

OF CHRIST'S MAKING INTERCESSION.

To make intercession.—HEB. VII. 25.

THE offices of Christ, the great mediator betwixt God and man, are the foundation of our hopes, and the springs of our comfort and happiness, his priestly office particularly ; and of his priesthood there are two principal acts : his satisfaction, by dying for sinners, and his intercession at the right hand of God. Of the latter, I shall give you an account from the words read.

The apostle, observing that the believing Hebrews were in danger to fall from the profession of Christ, by being too passionately addicted unto the Levitical ordinances, to secure them, he, through this epistle, sets before them the glory of Christ, in his person and offices, and shews how infinitely he transcends all that they affected and admired in the Levitical administration.

In this chapter he proves the excellency of Christ's priesthood above the priesthood under the law, by many arguments. Only at present take notice of some from ver. 19. The law, and the priesthood under it, made nothing perfect, made no perfect satisfaction for sin, nor purchase of salvation ; but Christ, then hoped for, as better than those legal rites, being the end of and thing signified by them, being brought in, did, by virtue of his priesthood, make all perfect by perfect satisfaction and purchase. And by him we have nearer access to God than was held forth in the legal administration. None but the priests were then admitted into the holy place ; none but the high priest into the holy of holies, the place of God's special presence on the mercy-seat ; but now there is no veil betwixt us and the mercy-seat ; it was rent to make our way, and all believers may have always access unto the throne of grace, &c.

Ver. 20, 21. Christ's priesthood had a stronger confirmation. That under the law stood but by positive institution, the Lord leaving himself a liberty to change it when he pleased. But the priesthood of Christ is established by an oath, and rendered unchangeable for ever ; as unchangeable as God himself, who cannot repent, as inviolable as the oath of God.

Ver. 22. Christ is the surety of a better testament, of a covenant made up of better promises, Heb. viii. 6. The covenant of grace, in its administration under Christ, is more free, clear, full, extensive, and firm. Christ is surety of the covenant, *i. e.* he obliged himself to see the articles and contents of the covenant made good, removing what might hinder, and provid-

ing what might secure and promote the observance. In the same sense he is called, Heb. xii. 24, not a mediator of supplication only, as the woman of Tekoa, 2 Sam. xiv., but of satisfaction, as Paul, Philem. 18, 19. Such a mediator is a surety, binds himself to satisfy for another.

Ver. 23, 24. The priesthood was defective, and very imperfect. The priest, then, did need partners, one could not do all the work; and successors too, they could not live always. But Christ, our high priest, needs neither partner nor successor; he alone is sufficient for all the acts of his office; and he is so always, unchangeably; he lives ever. Hence he infers, ver. 25, *ἵς τὸ πάντως*.

1. Perfectly; to remove whatever is an impediment to their salvation, and vouchsafe whatever is requisite to make their happiness and salvation complete.

2. Eternally, ver. 9, 'Because he ever lives.' He is able, but is he willing? Yes, that is evident by his intercession. Therefore, those that turn from sin by repentance, and come unto God by faith in Christ, shall certainly be saved to the utmost.

Obs. Christ always makes intercession for his people.

For this intercession of Christ, there is all sorts of evidence in Scripture, by types, prophecies, and plain assertions.

That was typified under the law, by what the high priest is appointed to do on the day of expiation, Levit. xvi. 11-15. A bullock and a goat was appointed for sin-offerings; they were to be sacrificed, and their blood shed without, at the door of the tabernacle. Then Aaron was to take part of the blood, and carry it with incense into the most holy place within the veil, and there sprinkle it upon and before the mercy-seat. Now the slaying of these sacrifices, and offering them without, at a distance from the holy place, signified the death of Christ, wherein he offered himself to God a sacrifice on earth for the expiation of his people's sins; and the presenting of the blood of those sacrifices in the most holy place, signified the intercession of Christ in heaven; and so the apostle applies it, Heb. ix. 12, 23. He entered within the veil, *i.e.* into heaven; and there, by virtue of his own blood, appears, *i.e.* intercedes, for us.

