but lie down in sorrow, who must lie down in darkness, never to see the light!

2. Darkness is dangerous. He whose way lies near snares and pits, who is to pass over precipices, rocks, the brink of dangerous gulfs, and has no light to direct him, every step is the hazard of his life.

No less dangerous is the way of man ever since sin entered into the world. So many snares has Satan laid, so many pits has he digged, so near we walk to the brink of the bottomless pit, as without light we cannot make one step in safety. Even those that are converted have light little enough to secure them from ruin. Alas! then, what shall become of them who have no light at all, all whose paths are darkness? They are every foot in danger to be ensnared, to fall, to bruise and wound their souls, yea, to tumble into the bottomless pit before they be aware. Thus dangerous is an unconverted



state, for it is darkness. The Lord Christ expresses this, John xii. 85. He knows not truth from error, good from evil, runs into dangerous mistakes; he knows not whether he be right or wrong, whether his way lead to heaven or hell, whether to the bosom of Christ or to the den of the devouring lion. He sleeps amongst serpents or murderers, and knows not where he is. He walks upon the very ridge of destruction; if he slips, he is ruined for ever; and yet he sees not where to set his foot. Alas! he is in darkness, Prov. iv. 19, John xi. 9. Though that stumbling-block be just before him which will ruin his soul and tumble him into hell, yet he knows not at what he stumbles, he sees it not, he is in darkness. Thus dangerous is thy unconverted state; it may sink thee into utter darkness before thou perceive. Oh that the misery of it might move to make haste out of it!

3. Darkness is fearful. We read of the 'horrors of darkness,' Gen. xv. 12. What more apt to engender fears than darkness, when dangers are on every side, and nothing visible that may afford confidence!

So the state of nature. The condition of a sinner unconverted is a fearful condition. He is encompassed with terrors on every side; such as, if he were sensible of them, would dash all his mirth and carnal jollity. An unconverted sinner, he is a *Magor-missabib*, like Pashur, Jer. xx. 8, he has fear round about him. Those whom the Lord has enlightened to see the dreadfulness of that state, they wonder that such can sleep quietly, or take comfort in any enjoyment, while they are not converted.

Is it not a fearful thing to stand guilty in the Lord's sight of millions of offences, every one of which deserves eternal death, and the Lord, in justice, is engaged to inflict it? To stand guilty, whereas the Lord will by no means clear the guilty? Yet this is the state of the unconverted.

Is it not a fearful thing to be delivered up to Satan, to be possessed by him, to be a slave unto him, to have no other guide but him, who will lead thee no other way but to ruin; to be disowned by Christ, as those who yield allegiance to the prince of darkness? Yet this is the state of such.

Is it not a fearful thing to 'fall into the hands of the living God;' to lie under the wrath of an unreconciled God; to lie open to the challenges of revenging justice; to find nothing belonging to thee in the world but the curse, and to have enjoyments mixed with the Lord's indignation? Yet this is the case; children of darkness are children of wrath.

Is it not a fearful thing to lodge the next room to hell; to find no other portion for thyself in the Lord's testament but everlasting fire, no other inheritance but the region of outer darkness? Yet this is the state of the unconverted.

Oh how dreadful is that state, where the terrors of sin, the terrors of Satan, the terrors of God, the terrors of hell, encompass a poor sinner, and he sees no way to avoid them! For he is in darkness, such as he sees nothing to support him under them, but some false rotten props, some broken reeds. The true grounds of confidence are hid from his eyes, cannot be discerned in this darkness.

Mercy is a support, but none find mercy but converted sinners. Christ is a support, but none shall find any saving benefit by Christ but converted sinners. The word is a support, but this speaks not a word of comfort to any but those that are converted.

Oh how fearful is that condition that shews no glimpse of hope, affords no ground of confidence! In the midst of such dangers, miseries, that can discover nothing that may cheer or support in those things that are the only grounds of comfort and support; nothing in mercy, nothing in Christ, his love, his blood, nothing in the word, nothing in the great and precious

promises, to bear up thy soul in this woful condition. When the terrors of death, and sin, and hell encompass thee, where wilt thou go for comfort? What will be thy refuge? what will support thy sinking soul?

A converted soul, when he feels the wounds of sin, can look up to the brazen serpent for healing virtue; but what can he see, whither will he look, who is in darkness?

A converted soul, when the terrors of death or the greatest fears in this life assault him, he can cast up his eyes above the mountains, and discover salvation approaching. But what can he see, what can he discover, who is in darkness?

Wretched sinner, thou who goest on merrily in thy evil ways, no more minding conversion, &c., than if it were a fiction, be entreated to admit at last this one serious thought: time is coming, when fears and terrors, either in this life, or in death or judgment, will seize on thy soul, and shake thy heart, and overthrow all thy carnal supports, dash out all the sparks of worldly mirth. When thou wilt find what we speak of the fearfulness of an unconverted state are not words of course, thou wilt then find need of those spiritual comforts and supports which thou now neglectest. But whither wilt thou go for them? If thou fliest to mercy for comfort, being unconverted, mercy will say, It is not in me. If thou go to Christ, he will say, It is not in me; no comfort in me but for those that turn to me, for none but converted sinners. If thou goest to the word, it will say, It is not in me; I have no drop of comfort for any that turns not, for any that continues in impenitency and unbelief. Oh, sure that day which is making haste towards thee, however thou forget it, that day will be unto thee a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, a day of dread and terror, and like thy unconverted condition, most fearful. Darkness is fearful; that is the third misery of it.

*Quest.* But who are those that are in darkness? How shall we know whether we be in this unconverted state? Those that have any regard of their souls, hearing the misery of this condition, will be apt to make this inquiry. Those that are so wretchedly careless, as not to question it, not trouble themselves with inquiries about their conversion, may put it out of question they are not yet converted, they have neither part nor lot in this matter, they are not so much as in the way to it. As for those who are not thus desperate, but are doubtful of it, and desirous to search into the condition of their souls, it will be requisite in some few particulars to shew how it may be known who are in darkness, who are not; who are converted, who are not. And this will be useful, both for the conviction of those that are not, and the comfort of those that are; they are not converted, but in darkness;—

1. Who walk in the ways of darkness. The children of light do not walk in the paths of darkness. You may know your state by your way; ways of wickedness are ways of darkness: so Solomon, Prov. iv. 19, 'The way of the wicked is darkness.'

He that walks in any way of known wickedness, be it drunkenness, &c., neglect of ordinances, &c., he is in darkness. 'By their fruits ye may know them.' It is a sure rule, Christ himself lays it down; if you bring forth the fruits of darkness, you are in the state of darkness. Hereby he proves the unbelieving Jews to belong to the prince of darkness: John vii. 44, 'his works.' If ye do his works, you are under his jurisdiction, not yet delivered. Now, what are his works? Why, all wickedness, every sin. He that acts any sin wilfully, customarily, delightfully, makes it his practice, continues so, allows him so to continue. The apostle advises the converted Ephesians,

as being both their property and duty, to 'have no fellowship,' &c., chap. v. 11. A convert may be surprised, overtaken with sin; but he has no fellowship, he is not familiar with sin, he delights not in it, it is not his companion, it is not his custom, nor his choice, nor his contentment, to converse with it. He looks upon every sin as a cheater, a murderer, a disgraceful, a dangerous associate, and therefore he will keep as far from it as he can; he is afraid, ashamed to have any fellowship with it. This is the temper of a convert, if you take him when he is himself.

Those, then, that are familiar with sin, in whose mouths and hands, in whose words and actions, you may ordinarily see it, who are no more afraid, ashamed of it, than of one whom they choose for a companion. Those who make any sin their interest, their delight, their practice, they have fellowship with it. You may know them by their companion, that with which they have fellowship. When oaths, profane, unclean discourse is familiar in their mouths; when they can lie, dissemble, revile, curse familiarly; when accustom themselves to any other way of wickedness, alas! darkness is here palpable. There is no conversion where no turning from sin. He is in darkness who allows himself to walk in any path of darkness, 1 John iii. 20.

2. Those that want spiritual discerning. He that has eyes and sees not, it is plain he is in darkness; what else should hinder his sight?

So they that have the same understanding, the same faculty of inward sight with others, and yet perceive not that in spiritual things, that those discern who are savingly enlightened, it is evident that spiritual darkness overshadows their souls.

He that sees not that beauty, that excellency in Christ, that necessity of him, as to be willing to part with all for him; to count that loss which he has taken for his greatest gain; to renounce his own righteousness, that he may be found in him; to renounce his own lusts, that he may be conformed to him; his own interests, that he may advance him; his own humours, that he may comply with him:

He that sees not that necessity of conversion, the new birth, as to trouble himself about it, to count himself miserable without it:

He that sees not such beauty in holiness as to prefer it before the choicest things on earth; to be in love with it, thirst after it; diligent in the use of all means to get it, increase it, strengthen, act it:

He that sees not that deformity, danger in sin, as to hate it above all things, to bewail it in himself and others, careful to avoid it, maintain a constant war with it, use all his strength to subdue it, rejoice in the crucifying of his dearest lusts, ver. 13:

He that has not this discerning of these and other spiritual things, it is evident he has eyes, but sees not; and what can be given as the reason hereof, but because he is in darkness? Such are in Egypt's condition; when converts, as the Israelites, have light in their dwellings.

8. Those that act not for God. The Egyptians, under the plague of darkness, are described by their unactiveness: Exod. x. 23, 'Neither arose any man from his place;' John ix. 4. A man in darkness may be in action about himself, but not in things at a distance; he sees not how to move towards them. The things of God are at a distance from every unconverted man; he sees not, he knows not how to go about it.

He is a stranger to acts of self-denial and mortification; a stranger to the life of faith, the exercise of grace, the vigorous acts of holiness, strict walking, constant dependence on Christ, a spiritual frame of heart in worldly business.

He cannot pray with enlargement, affection, fervency. He cannot meditate on Christ, and heaven, and spiritual things with delight; he cannot hear the word, so as to mix it with faith, to be affected with it, to run into the mould of it. Though he be employed sometimes in religious duties, though he be active in the things of God, yet he acts not at all for God. To act for God is to act out of love to him, with intentions to honour him, with respect to his glory. When men perform religious services out of custom, or to gain and keep their credit, or to stop the mouth of conscience, or to satisfy and make amends for some sin, he that acts for such ends, out of such principles, let him do as much as he will, even in a way of religion, yet he does nothing for God. And this is the condition of one not converted, he acts not out of love to God with respect to his glory, and therefore what he does is as though he did nothing. He acts not for God who acts not from right principles, for sincere ends; and this bewrays an unconverted state. If the Lord incline you to be faithful to your souls, these things may be helpful to discover your condition, whether ye be light or darkness, whether converted or unconverted.

*Use 8.* Exhortation, to those that are converted, brought out of the woful state of darkness; let this stir you up to joy and thankfulness for your deliverance. 'You were sometimes darkness;' that is the state of every man by nature. Now, as it aggravates misery to have been once unhappy,\* so the consideration of former miseries adds contentment to a happy condition. 'You were sometimes darkness.'

You have been formerly under the guilt of sin, enslaved to the tyranny of base lusts; you have been formerly vassals unto Satan, led captive by him at his will; you were 'by nature the children of wrath as well as others;' you were once in a condition as there was but a step between you and hell. Now, has the Lord delivered you out of this sad and woful condition? Can you say, we were 'sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord?' Oh, love the Lord, praise him, rejoice in him, speak great things of his name.

Oh love that Redeemer, who sweat, and bled, and died to work this your redemption. Oh pity those, pray for them, mourn for them who are yet in darkness. Let your hearts be affected as David's, Ps. cxvi. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8; xciii. 4.

*But now are ye light.* For explication. Light denotes several things in Scripture.

1. Spiritual knowledge. Light and knowledge are terms of the same import, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Light to discover God in Christ savingly, and to discern the things of God spiritually.

2. Purity and holiness. Sin and corruption is expressed by darkness, holiness and purity by light. In this sense the most holy God is called light, 1 John i. 5, spotless and perfect holiness, in whom there is not the least impurity. And in reference to us, ver. 7, such a light as is life, spiritual life, which consists in the principles of holiness and purity.

3. The favour of God, and the consequent of it, joy and comfort. The favour of God, the manifesting of his loving-kindness, is frequently expressed by the light of his countenance, Ps. iv. 6, the issue of which is joy and gladness, ver. 7. Light and joy explain one another, Ps. xcvii. 11. That which is light in the first clause is joy in the latter.

4. Glory and happiness. Heaven, the seat of it, is described by light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. It is called the inheritance, Col. i. 12.

\* Qu. 'happy'?—Ed.

Light here may comprise all these. So that when we say, those that are converted are light, the meaning may be,

(1.) They are enlightened with saving knowledge.

(2.) They are enriched with the principles of holiness ; the lustre thereof shines in their souls, and should appear in their lives ; by virtue of this they should shine as lights.

(3.) They are in the state of favour and reconciliation with God. Though they have not always the sense of his loving-kindness, yet they are always the objects of his love. Though his face do not always actually shine on them, yet the sun is up, it is always day with them ; joy is sown for them though they be not still reaping it, and every season be not harvest time.

(4.) They have title to glory. Heirs apparent to heaven, heirs of the inheritance, &c. Their title is certain, that they are said to sit with him in heavenly places.

*Use 1.* If those that are converted be light, &c., then those that are not converted are not light in the Lord. This necessarily follows by the rule of contraries. They may be light in appearance, or in respect of natural endowments, or moral accomplishments, or in the account of others, or in their own conceit and apprehensions, but they are not light in the Lord ; and this shews the misery of an unconverted state, and it is useful to take notice of it more particularly. If they are not light in the Lord,—

1. They are not in the Lord. The phrase implies union ; but such are without union to, without communion with, without participation of, without special relation to him ; without his special protection, without his special favour, without his gracious covenant. It may be propounded to them that they have no actual interest in, or right to, the blessings, the mercies of the covenant. The tenor of it is, I will be thy God ; they cannot apply nor challenge this : they may say, he is my Creator, he is my Judge ; but not he is my God in Christ, my God by covenant ; without God in their hearts, in their enjoyments, in their conversations. Thus the apostle describes the unconverted state of these Ephesians, chap. ii. 12, at that time, viz., when unconverted ; without Christ, not united to him, not partakers of the benefits of his great undertakings ; not pardoned by his blood, not acted by his Spirit, not crucified with him, not risen with him, not sitting with him in heavenly places, either in right hope, or first fruits of that blessed state, aliens from the church. An unconverted man, whatever he profess, or others account of him, is no more in God's sight a member of the church than a corpse is a man.

*Strangers from the covenant.* No more to do with the sure mercies of the covenants, the sweet contents of the great and precious promises, than a foreigner has to do with the privileges of one of our corporations, or a slave with the privileges of a child, or the legacies of his father's testament.

*Without hope.* So far from enjoying these, as he is, during that state, without hope of them, till he be enfranchised, till adopted, and no adoption till conversion.

*Without God in the world.* This is the saddest expression of all. If he had said without riches, or friends, or liberty, or health, or food, you would think it sad. Ay, but to be without God, that is infinitely more miserable than to be without all these ; yet this is the state of every unconverted sinner, not born again ; he is not light in the Lord, and so not in the Lord, and so without God in the world.

If a converted soul want riches, the Lord can supply that want. 'The earth is the Lord's,' &c. ; or friends, the Lord can supply, 'when father

and mother forsake.' 'All men forsake me,' 2 Tim. iv. 16. 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. xiii. 5; or liberty, Ps. xviii. 19; or food, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,' Ps. xxiii. 1. Ay, but if a man want the Lord, if he be without God in the world, what can make up that want? Let him have all the world, and want God in the world, and all that he enjoys will but add to his miseries. Without God, without all that is truly comfortable and desirable. Yet this is the state of an unconverted sinner.

2. They want the saving knowledge of God in Christ, they are not light in this respect. The darkness of ignorance and misapprehensions is upon the face of their souls; the prince of darkness, the god of this world, has blinded their minds, 2 Cor. iv. 8, 4. Though they may be knowing men in other respects, yet as to spiritual, saving, experimental, effectual knowledge of Christ, and the things of Christ, they are in darkness. They may have much knowledge of the Scripture and divine things, as to the letter, clear, notional, and speculative apprehensions of gospel truths; but as to spiritual discerning of any of these, they are in darkness, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The things of the Spirit of God he may apprehend literally, notionally, speculatively; but not spiritually, experimentally, practically. They hear, and read, and apprehend much of Christ, but not effectually, not so as to renounce all for him. They know him not, so as to find the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings; not so as to be made conformable to his death; not with such a knowledge as the apostle there describes, Philip. iii. 8-10. They read, hear of holiness, but are so far from knowing what it is by experience, as they are apt to think no such thing now to be attained in this world, as the holiness which the Scripture describes; and finding no such thing in themselves, judge those who pretend to it hypocrites and dissemblers; know not how to worship God in spirit, how to subdue a lust, how to resist a temptation, how to improve an affliction, how to escape a snare, how to avoid a stumbling-block, how to improve ordinances for growth in grace, how to improve Christ for spiritual strength, life, influence, so as by his strength to do all things; know not what the state of their soul is, where they are, whither they are going, darkness having blinded them, as the Assyrians, 2 Kings vi. 20, thought they were in Dothan, whereas they found themselves in the midst of Samaria, in the midst of their enemies; think themselves in the way to heaven all their life, till in the end, alas! they find themselves in hell.

Tell them of the new birth, sanctification, self-denial, the power of godliness; produce Scriptures, which expressly shew that without these there is no salvation; bring characters by which these may be discerned: yet they see them not, they believe not; for they know not these effectually, they are in darkness. They are no more apprehensive of these things, than if you were discoursing to a blind man of colours, or if you were describing the sun to a man that never saw the light. And why? They are not light in the Lord.

3. They want the favour of God. They are not under the beams of divine love, the light of God's countenance does not shine on them, and so they are not light in the Lord. They may conclude this from success, prosperity, plenty, and outward comforts; but this is but a fallacy, a delusion. The Lord's greatest enemies may abound with corn, and wine, and oil, &c., but the light of God's countenance is not lift up but upon converted souls. There is a veil of darkness before the Lord's face; this is never rent, removed, till conversion. Those that are unconverted, want that which is the life and joy of the converted soul; that which sweetens all his afflictions, and

makes all his enjoyments comfortable. This is it which is better than life; those on whom it shines not may well be said to sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. This dismal shadow never vanishes till the Lord's face shine, and this never clears up till conversion. You may discern the state of a returning and an unconverted sinner, expressed in the state of the church and the rest of the world, Isa. lx. 2. Behold darkness covers impenitent souls, and gross darkness unconverted sinners; but if thou be converted, the Lord shall rise upon thee. Alas! They know not what it is to walk in the light of God's countenance all the day; not one glimpse of that light of life appears unto them; for they are not light in the Lord.

4. They want the lustre of holiness. This is one thing which concurs to make converts light in the Lord. This light shines nowhere on earth but in the hearts and lives of such; those that are unconverted shew themselves either strangers or enemies to it. They are carnal, sold under sin, know not what belongs to an holy frame of heart; think heaven may be attained without strictness, holiness, as the Scripture requires, and the lives of the saints there recorded hold forth; jeer, deride, abuse it, under odious names; place all their holiness in some outward performances or observances; holy discourse and employments are wearisomeness to them.