It is foretold by the prophet, Isa. liii., where, having given an account of the sufferings and death of Christ (one main act of his priestly office, whereby he made satisfaction to justice), so plainly and punctually, that it may seem rather a relation of what was past, than a prophecy of what was to come; he concludes with the other part of that office, the intercession of Christ, ver. 12.

It is plainly asserted in the New Testament, Rom. viii. 34, Heb. ix. 24; how, and in what capacity he appears for us, the other apostle shews, 1 John ii. 1, 2. He appears as our advocate, to make our defence, to secure us in judgment, to plead for us; and his plea is grounded upon satisfaction, made by the sacrifice of himself for our expiation; *ἱλασμὸς* is *θυσία ἱλαστική*, a propitiatory sacrifice. Having offered himself as such a sacrifice, sufficient to make atonement, he appears by its virtue to plead for, and obtain the effects of it; which are no less than perfect salvation, as the text comprises. For as he argues, Rom. v. 10, *πάλιν μᾶλλον*, much more shall we be saved, saved to the uttermost, by his life, *i.e.* by his living to make intercession.

It is a matter of great consequence, you see, though not much (that I can find) insisted on. Let me therefore endeavour to open it more fully and clearly, by giving you some account of the nature, efficacy, and continuance of this intercession.

1. For the nature of it. In general, it is Christ's appearance in heaven in behalf of his people; as having on earth satisfied for them, done and suffered all things which were requisite on his part to be there accomplished for their salvation, both for the removing of what might hinder it, and purchasing what might perfect it, and make it complete; or a presenting of himself, as having finished what was necessary on earth, for the saving of them to the utmost.

More particularly, it includes these severals;—

(1.) He appears in our nature, not only as God, but as man, 1 Tim. ii. 5. While he is mediator, he is man. Now his intercession is a principal act of his mediation. To intercede is to mediate. He did not cast off the human nature when he left the earth, but carried it into heaven, and there retains not only the soul, but the body of a man; the same body as to the substance, though freed from corruptible qualities, such as are inconsistent with his glorious condition in the heavens. The same body which suffered, which was buried, which rose again, the same ascended into heaven. The same body that did bleed and die, that suffered and was made a sacrifice, he presents in heaven. He appears with it, and thereby it is evident that he appears for us, as Heb. ix. 24. He appears as one concerned for us, as one [who] is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. As he assumed our nature, and took a human body for us, so he retains it in heaven, and appears there with it for us. The apostle does not say he entered into heaven, to appear there in glory and majesty, as if his appearance there had been for himself solely; but to appear in the presence of God for us. As he was born, and lived and died for us, so he ascended into heaven, and appears in our nature at the right hand of God for us. But how for us?

(2.) He appears as our advocate, to present us and our cause unto God. When Aaron was to enter the most holy place, to intercede for the people, he was to bear the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast and shoulders, Exod. xxviii. 12, 29. In that Aaron was to bear the names of the tribes, may be signified that he was not to enter into the place of intercession in his own name only, but in the names of all the people. So did Christ (typified by the high priest, and so often called) appear in heaven, the place of his intercession, not in his own name, but in the name and behalf of his people.

Aaron was to bear their names on his shoulder; to denote, as is conceived, that the high priest was to bear with their weaknesses and infirmities; and such an high priest is Christ represented, Heb. iv. 15.

Aaron was to bear the names of the tribes upon his breast, when he appeared for them in the holy place; to signify he was to have such care and love for them as though they were in his heart. According to what the apostle expresseth towards the Corinthians, 2 Cor. vii. 3, to be sure it is thus with Christ; he in appearing for his people as intercessor and advocate, does as it were bear them on his breast; presents them unto God as those that are in his heart, to die and to live for them. He died to make satisfaction; and lives to make intercession for them; he ever lives to appear as their advocate, 1 John ii. 1; he states their cause before God as it now stands, and represents it to him in the favourable and advantageous state and circumstances to which it is brought by his obedience and sufferings for them. And so stated it cannot miscarry, when they come to trial before God's tribunal; they need fear no charge that can be brought against them, no accusation of men or devils, they have such an advocate, as can answer, and nonplus, and silence all. Some resemblance of this you may see, Zech. iii. 1, 2; Joshua, a type of the church, is charged, accused by Satan;