Here is a misery indeed; want that, without which no man can see God; and this they want, because not light in the Lord.

5. They want discoveries of future glory, they are not light in the Lord; they have not so much light as will discover it at a distance; there is no dawns, no approaches, no appearances of that blessed light. It is midnight with a sinner while unconverted. No crevice to let in the least light, the least hope of glory, while he continues in that dismal state. The morning star, that ushers in that happy day, first appears in conversion, Acts xxvi. 18. Till a sinner be turned from darkness to light, till he be converted, there is no hopes of obtaining an inheritance among those that are sanctified; no appearance of this till then, because till then not light in the Lord.

Put all these together, and then view the sad and lamentable condition of every unconverted sinner. If not born again, thou art without God, Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the saving knowledge of Christ, the least glimpse of God's love, the least sparkle of holiness, the least hope of glory; and all this, because not light in the Lord.

But how shall we know, who are in this state, whether or no we be light in the Lord? To direct you herein, let us come to a

*Use 2*, by way of examination. Hereby ye may know whether ye be converted. Every convert is light in the Lord; those, therefore, that are not light in the Lord are not converted; these are so conjoined, as he that knows the one may conclude the other. Examine, then, whether ye be light in the Lord, if ye would know whether ye be converted. In order hereto observe these particulars:

1. Light is delightful. *Totus mundus luce nihil habet jucundius*, a greater and wiser than he, Eccles. xi. 7. The light of the word is delightful to one that is light in the Lord. There is a great affinity between these lights, both proceeding from the same Father, 'the Father of lights.' Hence the discoveries of the word are sweet, acceptable, delightful, to one that is savingly enlightened.

Not only the discoveries of Christ and mercy, privileges and promises, pardon and glory, but that light of the word which discovers to him the corruption of his heart, the sinfulness of any practice, the danger of sin; that word which searches his conscience, and discovers the condition of his

soul, detects his failings and sinful miscarriages, not only a word of promise and consolation, but a word of reproof and conviction. This is sweet and acceptable to one that is light; he can bless God for, and rejoice in, that word that condemns and discovers his secret sin.

He therefore that cannot endure the word that discovers his misery and sinfulness, that searches his conscience and reproves his sin, cannot endure searching sermons nor those that preach them, such as tend to awaken his conscience, and rouse him out of security, and condemn his sinful practices, cries out that he hears nothing from such but hell and damnation, and that which may make him despair; he hereby shews clearly he is so far from being light in the Lord, as this is a plain evidence he hates the light. I speak not this for nor of myself; it is the word of Christ; if you will take Christ's word, such a man hates the light, John iii. 19, 20. He that is so in love with his sin, be it what it will, as he would not have it reproved, condemned, hell and wrath denounced against it, Christ pronounces, he hates the light, loves darkness, &c. It is plain darkness is his element, he is not yet converted, nor yet turned from darkness to light; he that is light in the Lord is of another temper, as you may see, ver. 21. He is so far from declining, being impatient of a searching, discovering truth, as he comes to it of his own accord.

2. While there is light there is heat. *שש a שש et שש.\** Heat, as philosophers tell us, is an inseparable property of celestial light. We see a concurrence of these in fire; indeed, there may be an appearance of light where there is no heat, as in glow-worms, but where there is any real light, there is some degree of heat more or less.

Answerably, they that are light in the Lord are zealous for the Lord, eager in following him, ardent in love to him and desires after him, fervent in spirit in serving him. They will not content themselves to offer up lukewarm, heartless services unto God. When they find the danger of such a temper, they bewail it, judge themselves for it, it is their affliction; there is a spiritual heat for the Lord in those that are light.

Therefore, where there is a customary indifferency, and carelessness in religious duties, those that ordinarily serve him, as though they served him not, give him but the lip, or knee, or outward man, not heated and enlivened with the vigorous motions of the soul towards God.

Where there wants ardency of affection in spiritual duties, eagerness of soul after growth in grace, communion with God, and enjoyment of Christ in the use of ordinances, no such longing, thirsting, panting, breathing after Christ, conformity to him, participation of him, fellowship with him, serviceableness to him, ability to please, honour, advance him, as after those things that men's hearts are set upon, and hotly pursue in the world; this argues clearly an absence of spiritual heat, and if thou wantest this heat, thou art not light in the Lord.

3. Light is progressive. We see, after the day-break, the light grows clearer and clearer, till it come to its full brightness; Scripture expressions lead us to this observation, as well as experience; in the morning light is in its youth. Hence *שחרית*, the word which the Hebrews express the morning, is used for youth, Eccles. xi. 10. At noon the light is in its manhood, its full strength; we have that expression, Judges v. 31. The light from its birth grows and increases, till it comes to its full strength, when the sun is in the meridian.

Thus it is with those that are light in the Lord, as Solomon expresses it,

\* That is, *שש*, the sun, is from *שם*, the heavens, and *שש*, fire — Ed.



Prov. iv. 18. This light is but a spark at first, and often accompanied with much smoke, but by degrees it breaks forth into a flame.

Such grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ ; they go from strength to strength, and from one degree of holiness and spiritual knowledge to another ; this light daily prevailing against the darkness of ignorance and corruption, till at last it be brought forth to victory.

There is a growth of knowledge in the extent of it ; it discovers one truth after another, unlocks one mystery after another, and daily scatters the clouds of misapprehensions.

In the clearness of it, sees gospel truths with more and more evidence, as that blind man's sight was restored by degrees, Mat. viii. 23, 24. At first he saw men, as trees walking ; after, ver. 25, he saw every man clearly. Those truths of Christ, those gospel mysteries, which at first he sees but confusedly and obscurely, he by degrees discerns evidently and distinctly, in their proper complexions, proportions, connections, so as to discern betwixt things that differ, so as not to take one thing for another, nor to be easily imposed on, deluded or mistaken with shows and appearances, to take a show for a reality, to exchange a real truth for one in appearance.

In the firmness of it. At first the light makes but a weak impression ; he has not fast hold of it, not firmly grounded in it, is but a child in understanding, apt to be tossed to and fro ; but by degrees he comes to be established in the truth to a full assurance, carried with full sail into the embracement of truths revealed in the gospel, he is 'rooted and grounded.' Those winds of doctrine and error which overthrow others, and toss them out of all sound principles, though they shake him, do but root him faster by shaking of him, as well grown trees are by a tempest.

There is a growth in the spiritualness, the efficacy, the experimentalness, the practicalness of his knowledge. This light has daily a more spiritual and powerful influence upon his heart, to spiritualize it in his motions, intentions, inclinations ; upon his conscience, to make it tender ; upon his affections, to kindle them to God, and dead them to the world ; upon his conversation, to reform and beautify it with more holy and exemplary actings.

There is a growth in grace, too, in every one that is light in the Lord. This light of holiness shines more and more, prevails against inward distempers and outward miscarriages, bears down the interest of darkness, *i. e.* of the flesh and of the world. He that is light in the Lord, when he is himself not under the darker clouds of temptation, desertion, grows daily more holy, humble, self-denying, heavenly, zealous, out of love with sin, estranged from the world, more in the exercise of faith and the actings of love, more jealous over his own heart and watchful over his ways. This light, where it is in truth and reality, will shine more and more, and such as these fore-mentioned are the beams of it.

That light which puffs up and defiles, makes men proud or loose in their principles or practice, it is not from the Father of lights, nor does it evidence that thou art light in the Lord ; nay, rather it is from him who transforms himself into an angel of light, and argues that thou art yet darkness, under the jurisdiction of the prince of darkness.

If thy growth be in the principles of darkness, and thy improvement no other than in the works of darkness, knowest not by experience what it is to grow in holiness, heavenliness, &c. ; art a stranger to ardent desires, serious endeavours after it ; thou dost but delude thy soul against clear evidence of Scripture if thou conclude thyself light in the Lord.

Or suppose there be some improvement of light, if this make thee decline from the strict and holy ways of Christ, more loose in thy walking, more

negligent of spiritual duties, more careless of thy heart, more indifferent as to the truths, ways, worship of Christ, this light, how much soever it be imagined, is not light in the Lord, but rather in Satan. Light in the Lord would not lead thee from the Lord, but nearer to him, in more holy walking, and a more humble, spiritual, heavenly frame of heart, for light in the Lord is an increasing light, it shines more and more, &c. It daily brings thee nearer to him, and the nearer to the sun, to the fountain of light, the more lightsome; as in joy and hopes of glory, so in the lustre of spiritual knowledge and holiness.

Oh that the Lord would make you faithful in examining the state of your souls hereby, that you may be able to pass a right judgment of it, whether you be converted or no, whether you be darkness or light!

*Use 3.* Consolation to those that are converted. If thou art a convert, thou art light in the Lord, and this light discovers thy condition to be safe, comfortable, glorious, durable.

1. *Safe.* If thou canst conclude by Scripture evidence, I was sometimes darkness, &c. The Lord has brought thee into a safe condition; thou art freed from those fears and dangers that thy former darkness exposed thee to. Neither the horror nor the dangers of darkness need disquiet thee; the Lord has 'delivered thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from falling.' Before conversion, whilst thou walked in darkness, thou wast every foot in danger of the snares of death, every step in danger of falling into hell, and thy condition more fearful, because thou hadst not light to discover thy danger. But now the darkness is past, the Lord has shined on thee, and thou mayest walk cheerfully, confidently, safely before the Lord in the land of the living.

O happy change! before in the shadow of death, of eternal death, but now in the land of the living; before in the most dismal darkness, next to hell, but now in the light of the Lord; before on the brink of destruction, without a light, without a guide, but now in the path of life. He has set thy feet upon a rock, and the Lord himself is thy light and safety. Thou mayest triumph with David, Ps. xxvii. 1; the reason, he shall set me upon a rock, ver. 5.

Thou seest multitudes playing upon the very brink of hell, but a step between them and eternal death, and no light to guide a step, and so they are every moment in danger to tumble into the bottomless pit; and yet in such darkness as they will neither see their danger, nor believe those that shew it them. This was thy condition once, thou wast darkness as well as others; but now thou art light, &c. The Lord has by conversion set thy feet upon a rock; there thou art safe, whilst thou seest multitudes wrecked in the gulf of destruction, sinking into utter darkness, round about thee. Oh the wonder of distinguishing mercy! thou mayest now say, 'Return to thy rest,' &c.

2. *Comfortable.* Light and joy in Scripture are put one for the other; and Solomon tells us, Prov. xiii. 9, 'The light of the righteous rejoiceth.' What cause have they to rejoice who are light in the Lord; who are in him, united to him, in covenant with him, under the beams of his love, under the sweet influences of his loving-kindness! This is the state of the converted. Those who have been under the sad apprehensions of God's wrath, under the anguish of a wounded conscience, encompassed with the terrors of the Almighty, when they see nothing in his face but clouds and frowns, hear nothing from his mouth but threatening, see nothing in his hand but revenging justice,—and this often is the condition of those that walk in darkness,—such will need no arguments to prove that it is a comfortable

condition to be light in the Lord, to see his frowns turned into smiles, his threatenings into promises; to see mercy take place of justice, and instead of the bitterness of death, to taste the 'loving-kindness which is better than life.'

It is true, the days of darkness are not always so dreadful to every unconverted sinner; we see them spend their days in mirth and jollity, but this is because they are past feeling. This is one sad effect of this darkness, it hinders a sinner from seeing his misery; if he did apprehend it, his life would be as death unto him. There is always cause of dread and horror, though in the dark it is not seen. What can be comfortable to him who spends his days in darkness? This was once thy condition; but if thou beest light in the Lord, let me speak to thee in the apostle's words: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.' The horror of darkness is past, the shadow of death is vanished, the darkness of an unconverted state, the sad emblem of hell, is scattered; the light of life now shines round about thee, and oh what sweet discoveries does it make! Look where thou wilt, the beams of joy and light break in upon thee. Look upward, there is light in God's countenance shines on thee; look inwards, there the day-spring from on high has visited thee, the fountain of light and joy is seated in thy soul; look backward, the night is far spent, the day is at hand, thou art not of night nor of darkness; look forwards, thou art not far from possession of the inheritance of the saints in light; look any way, light is sown for thee, and joy, &c. Oh that is precious seed, and will be more and more fruitful, till thou reap the full harvest in eternal light! 'Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord;' or, which comes all to one, who are 'light in the Lord.'

3. *Durable.* Not safe, comfortable, happy for a moment, but for ever; for it is light in the Lord. If thy light were in thyself, death, or other calamities, might extinguish it; if thy light were in the world, and outward enjoyments, it might go out of itself, for the light hereof is but as the crackling of thorns; if thy light were in wickedness, it would certainly be put out, Job xviii. 5, 6. But what can put out that light that is in the Lord? Light in other things is like them, vain and fading; but light in the Lord is as he is, everlasting. Everlasting knowledge, joy, holiness, happiness is the portion of converted souls; because they have all these in the Lord. It is the honour and security of Christ's ministers that he styles them stars, there is their light and stars in his right hand, so they are light in the Lord, held in his right hand, and so held for ever; for what can pluck them thence? Rev. i. 16, 20.

The security of Christ's people, lesser lights, is no less; they are in his hand, and in his Father's hand, and shall shine there for ever, John x. 28, 29. Here is the happiness of thy condition. If once thou be light in the Lord, thou shalt never be darkness; for thou art light in him in whom is no darkness, nor can there be any. He is in himself everlasting light, and will be so to them that are in him, Isa. lx. 19, 20. Once light in the Lord, and so for ever. It may be clouded and obscured, but this light can never be put out. This is not the least happiness of this condition, that whatever happiness is essential to it is everlasting.

4. *Glorious.* Nothing visible on earth more glorious than light; and these are put one for the other in Scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 41. What is their glory but their light? Those who are converted have hereby a double glory, one as they are light, the other as they are light in the Lord, light in the Lord of glory. He is a glory to them, even as a robe of light would be to our body; such, and much more, is the Lord to a converted soul, Isa. lx. 19.

Though their outside may be vile and contemptible in the eyes of men, yet they are 'glorious within,' Ps. xlv. 18. Every soul espoused to Christ is styled the daughter of a King, the daughter of the King of glory. A garment of wrought gold seems glorious, but there is a garment which far exceeds this in glory. What would you think of one clothed with the sun? Would not this seem a glorious object? Why, so is the church described; and that upon earth, though the vision was in heaven, Rev. xii. 1. This woman is the spouse of Christ, the church; she is clothed with the sun, the Sun of righteousness: a glorious garment indeed; and being a garment, must reach every member. Here is thy glory if converted: though thou be hated, despised, reviled, vilified; though thou be in a forsaken, a persecuted condition, as the woman was now in the wilderness, ver. 6; yet thou art light in the Lord, light indeed, being clothed with the Sun. Christ himself is thy glory.

Thus you see how sweet and happy their condition is who are converted, who are light in the Lord.

Here is support against fears and dangers. Men and devils, death and hell, cannot prevail against thee; thou art safe.

Here is support under crosses and afflictions, pain and sickness. No condition can befall thee but here is enough to make it comfortable. Thou art light in the Lord; whatever thou mayest meet with in the world, thou mayest find light and joy in him.

Here is comfort against temptations, against backslidings, apostasy in these apostatizing times, thy condition is durable, it is founded in the Lord.

Here is comfort against the contempt, the scorn, the reproaches, the slanders, the dirt which the profane world casts on thee. Whatever they say or think of thee, thy condition is glorious, thy glory is from and in the Lord; thou art light in the Lord.

*In the Lord.* This phrase may denote that he is the author of this light, and all included in it, and that it is effected by union with himself; they have it all by being in him. 'E' in the New Testament often is of the same import with *de*, light in him, *i. e.* by him, 2 Cor. v. 19. It is he that gives the light of this knowledge, 2 Cor. iv.; it is the Lord that sanctifies us throughout, 1 Thes. v. 28; it is he that is the God of all consolation, Rom. xv. 5, 2 Thes. ii. 16; and causeth comfort to spring in the heart, by causing his own face to shine. It is he that gives us title to glory, making us partakers of the adoption. The converted are heirs of God; and all this they have by being in him, united and made one with him; by being joined to him who is the fountain of knowledge, and holiness, and comfort, and glory.

*Walk as children of light.* Here he shews what they should do after conversion: walk answerable to their state; being light in the Lord, should walk as children of light.

*Obs.* Those that are converted should walk as children of light. Before they walked as children of darkness, for they were darkness; now as children of light, for they are light in the Lord.

Two things must be explained: 1, what it is to be children of light; 2, what it is to walk as children of light. These expressions being opened, the truth will be clear.

For the first, it is a Hebrew phrase, and the apostle being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, though he writ in Greek, yet mixes therewith some phrases of his mother tongue, as is usual with the rest of the apostles. So that the knowledge of the Hebrew (the original of the Old Testament) tends much to the understanding of the New Testament, though writ in another language.

And they have the best advantage of interpreting this, who have some skill in that. Now, that we may understand this phrase, which is very pregnant, let us observe how it is used in other places. It denotes several things.

1. *Descent.* That is the natural and proper signification of it, a child is from his father; so they are called children of light, who are of the Father of lights. Children of darkness are of their father the prince of darkness; but children of light are born of God; they owe, they derive their second, their new birth from him. Christ, the light of the world, is formed in them, they take this name from their Father; he is light, and those that are born of him are children of light.

2. *Propriety.* So Mat. viii. 12, *ὅτι τῆς βασιλείας*; those that challenge a title to the kingdom, a propriety in it as their inheritance. Those did but groundlessly challenge the kingdom, but these have a full title to all those blessed things that the Scripture expresses by light, these belong to them only peculiarly. They only have spiritual knowledge, holiness is their peculiar. The joys of the Spirit, the light of God's countenance shines on them, and a stranger does not enter into their joy; they are heirs of the promise, the only heirs of the inheritance of the saints.

3. *Destination.* 1 Sam. xx. 81, *בן כוֹת*, one who is near to, worthy of, destined to death; so children of light, because they are ordained to it. They are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ in knowledge and holiness; chosen vessels, whom the Lord has set apart in his eternal counsel, to be filled with joy and glory. Whatever their portion seem to be on earth, in this vale of misery, it is but a valley they are to pass, and they will be in eternal light; there is but a valley, a step between them and glory.

4. *Residence.* Isa. xxi. 10, corn is *בן נרני*, 'the son of my floor,' because that is the place where it is laid up and abides. Children of light, because they abide in the light. Those that are unconverted, their element is darkness, sin, wrath, misery; here they walk, here they abide. But when a sinner is converted, his element is light. Such are not of the night, nor of darkness; the Day-spring from on high has visited them; the Sun of righteousness is risen upon them, and in his light they see light. In this they walk, in this they abide, and shall never see darkness, spiritual darkness, hell, wrath, misery; they are translated from thence into another kingdom, a region of light. The light may be clouded, but never quite extinguished.

5. *Constitution.* The Hebrew doctors call the name Jehovah, *בן ארבע אותיות*, 'the son of four letters,' because it is made up of four letters. So those that are converted may be called the children of light, because spiritual light is the constitution of their souls. Their minds, hearts, affections, are of a lightsome, i. e. a spiritual and heavenly temper; spiritual light in their minds, holiness in their wills, joy, delight, hopes of glory in their hearts.