Christ, called the Lord here, by his intercession with the Father, pleads that, instead of Joshua, his accuser may be rebuked and confounded, acquitting and justifying the accused. No charge will have better success, which is formed against those for whom Christ appears as advocate, Rom. viii. 34. No charge can be fixed on his chosen people, not only because Christ died and rose again, but because Christ appears at the right hand of God as their advocate, to plead, &c.

(3.) He presents his death as suffered in our stead, his blood as shed for us. The high priest (as was said) when he was to mediate for the people in the most holy place, was to bring the blood of the sacrifice and present it there; he was not to enter without it, there was no interceding but by virtue of it, Heb. ix. 7; so Christ by his own blood entered into heaven, ver. 12, thereby to make intercession for transgressors. Indeed, his intercession is but the continued virtue of his blood, and therefore is described by his presenting it, as the high priest did that of other sacrifices. Not that Christ in heaven presents his blood out of his veins, but his soul and body which was sacrificed; that body which was scourged, wounded, pierced through with nails, and made full of bloody furrows, remains in the presence and at the right hand of God, and will remain there for an eternal memorial of his sufferings. Not that the Lord needs any memorial, and wants any helps to continue things in remembrance, or less regards, or is less mindful of things long since past; for things past, how long since soever, are as full in his all-seeing eye as if they were present; and so are things future too, at what distance soever. Hence Christ is said to be the lamb sacrificed, &c., Rom. xiii. 8. That sacrifice of Christ was present to him, so as to procure all the advantages of it for believers under the Old Testament, many ages before it was actually offered; and so it is as present to him still, though it be many hundred years since it was offered.

But such expressions, when we say Christ presents his blood, they help our weaknesses; and signify to us that the death and sufferings of Christ have the same influence with God now, as if he were still suffering, as if he were but just now crucified. That the virtue of his blood is still as fresh and efficacious as if it were but just now shed; as if the wounds were still open, and the blood now streaming out in the presence and at the right hand of God. This blood, thus presented, is said to 'speak better things than the blood of Abel,' Heb. xii. 24, Gen. iv. 10; it cries for mercy as much as the blood of Abel cried for vengeance; it pleads powerfully, and has as much the virtue of interceding as if it had an articulate voice.

(4.) He presents his will and desire that his people may have all the purchase of his blood. The will of the divine nature as he is God, the desires of his human nature as he is man. Thus he is said to intercede for us, in that the Father understands that it is his will and desire, as he is God and man, that his people may be possessed of all the effects, and receive all the advantage of his obedience and sufferings for them; so that his intercession is in effect his praying for us in heaven. His intercession is by some called a prayer, and so it is rightly understood, as it imports his will and desire to the Father for us. His prayer on earth is expressed in this form, John xvii. 24; and his desires in heaven are called prayer, John xvi. 26, 'at that day,' after he had left the world and was ascended into heaven, 'I say not that I will pray,' I need not tell you that; this you may take for granted, you may be sure I will do it, some understand it. More plainly, John xiv. 16, when I am departed from earth, and am set at the right hand of God, I will be mindful of you, I will pray for you; so that in some sense Christ prays now that he is in heaven, and his interceding is praying for

us. To clear this, it differs in some circumstances, both from our prayers, and from his own prayers on earth.

[1.] He does not desire undeserved favours as we do ; so it differs from our prayers. The best of men that make any address to God, are unworthy of the mercies they pray for. But Christ wills nothing for us but what he merited ; he desires to obtain nothing on our behalf but what he has deserved for us. Rev. v. 9, 12, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,' how unworthy soever they are for whom he was sacrificed ; he has redeemed us, laid down a price of more equal value with what he asks for us.