6. *Obligation.* 2 Kings xiv. 14, *בני התערכות*. It is rendered hostages, but it is the 'sons of the contracts' or covenants; those that were given to insure the engagement whereby Amariah had bound himself to the king of Israel. Those that are converted are in this sense children of light, because they are obliged to walk as those that are enlightened from above; to walk holily, to be followers of God as dear children. There are strong engagements laid upon them, they are bound by covenant thus to walk. This leads to the

*Second question,* What is it to walk as children of light? It is in this we shall have the substance of the text, and the scope which the apostle aims at in this chapter, indeed in the whole epistle, yea, in all his epistles; and therefore it calls for special enquiry and attention. Take it in this.

1. To walk at a distance from darkness, ver. 11 ; from sin, which is the work, which is the cause of all those woful things which the Holy Ghost expresses by darkness. 'What communion has light with darkness?' 2 Cor. vi. 14. He speaks of it as a most absurd incongruous thing, that those that are light should mingle with darkness. This is it which the Lord expects, this is it which this relation calls for. Those that are children of light, should have nothing to do with sin, with any sin whatsoever. Every degree of darkness is contrary to light ; so every sin, small or great, open or secret, is opposite, contrary, altogether unbeseeming the blessed relation of a child of light. They may be ashamed to challenge this title who dare make bold with any sin, much more with gross sins.

Light is beautiful ; a child of light is a pleasant child in the Lord's eye, as he calls Ephraim. Oh, but sin is the loathsomest defilement, the most odious deformity in that pure eye that cannot behold iniquity ! Those that labour not to avoid every sin, wallow in it, besmear, pollute themselves with it, are they children of light ? Are they not rather bastards, unworthy pretenders to this relation ?

It is the very nature, the new nature of a child of light to avoid sin ; as it is the nature of every man and woman to shun that which will make him ugly, loathsome, and deformed.

A child of light should avoid 'the very appearance of evil,' 1 Thes. v. 22 ; not only gross, open, scandalous evils, nor only secret, refined sins, which he knows to be evil and sinful, but even that which has the appearance of it ; at such a distance should he walk from spiritual darkness, as not to come near the appearance of it. He hates the garments spotted with the flesh, Jude 23 ; not only sinful filthiness itself, but the appearance of it, though it be but in a garment. How charily will one keep a costly robe, a rich garment, from spots and stains ! Children of light are covered with a robe of light ; it behoves them to be fearful of it ; this is that alone which spots and stains it. And these spots are not easily got out, it will cost more than the garment is worth to cleanse it from the stain of sin ; nothing will do it but the precious blood of him who is God blessed for ever.

Light is comfortable. Oh but sin is the saddest, the most uncomfortable evil in earth, nay, in hell ; children of light had need walk at a distance from this.

Light is glorious ; so is the state of a child of light. Oh, but sin is the most shameful thing that ever appeared in the world : it turned the glory of the fallen angels into shame ; it turned the glory of innocent man into shame. It is as shameful spewing upon the glory of a child of light ; shameful spewing indeed, even as if a dog should vomit in thy face (it is the Holy Ghost's expression), this could not be such a shame to thee as every sin is in the eye of God. Oh what reason to avoid it !

If you would walk as children of light, you must be afraid of sin, hate it, grieve for it, labour to expel it.

Be afraid of it. Fear sin as hell ; fear the darkness of sin as that utter darkness ; indeed, it is more to be feared, for it is sin that made hell a place of darkness, *quod efficit tale, est magis tale*. If it made hell to be so, it is more so itself. Fear it as death, as the king of terrors ; for it alone makes death terrible, it is the sting of it.

Hate it as thou wouldst hate for ever to live in darkness ; as a poor freed prisoner hates his dungeon, as he hates to return to those fetters and vermin that were formerly his misery.

Grieve for it ; for the remainders of it in thyself, for its over-spreading others. Grieve at it as thou wouldst do to see a gross, noisome, unwhole-

some fog deprive thee of the sight of sun and heaven. Such is the sad issue and woful nature of sin.

Labour to expel it ; to expel the remainders of darkness out of thy soul. It is not enough for children of light to escape gross darkness, the pollutions of the world ; nor is it enough to avoid the outward acts of sin. But this is the great work of a child of light, to maintain a constant combat with the remaining powers of darkness in his soul ; make it his business to mortify those lusts and corruptions which, it may be, no eye sees, to stop up the fountain of darkness. As Christ is the fountain of spiritual light, so the heart is the fountain of spiritual darkness. ' Out of the heart,' &c., Mat. xv. 18, 19.

The great work of a child of light is about his heart. He is careful of his life, too, but he finds it an easier matter to avoid the outward acts of sin, to cut off the branches, than to kill it in the root ; to subdue and mortify it in his heart, this is to stop up the fountain.

He should look upon it as a great part of the work he has to do in the world, not only to free his conversation from darkness, but to scatter it where it is most firmly seated, to scatter the remainders of it in his mind, will, affections. He fasts, mourns, prays, believes, and is diligent in the use of all means, that his inward and secret corruptions may be crucified, this soul-darkness more and more expelled. Thus must they walk, who walk as children of light.

2. To walk boldly ; to be herein followers of God as dear children. How followers of God ? The apostle tells us, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16, the light of holiness should shine in the lives of those that are Christ's ; holiness both exercised and diffused.

Children of light must live in the exercise of holiness. It is not enough to be habitually sanctified, to have the habits and principles of spiritual life and holiness. Walking denotes motion and activeness. Holiness is spiritual light, wherever it be ; but if it lie in the heart inactive, unexercised, it is but as a candle under a bushel. It should shine forth in the exercises of holiness. This precious talent is not given to be buried, or hid in a napkin ; it should be improved and drawn forth in lively and vigorous actings. There should be the exercise of patience, humility, self-denial, heavenliness ; the actings of faith, love, fear, hope ; the motions of zeal, desire, delight. The armour of God, the whole armour of light must be put on, so as to be in readiness to act for God upon all occasions, Rom. xiii. 12. Grace unexercised is like armour laid aside ; the apostle likes not this posture, he bids put it on. We must be always on our guard. We must be always ready for action.

Holiness diffused. Holiness must be extended to the whole conversation of a child of light. It is not enough to manifest a holy temper now and then by fits, under afflictions, or in good company, or in religious duties. A hypocrite may make a show of this upon such occasions ; but he must walk holily, his whole course must be holy ; he must be heavenly in worldly employments ; holy in common affairs, even his recreations and earthly business. This is to walk as children of light.

8. Exemplarily. Children of light must walk so as to be light unto others, and this in divers particulars.

(1.) Unblameably. So as to give no cause of offence to the weak, nor no cause of reproach to the wicked. Carnal and perverse men will seek and take occasion to reproach those that belong to God, nor can the best many times avoid this ; but though they will be apt to take occasion, yet should they be careful to give none, that they may be blameless in the sight of God,

however carnal men censure them ; and so the Lord will justify them, however the world charge and accuse them. Christ himself could not walk so, but those that bore ill will to him would take occasion to charge and reproach him ; but though they took occasion, he gave none. ' The disciple is not better than his Master, nor the servant than his Lord,' John xv. 20. If our dear Lord could not escape the censures of wicked men, his servants must not expect it. If they run not with others to the same excess of riot, they will be charged with pride, singularity, covetousness, hypocrisy. This cannot be avoided so long as the evil spirit, the accuser of the brethren, rules in the children of disobedience. But this must be with all care avoided, that though they will take occasion, yet no just occasion may be given to these charges and censures. The children of light must use all diligence to walk in all good conscience towards men. Or if men will be so perverse as to mistake, and misconstrue their carriage, yet must they so walk as they may approve their hearts and ways to God, and so they may appeal to him in the midst of all censures and reproaches, 1 Pet. iii. 16.

Labour to walk, as Zacharias and Elizabeth, ' in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,' Luke i. 6 ; that if the wicked will have a quarrel, they must pick one, no just occasion may be offered. To this the apostle exhorts, upon the same ground which is in the Philip. ii. 15. If you give just cause to others to blame and censure, this is a cloud to the light, this becomes not those that are light in the Lord. They should walk so as they may be ' found of him in peace, without spot and blameless,' 2 Peter iii. 14.

(2.) Their walking should be convictive. It should discover and manifest the sinfulness of those who walk in the ways of darkness. One contrary sets off another. It is the property of light to discover the hidden things of darkness ; the conversion\* of a child of light should be a real reproof to the men of the world. It is true, this is the way to incur their hatred ; for those that walk in darkness hate the light, because thereby their deeds are reprov'd. But, however, this is it which your relation calls for ; your strictness should reprove their looseness, your zeal their indifferency, your faith their unbelief, your conscientiousness in holy duties, their negligence of them. Though it sometimes incur their hatred, yet it may, it has, through the blessing of God, occasioned their conviction, their conversion. The light of your holy, heavenly walking should discover their darkness ; this may leave a prick in the conscience of an unconverted man, and thy life may prove a real sermon, to bring him to God, 1 Peter iii. 1. There wants not experiments of this kind. Thy walking should be convictive, if thou walkest as a child of light.

(8.) Their walking should be imitable, i. e. worthy of imitation ; so order their ways, as they may be a pattern unto others ; so shine, as others may follow the light, not in affectation of pre-eminence, or singularity, in unwarranted opinions or practices ; but in close following of Christ, and walking exactly according to the rule of holiness. Follow me as I follow Christ. Walk so as to be examples, so as to provoke others to love and good works, so as to shame the lukewarmness, formality, carnalness of others.