[2.] He does not present any petitions in the posture of a humble, dejected supplicant ; he does not fall on his knees, or lie prostrate to beg anything for us ; this is not agreeable to him as he is God, nor to his present glorious state as he is man. As God, he is equal with the Father, counts it no robbery ; as man, he sits at the right hand of God, Heb. i. 8, and viii. 1 ; he is exalted to all glory, power, and majesty, next to the Father : 'Far above,' &c. Eph. i. 20, 21.

[3.] Nor does he present any requests with cries and tears, or such expressions of passionate fervour ; and so his intercession differs from his own prayers on earth, Heb. v. 7. Then he did as a man of sorrows, acting suitably to his condition then in the flesh, which was a state of humiliation, but is not congruous to his present state, when he is crowned with divine glory, Heb. ii. 9.

[4.] Nor does he desire anything for us by virtue of what he undertook, but has not yet performed, as he did in that divine and admirable prayer, John xvii. For whatever was requisite to make way for the fulfilling of his desires in behalf of his people is already fully accomplished, John xix. 30. His intercession there was by virtue of the sacrifice he was to offer ; his intercession now is on account of the sacrifice already offered.

These are some accidental differences betwixt the intercession of Christ and other prayers, whether his own or ours. But then I conceive, with submission, that his intercession is a prayer.

[1.] Essentially. Though it differ from other prayers in some circumstances, yet it has the essence of a prayer, and is so truly and really. For prayer, when it is designed by what is essential to it, is a presenting of our desires unto God, Philem. 4 ; and if we add, in the name of Christ, that will make no difference here. Christ, as our intercessor, presents his desires for his people unto the Father in his own name. It is his earnest desire that his people may reap all the fruits of his purchase ; he desires it for his own sake, who died for this end, and made the purchase for this purpose, that they might inherit.

[2.] It is prayer virtually. The presenting of his blood has the virtue and force of a prayer, Heb. xii. 24. The blood of Christ, called the blood of sprinkling, in reference to the blood of the sacrifices, which were to be sprinkled on, and before the mercy-seat, and by virtue of which the high priest did intercede for the people ; it speaks, it cries ; there is something in it equivalent to the voice of an importunate supplicant. It speaks for excellent things, *χρίστος*, for grace, reconciliation with God, and all the comfortable effects and consequents thereto ; it is a voice most powerful and prevalent, though it be not articulate. There needed no other plea, no other advocate for Abel against Cain, but the cry of his brother's blood ; the Lord heard it immediately, and answered it with a curse, Gen. iv. 10, 11. There needs no other plea for us with the Father than the cry of Christ's blood ; that prevails instantly, infallibly, for the blessings, Eph. i. 3 ; it has the virtue of a most effectual prayer.

[3.] It is transcendently a prayer. It is of greater force and prevalency with God than all the prayers of all creatures together, even of those which have most power with God. If all the glorious angels, and all the saints in heaven and on earth, should prostrate themselves before God, and come together to prefer one petition to him with all fervour and importunity, you would think that a powerful prayer indeed, of great virtue and prevalency. But the intercession of Christ, as it is a representation of the will and desires of Christ, is of more force and power to prevail, of more infinitely; for it is a presenting of the will of God for us, and of the desires of him who is God-man, and so more considerable than the united requests of men and angels all together. If we should have seen Christ on earth praying with strong cries and tears, we would not have questioned but he would have been heard. His intercession now is fully as prevalent with God as such a prayer of Christ would have been; nay, he presents his will and desires now with more advantage; for, being as our intercessor at the right hand of God, his power and interest is in the highest and most glorious exaltation. Thus much for the notion of Christ's intercession, what it imports, and wherein it consists.

2. For the efficacy of it, it may partly be understood by what is said. Let me add some particulars.

(1.) The intercession of Christ is grounded upon merit, and therefore must prevail in point of justice. Christ's obedience unto death was meritorious, and did deserve for his people that which, as intercessor on their behalf, he pleads for. There are three ingredients of strict and proper merit which concur in the obedience and sufferings of Christ. That which any will merit by, 1, must be his own; 2, and that which he owes not; 3, there must be a proportion betwixt it and that which he would deserve by it. Now, as to the first, the soul and body of Christ, which he offered for us, was his own, John x. 18; and the obedience he performed for us was done by his own strength, the divine nature empowering the human, both doing and suffering; whereas otherwise his sufferings would have been unsupportable to any mere man.