(4.) Their walking should be an ornament to their profession. There should be such a light in it as to beautify their profession, adorn the gospel, and make the ways of Christ lovely in the eyes of others ; such a light as should not only put wickedness out of countenance, but gain credit to the professors and profession of Christ ; such a lustre in your conversation as may reflect glory upon God. Let your light so shine, Mat. v. 16, so as to render the power of grace, and the excellency of religion, conspicuous, admired.

\* Qu. ' conversation ' ?—Ed.



4. Cheerfully. Being children of light, they are children of joy. That is their portion, they are all *Barnabases*, sons of consolation, and should walk accordingly.

Walk cheerfully, as in the light of God's countenance, as in that light that discovers to them the fountain of joy, the true grounds of all solid comfort, the great and precious promises, the high and glorious privileges, the sweet and honourable relations they have interest in.

Whatever tribulation they have in the world, in Christ they have peace. None in the world have true cause of joy but children of light. It is true they should be shy of carnal mirth; this is below them, the spring-head of their joys is higher, and the streams purer, and the taste sweeter, and more durable.

It is a disparagement to them and their relation, to be dejected with those things which sink the spirits of worldly men.

In the greatest outward calamities, though they are not to put off natural affections, yet they are never so to mourn, but as those that have hope, as those that have cause to rejoice in the Lord. When they hear and see such things as may occasion trembling, yet they may rejoice in trembling, as the prophet sweetly, Hab. iii. 16-18. When the children of darkness have fear in their greatest joy, these may have joy in their greatest fear. Though they be sometimes called to mourning, yet is there a blessed seed of joy in their mourning, Mat. v. 4, John xvi. 20. They are called to humiliation, and brokenness of heart; and as it consisteth in humble, self-denying, and mean thoughts of themselves, it should be their constant frame; but as it consisteth in anguish of mind, and dejection of heart, and disquietment of spirit, it becomes not their condition: their life should be a life of heavenly delights; they should get above doubtings, fears, soul-disquietments. Thanks, praise, joyful obedience, delight in God, cheerfulness in his presence, in his service, in doing, in suffering, is that which this relation calls for; and those who would walk like children of light must thus walk.

If it be inquired how we may walk as children of light? Besides what is said already in the explication, which may serve for this purpose, I shall lay down some rules which may help you both as directions to guide you in this way of walking, and as characters whereby you may thus discern whether you thus walk or no.

1. Walk not according to opinion. Groundless and false opinions, that is the rule by which most walk; not only the men of the world, but professors, seduced by their example, or by the darkness and corruption of their own minds and hearts. They judge of things, not as they are in truth and reality, nor as the Scripture or right reason represents them, but as others think of them, though groundlessly and erroneously, and regulate their walking by such a judgment. This is in Seneca's style, *secundum opinionem vivere*, to live according to vulgar opinion, and is a rule below those, who would live in the use of common reason, much more below those who are the disciples of Christ, and 'have learned of him, and been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus;' the children of light should be far above this, and leave it to such as are in darkness. With them, *omnia ex opinione suspensa sunt*, the worth or value, the good or evil, of things is measured by false opinion, not by true measures.

For instance, how came riches, great estates, abundance of superfluities, to be so highly valued, above all by many, and too much by those who profess themselves crucified to the world, and the things of it? How came we by this great esteem of that which is much and great in the world? We are no led to it by the Spirit of God; the Scripture hath scarce a good word for riches, Heb. ii. 6, Mat. xiii., 1 Tim. vi. And reason and experience tell

us that so much of the world hath more of care, and trouble, and vexation, and more danger of temptation, cumber, and hazard to ourselves than a competency. Whence is it, then, but from vain opinion, without Scripture, without reason? These things are of high esteem in the opinion of the world; this carries it against all, even those that are redeemed from the earth are swayed down by it. They are seduced by the common opinion, though it be a vulgar error. Men commonly think exceeding highly of these things, though no good reason can be given why they do so. Persons are valued for what they have, not for what they are. And he is a singular, a rare person, that does not more or less follow the common opinion.

So for curious fare, and fine apparel, and sumptuous accommodations, what is it that sets a value on them but vain opinion, when in reality that which is less, or meaner, would be as much or more for health, and strength, and comeliness, and all the ends for which these things are afforded us? All these it would satisfy, only it will not satisfy common repute, and the vain conceit of the generality concerning these things.

Now the children of light should be far from following this rule, else they walk not like themselves. It is for those that are blind, or in the dark, to judge of things, or value them by their vain opinion, and order themselves accordingly. This should not sway your judgments, nor order your designs, nor regulate your practices as to these outward things. It is a blind guide, and leads those that follow it fully into the ditch, and those that follow it but in part into by-paths, and such wherein the children of light should be afraid and ashamed to be found. Let not this guide you in your particular callings, nor measure your estates, or order your fare or habit, or accommodations; you have another rule, the Scripture and enlightened reason. The light of the word is the rule for the children of light. Observe what this discovers concerning these things, not what the world vainly thinks. There you have the judgment of the Spirit, the mind of Christ; this you should follow, not the opinion of the world, which lies in wickedness and in darkness, Rom. xii. 2. The children of light are 'transformed by the renewing of their mind,' so as they may discern 'what is that good, that acceptable, that perfect will of God,' to which the will and opinion of the world is opposite, and therefore they must not be conformed to it.

I might give you other instances as concerning sin. How is it that some sins pass for small, which the word of God declares to be great and dreadful; and some things which the Scripture represents as sins are counted no sins; and sin in general, which the Lord pronounces to be the greatest evil, is counted a less, a more tolerable evil than many outward grievances? Why, vain and common opinion carries it in these cases against the verdict of the Holy Ghost.

So for holiness. How comes it to be so little valued and regarded, when the Lord hath said so much concerning the absolute necessity and transcendent excellency of it? How is it, that a show of it will serve some, a little of it (so much as will barely be sufficient to bring one to heaven) will serve others? How is it, that many things are more esteemed, more passionately affected, more eagerly pursued? Why, vain opinion prevails here also, to the disparagement of that which is most valuable, and to the advancement of that which is but loss and dung in comparison.

To add no more. How is it that a low, afflicted, suffering condition is feared and shunned, as if it were the greatest evil on earth, whereas, being sanctified and improved, it may be more for the honour of Christ, and more for the advantage and prosperity of the soul, than the prosperous and flourishing condition in the world, and may more promote the main design and interest, both of Christ and his people? This can have no better ground than vain

opinion, which Moses followed not, when he 'chose rather to suffer,' &c., and 'accounted the reproach of Christ,' &c., Heb. xi. 25, 26. He had not respect to common opinion, but to something else; nor did the apostle regard it, but something of another nature, 2 Cor. iv. 16-18.

2. Follow the light of the word fully. Make use of it to discover the whole will of God, concerning the duty of his children, that you may comply with it, and order heart and life by it. Study not only the promises and privileges which belong to your state (though this must be part of your study and inquiry); but also your duty in the full latitude of it (for it is of large extent, Ps. cxix. 96); what you owe to God, to yourselves, families, relations, brethren, enemies, all men, and inquire with a design to conform your souls and conversations to the whole will of God. Decline no part of it, whatever it be. Those that are in darkness may stumble upon some duties, but they are partial in the law, Mal. ii. 9. They accept faces (as in the Hebrew). Some duties please, some disquiet them; they pick and choose, some are taken, others are left, as their humour, interest, inclination serves them; some parts of their conversation is lightsome, but darkness is upon other parts thereof.

It must not be thus with those who would walk as children of light. The light of holiness must shine in every part of their souls, in every part of their lives; so as to be 'holy in all manner of conversation,' in an impartial, universal observance of the will of God, Ps. cxix. 6. Then may they be confident that they walk answerable to their state and relation, when they respect all; then need they not be ashamed, as those that live in contradiction. They walk not as children of light, who walk not in all, as Luke i. 6. All must be regarded and observed, but there is occasion to mind you more especially of some, of which you should have a particular care.

(1.) Those that are too much neglected by professors. Those to whom God hath made known his will have been subject, in several ages, to some neglects, which, prevailing, have proved fatal to them in the issue. You may see what neglects the Israelites of old were guilty of; their not worshipping God after his appointment, did principally bring the captivity. Afterwards, in Christ's time, there were some great pretenders to a more than ordinary holiness, were strict and severe in many duties, but declined others, of which they are admonished by Christ: 'These things ye ought to have done, but' &c. They were much for outward holiness, but neglected inward purity; very punctual in divers rites and observances, but overlooked the *Caput et cor*; seemed strict in the duties of the first table, which respect the worship of God, but omitted those of the second, little regarding righteousness and mercy. In the ancient church after Christ, the fatal neglect seems to have been their not keeping close to the rule of the word, in administration of worship, ordinances, and discipline, taking liberty to add or diminish, or vary herein, as they pleased. The consequence whereof was the letting in an inundation of corruption, which in fine settled in popery in the west, and a woful degeneracy in other parts of the world. In other places which have been reforming and cleansing themselves from these corruptions, there has been much care about doctrinals, and zeal and industry about the points controverted in religion, but too much. In general, I fear there is much guilt upon professors for not bringing forth fruits worthy of the gospel; those fruits of the Spirit, for which the Spirit of Christ was many years striving with us in the ministry of the gospel, not being filled with those fruits of righteousness; also for not improving those means and advantages we sometimes had for the carrying on of Christ's work amongst us, and the promoting of his interest in our own hearts and lives, and in others; and since the Lord's hand hath been stretched out against us for not learning

righteousness by his judgments, not inquiring duly what design he had upon us in thus judging and chastening us, not complying with his design. So that it is a common complaint, that generally we are no better for our sufferings, still as proud, and vain, and selfish, and worldly; still as unmortified, as little refined as if we had not been in the furnace.

Children of light should better discern what God aims at in afflicting, and more readily follow him whither his correcting hand leads them.

Particularly, while we advance faith, let us not depress good works, but be careful to maintain them, Titus iii. 14, and to walk in them, Eph. ii. 10.

While we profess and magnify love to God, let not brotherly love be lost amongst us; that impartial universal love, which is called for everywhere in the New Testament; let not our love be confined to parties.

While we would have forbearance from others, let us not refuse to forbear one another in tolerable differences.

While we lay great stress upon hearing the word, let not other duties and ordinances be slighted or slightly attended.

While we oppose religious rites and ceremonies of human invention, let us neglect nothing which the Scripture shews to be of the substance of religion.

While we are for spiritual worship, let us not tolerate in ourselves an unspiritual, a carnal temper of heart in worshipping God.

While we are zealous for pure ordinances, let us not neglect the end and due improvement of them.

While we like not the gaudy and pompous dress of worship under the gospel, let us not be proud, and vain, and gaudy, in our own dress and garb.

While we seem tender and scrupulous in worshipping God, and what worship we offer to him, let us not overlook love and peace, righteousness, and mercy towards men: of which more anon.

Not to be tedious: let me commend some scriptures to your serious consideration, wherein some of the duties of Christ's disciples are laid down; and observe if divers of them be not too much neglected by those who profess subjection to Christ: Mat. v. 39, *ad fin.*, and Mat. vi. 19, 20; Mat. vii. 12; Rom. xii. 9, *ad fin.*; Gal. v. 22, *ad fin.*; Eph. iv. 25, &c.; Philip. ii. 1-5; Col. iii. 12-14; 1 Thes. v. 12-16; 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18; James i. 22-27; 1 Pet. iii. 8, &c.

To explain these passages is not my business, and many of them are plain. They are part of the rule by which a child of light should walk; and some of the duties herein specified have their observance amongst us; but whether many of them be not too much neglected and overlooked by those who profess an universal subjection to Christ, as their Lord and lawgiver, when you have duly perused, and seriously considered them, and compared the lives and deportment of professors therewith, you may be able to judge. If you would walk as children of light, be careful, especially, of those duties, those acts of holiness, the exercise of those graces, those parts of gospel obedience, which you see professors too apt to neglect; your great concernment in this may excuse me for staying so long upon it. Too much neglect of practical godliness, and the power of it; and we in these nations have our neglects too; the Lord hath not been scourging us all this while for nothing. These have had some hand at least in preparing the furnace, and heating of it.

(2.) Those for the neglect of which we are reproached. The Lord sometimes instructs his people by the mouths of enemies, and minds them of their duty, by such as little regard their own. We are charged at this day with the neglect of moral virtues, and the duties of the second table;

ministers for not pressing of them, and hearers for not making conscience to practise them : such as these, meekness, lowliness, peaceableness, mercifulness, liberty, charity, truth, faithfulness, candour, righteousness, temperance, patience, &c. Now this is a heavy charge, and great guilt is upon us if we deserve it, for those are things of great necessity and excellency. When they are from a right principle, and directed to a right end, they are not moral virtues only, but Christian graces, part of the divine nature and of the image of God ; half of our religion consists in the exercise thereof, and those that are to seek here are but almost Christians. These are so far from being the children of light, that they who are destitute of them are below some of them who are in darkness. You find them even in the New Testament frequently and importunately called for : 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 'Add to faith, virtue,' i. e. all moral virtues, say some ; however, divers of them are here specified, ver. 8. Much of the fruitfulness of a Christian lies in these things, and he that lacketh them, whatever he have, whatever attainment he pretends to besides, is barren, ver. 9. He is blind, he is in darkness, he doth not, he cannot walk as a child. Godliness is not in its power, where it commands not the exercise of these. Those who take themselves to be in a higher form, and slight these things as below them, and pretend to be wholly taken up with spiritualness, heavenliness, living by faith and intimate communion with God, so as to neglect what should order their conversation towards men, are less absurd and preposterous than one who will needs be in his grammar when he hath not learned his primer, and thinks he can read well enough when he is not able to spell, or does not know his letters.

(3.) Such as the providence of God, and your present condition more particularly calls you to. Children of light should make use of the light, to discern in all circumstances that part of God's will, wherein they are more especially concerned, and apply themselves to special observance of that which is most seasonable, as *ex. gr.*

When you are under affliction, and the hand of God is upon you, if you walk under the cross as children of light, you should see (though such as are in darkness cannot, or will not) when his hand is stretched out, and humble yourselves under it, 1 Peter v. 6. You should observe what his hand points at, and take notice what he is correcting in you ; what he would have you to reform, to leave, to do, to suffer ; what his design is in thus exercising you with sad dispensations, and how you may serve it, and fully comply with it.

When your outward condition is prosperous and successful, you should be thankful, you may rejoice ; but rejoice with trembling, as considering that outward prosperity is usually more hazardous to your souls than afflictions and sufferings ; and a fair gleam often ushers in a storm, Ps. xxx. 6.

When you have abundance of this world, and outward comforts are still flowing in, use what you have faithfully for God, and employ, lay it out for those ends for which he hath entrusted you, as becomes those who are but stewards, and expect shortly to give an account of their stewardship ; and as those who make account at present, that the tide may turn, as you see it daily doth, and that it may be low water with you ere long. Employ what you have, so as you will wish it had been employed when it is gone (for shortly it will be gone from you, or you from it), and then the comfort and advantage (which is more valuable than the things themselves) will remain, whatever be lost.

If you be cut short in these enjoyments already, learn now to count the all-sufficiency of God your riches, to value more, and be more diligent for that treasure which is above the reach of danger, and so may grow truly

rich, rich unto God with a little, when others are poor, very poor in abundance.

When you have provisions for your souls, be careful that your souls thrive. If your souls be lean in a year of plenty, what will they be in a famine? If they be like the heath in the wilderness, when they have been watered with the first and latter rain; take heed lest the Lord command the heavens, &c. Learn of the ant, who provides her meat in summer, Prov. vi. 6-8; she knows by instinct winter will come; we have had some touches of a winter already, and sharper weather may come. When you are abridged of soul advantages, you have special warnings from heaven to be faithful in a little, lest the Lord take from you even that which you have. Children of light should above others be wise in their generation, to know their seasons and the duties of them, their light otherwise may add to their guilt, and make it greater, more conspicuous, and lead the Lord to more severity. You are upon trial, upon your good behaviour, one year more you are forborne after apparent hazards of being cut down; if more fruitfulness appear not, you know what follows, 'cut it down.'

(4.) Those that have a special tendency to endear religion and the ways of Christ to others, to acquaint those who are strangers to it with the excellency thereof; to convince those who are prejudiced against it, to win those and conquer them who are enemies to it.

There are many acts required of us which are of this nature and quality, and might through the blessing of God produce these happy effects. And the children of light are greatly concerned to make these their constant walk, to be very much in them if they will walk like themselves. But these acts are not those wherein secret converse and walking with God consists; not the inward actings and motions of their hearts towards God; not the more retired exercise of their graces betwixt God and their souls, for these others are not acquainted with, nor will they believe or regard them, unless there be some visible demonstration thereof. That which has this effect upon them must be something that they may see or be sensible of; something which they or the world may have advantage by; something which is lovely and commendable amongst the sons of men, for which they commonly have some reverence and esteem; in which there is some light and lustre which strikes their senses, and through them reaches their minds and consciences.

And this is it which Christ calls for in general from all the children of light, Mat. v. 16. We must do nothing to be seen of men, that we may have praise and applause, but many things we are bound to do which men must see, so as to be thereby provoked, obliged to glorify God in speaking and thinking well of his laws and ways. There is a light shines in good works, those works whereby we do good in the world, or do good to the place where we live, and to the persons with whom we deal and converse, which reflects glory upon God, when it makes them believe there is a singular goodness and excellency in that religion which produces so good effects. When they find by experience in those that profess it, such uprightness and candour, such bounty and mercy, such tenderness over others in all their concerns, such readiness to supply them, to relieve them, to be helpful to them every way, both for heaven and for the world, the children of light should not spare purse nor pains to effect this. And that is wretched and miserable sparing indeed, which opens the mouths of sinners against professors, and hardens their hearts against Christ's ways. Oh, let none that pretend to be light in the Lord, bring such a cloud of darkness upon their

profession ; ' better a millstone,' &c., and they and their estates sunk in the sea than give scandal.

The apostle Peter seconds the advice of Christ in words to the same effect, 1 Peter ii. 12. Such good works should be visible in the walking of children of light, that their persecutors (for *the day of visitation* there is probably a day of persecution), beholding them, may not only be silenced, and speak no more of them as evil-doers when they see and hear of so much good done by them, but may be won to a good opinion of their way (rendered by their good works so lovely), and so persuaded to embrace it and enter into it as the best way in the world. Oh that professors would fill their conversation with such acts and works, that those without may have a real convincing demonstration that their way is the best way in the world.

See how importunately the apostle Paul calls the children of light to the practice of those things which might commend and endear their profession to others, Philip. iv. 8. Whatsoever things are *σμενὰ*, venerable, high in their esteem ; whatever are *προσφιλή*, amiable, obliging to their affections ; whatever are *εὐφημα*, commended in their discourse ; if you have any regard of virtue, or to anything that is praiseworthy, make these your designs, propose these to yourselves as principally to be aimed at in your practice. There is no way so advantageous for the children of light to shine as lights in their stations, and to appear in the world like themselves, as this.

(5.) Those to which you have most averseness, to which your inclinations do least lead you ; as there are some evils to which we are naturally more inclined than to others, so are there some parts of our duty, some acts of holiness to which we are more backward than to others. And as we are in most danger to fall into that evil to which we are naturally most addicted, so are we most subject to decline those acts and duties to which we have the least inclination ; and as we are concerned to observe most what sin our corrupt nature is most prone to, and [to be] most watchful against it, so we are obliged to take notice especially what part of our duty we are most apt to decline, and to strive most with our own hearts to bring them to a compliance with the will of God in that particular. And herein the children of light will approve themselves to be children indeed, most obedient, and most dutiful, and most affectionate children, when they cross their own inclinations to comply with his will. Hereby you will have the comfort and evidence that you follow the Father of lights fully, when you follow him in those steps which you are naturally most averse to tread in, and most prone to skip over them, or turn aside from them.

And the same may be said of those parts of the divine will which cross our interest, the interest of self, of the world, or of the flesh, those which are inconsistent with our ease, our pleasure, our gain, and worldly advantage, or our safety, or our credit. Those who would walk as children of light, must follow their Father and observe his will, in those acts and duties that are unpleasing to the flesh, in those that are most difficult, in those that are very chargeable and expensive, in those that are reproached and disgraced ; in those that are hazardous, and expose them to danger in their estates, or liberty, or lives, in all that is dear to them in the world. No fear, no hazard, no difficulty must stop them in their course, in the race set before them by their heavenly Father, nor turn them aside from it, who would walk and have the comfort of walking as children of light ; and thus walking they will be indeed followers of God as dear children.

(6.) Those which you are under temptation to neglect. Many times we are more tempted to neglect some than others, and in more danger to

neglect them then when under temptation. The children of light should walk so as to see their danger and avoid it. Those whose necks are under oppression or persecution, when the yoke is heavy and pinches sore, are in danger to neglect that special duty of the gospel, to love their enemies, and pray for them, and do good to them, which yet is the proper character of Christians, and their excellency above all others, *amicos diligere omnium est*, &c. So brethren, when they are of different ways and persuasions, those differences are apt to alienate their affections, and they are in danger to lose brotherly love, and to neglect the acts and offices of it one to another, which yet is a duty on which the gospel, next to faith, lays the greatest stress, and calls for most frequently, and with greatest importunity. They walk not as children of light, who walk not in love with one another. The apostle tells us they are in darkness, and walk in it, and are blinded by it, 1 John ii. 8-11.

So those that engage themselves much in the world, are in danger to neglect their families, and the duties they owe to God, and the souls of their relations, if they neglect not their own too.

Children of light should be wary where they are in most danger, and that is where they are under temptation. If you would walk as children of light, you must follow the light of the world fully, especially in the particulars specified.

8. Walk above the world and earthly things. Children of light are clothed with the sun; the moon, the world is under their feet, Rev. xiii. 1. It has no high place in their minds or hearts; riches, pleasures, honours, and respect are thrown down in their thoughts, and cast out of their affections, they are not the design of their lives; the world is their footstool everywhere, and serves, does not command them.

They have no high esteem of the world, nor of those things that are of most value in dark minds; condemn riches and greatness, which others adore or admire. The light hath discovered to them something of another world, which outshines and disparages all that this world can tempt them with. They are ranked amongst the worst of children of darkness, who 'mind earthly things,' Philip. iii. 18, 19.

Their hearts and affections are estranged. They are to the world's breasts, which promise pleasure and plenty, as a weaned child; the world is crucified to them. It is now (whatever it was while they were darkness) as a lifeless untempting object, has no more beauty nor comeliness to draw out their affections to it, than a dead carcass, a crucified thing. They are in gross darkness that are in love with the world; 'the love of the Father is not in them;' it would not be so if the true light had shined in them. The apostle is positive, 1 John ii. 15; and more sharply, James iv. 4.

They seek it not. It is not pursued as their design; they follow it not to embrace it, but to crucify it; they seek it otherwise as though they sought it not, with some indifferency whether they have it or not, so they may have those better things. Other seekers of it are in palpable darkness, Mat. vi. 81, 82. They would be loath to leave no difference betwixt the children of light and the children of this world, betwixt the disciples of Christ and the Gentiles. Let the Gentiles that are in darkness, and see nothing better, seek these things; children of light 'seek those things that are above.' If a way be opened for them by the providence of God, to get more of the world, they proceed therein moderately, and very cautiously, lest the world should encroach upon their heavenly interest, lest the world should steal away those thoughts and affections, that care and time, and those endeavours which are due to God and to their souls; and lest, having more in trust



they should not be faithful. They seek not the world for worldly ends, that they may rise higher and fare better, more deliciously, or that they may have more esteem and reputation (these are the low unworthy ends of sensualists and worldlings for themselves and their posterity); but that they may do more good, and be more serviceable, and more honour their profession, and shew the sincerity of their aims by really and freely employing what they get for those noble and generous purposes.

But I have formerly spoken to you more of this on another subject; and the Lord has since spoken to you concerning this in another language. Your guilt will be great, your condition very lamentable, if nothing prevail with you to walk as children of light in this particular; when the Lord has thundered from heaven, by one dreadful judgment after another, which seem directly levelled against worldliness.

4. Walk in the sight of heaven. Children of the light are the 'children of the kingdom,' heirs of heaven and glory, begotten again to an inheritance, &c. And that is one reason why they are called children of light, because they are heirs of the inheritance of the saints in light. If they walk like themselves, they walk as travelling towards their own country, and going to take possession of their inheritance and portion in another land, another world, and to look upon this world as a strange country, and upon themselves in it as strangers and pilgrims; upon their habitations, as inns and lodgings in a journey; upon their enjoyments, as the accommodations of an inn, in which they are to rest as it were but for a night, and to leave all as it were the next morning; and upon what they meet with in their way, whether pleasing or displeasing, as things wherein they are little concerned, being in a journey, passing from them, and hastening homewards: all the occurrences of this life being but as the passages of one day, compared with that eternity which is in their eye.

Under such apprehensions should children of light continually walk in the world, while their minds and hearts are at home, their conversation in heaven; their eye not upon the trifles of this life, but upon their portion and inheritance, their longings for possession of that happiness, those riches, those joys, that glory which shall be revealed. The view of this at a distance, their thoughts of it, does quicken, comfort, encourage them, put spirits and life into them, in all their actings for God, and motions towards him, or sufferings for his name's sake. This fortifies them against all the terrors and all the allurements of the world. They should make use of this to disgrace all that the world can tempt them with, to brush down, as a cobweb, whatever is a snare to a worldly heart.

What are the riches and treasures of the world but loss and dung, compared with those riches of glory, the treasures of our Father's kingdom?

What are the delights of sense, and pleasures of the world, but drops of mud? Drops, compared with those rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand; and mud, compared with the pure river of the water of life, those pure, sinless, satisfying, ennobling, everlasting delights.

What is all the honour and splendour of the world, but as the glittering of a glow-worm to the glory of the sun in its full brightness, when compared with the glorious inheritance of the saints above?

What are the things on earth, which earthly hearts most affect and admire, but as trifles and children's playthings, compared with things above? A sight of that country which they seek, that place they are walking to, will help them to look upon all the glory of the world with contempt and disregard; and when they walk as children of light, they walk in such a sight of it.

Such a sight of it, as will also encourage them against all the sad things they may meet with in their walk. What though there be darkness here, days of blackness and thick darkness; there is everlasting light, without approach of night or spark\* of darkness. What though there be troubles and afflictions, sufferings and tribulation, yet there is peace that shall never be disturbed, rest that can never be disquieted. After all that this world can do to disturb and disquiet us here below, there remains a rest for the people of God, an eternal rest.

What though we be tossed to and fro here, without any certain dwelling-place, and must think of removing as soon as one would think we were settled; yet there is a city that has foundations, where shortly we shall be settled to full contentment, so as no malice of men or devils shall ever remove us.

What though we be poor and mean, have little, and are in no way to compass more on earth; yet 'God has chosen the poor of the world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom,' of such a kingdom, as all the kingdoms of earth are but toys and baubles to it.

What though all our earthly enjoyments be utterly uncertain, they may be consumed, or lost, or forced from us on a sudden, we can no way secure them a year, a week, a day to an end. Oh, but we have an inheritance; we have enjoyments and treasures above, which lie at no such uncertainties. They are reserved for us in the heavens, above the reach of rust, and moth, and water, and fire, and injustice, and violence. We look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken, 'though the earth be removed, and the mountains,' &c., which cannot be consumed, though the earth should be turned to ashes, and elements melt with fervent heat.

We are passing through a valley of tears to the joy of our Lord; through the malice and rage of men, to the enjoyment of that God who is love itself; through menaces and threatenings, to inherit the promises; through men's reproaches and hard measures, to the blessed welcomes of Christ, and his everlasting embraces. The sight, the thoughts of this, arms the children of light against all temptations, encourages them against all hardships and sufferings. So it did the apostles and primitive Christians, 2 Cor. iv. 16-18. This is to walk as children of light, 'not looking at things that are seen,' &c.

*Motives.* 1. Otherwise you live undutifully, as disobedient children. It is your Father, the Father of lights, that enjoins you to walk as children of light; if you walk otherwise, you are unlike your Father, you cannot please him, you disobey him, you are so far children of disobedience.

2. You cross God's design in honouring you with this title and relation; for this end you are begotten again, born of God; for this end he 'called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,' and made you 'light in the Lord.' If you walk not as children of light, you walk cross to God, and will be found a resister of him in a high degree, as those that would frustrate his design, and make him fall short of his end in thus honouring you.

3. You walk in a contradiction to your state and relation. So far as you walk not as children of light, you walk as children of darkness; and that is as if one that is advanced to be a prince should live as a shark or a beggar; or as if one that has the soul of a man should live like the beasts of the field.

4. You undermine your hopes, and weaken your title to the inheritance of the saints in light; you cannot plead your title to that inheritance further than you live like heirs of it; you live not like heirs if you walk not as children of light.

\* Qu. 'speck'?--ED.