As to the second, that which he performed and suffered was what he owed not, not due from him. He was not obliged to it by his own voluntary undertaking and submission, being not only man, but God in one person.

As to the third, his obedience and sufferings were of equal worth with the recompence which he pleads for in behalf of his people. He thereby fully satisfied the demands both of law and justice; and though it was the life and pardon of a world of condemned persons that he pleads for, yet his obedience and blood is of more worth than all this; for these are of infinite value, being the obedience and blood of God himself, Acts xx.

So that Christ's obedience, active and passive, is meritorious, not only *ratione pacti*, by reason of the agreement betwixt the Father and him, he having performed all the conditions required in order to our redemption, but *ratione pretii*, by virtue of the intrinsic value of what he payed and performed.

Now, to use the apostle's expression, Rom. iv. 4, 'To him that thus worketh, the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt;' it is grace to us, but it is debt to Christ. And so the plea on our behalf in his intercession, being for a just debt, it cannot but be most effectual with a righteous God.

(2.) The efficacy of it appears in the acceptableness of all included in Christ's intercession unto God the Father, and his readiness to comply with the motions which it imports. Christ appears in our nature; now, that is the nature, the body which the Father prepared for him, Heb. x. 5, prepared

for Christ, that he might become a sacrifice ; such a sacrifice whereby justice was fully satisfied, mercy made wonderfully conspicuous, wisdom, power, goodness, truth, righteousness, and in a manner all divine perfections transcendently glorified, and thereby this nature eternally endeared unto God, and so exalted at his right hand as an everlasting monument thereof. Though it be man's nature, yet it is now (as the Lord says in effect) a part of my beloved Son, his nature too, in whom I am well pleased.

He appears as our advocate, and he pleads nothing but what is the will of God, Heb. x. 7-9. His will was that Christ should be a sacrifice ; and it is upon the perfect fulfilling of his Father's will that his plea proceeds ; that is the ground of it, therefore it must prevail. If it should not be effectual, the will of God would be ineffectual ; if it should meet with a repulse, the Lord would cross his own will. It is God that justifies, so as none shall condemn. How so ? It is Christ that makes intercession.

He presents his blood, his interceding is a commemoration of his sacrifice ; and this is the savour of a sweet smell to God, Eph. v. 2 ; he is infinitely pleased with it.

He presents his will and desires for saving of his people to the utmost ; and his will is his Father's will ; his desires always fulfilled, his requests ever heard and answered, Mat. xvii. 5. He would have him heard of all, he himself will certainly hear him, he is his beloved Son. Christ expresses his assurance of it, John xi. 42, xii. 48. He can ask nothing so great but the Father will give it, Ps. ii. 8. The Father says of Christ, ver. 7, 'Thou art my Son,' &c. It is spoken in reference to his resurrection from the dead (which was an evidence that he was not a mere man, but the eternal Son of God), and upon his resurrection followed his intercession ; in reference to which the Lord says to him, Ask of me, and I will give thee a spiritual kingdom over all my people through the whole world, a power to rule and save them. This is the greatest thing that Christ does ask, the sum of all he intercedes for. When Esther appeared before king Ahasuerus to intercede for her people condemned to destruction, he gives her this assurance, Esth. v. 8, hereby signifying that she could ask nothing so great but he would grant. Christ had this assurance of the Father before he became our advocate and intercessor actually, that there is nothing so great that he could ask but the Father would grant it. Such is the efficacy of his intercession.

(8.) By virtue of his intercession, all that he purchased by his obedience and sufferings is actually conferred. Pardon and salvation are sometimes ascribed to the death of Christ, sometimes to his life ; for he made the purchase by his obedience unto death. But we have the possession by virtue of his life in heaven, by his living there to make intercession for us. He merited salvation, and all that tends to save us to the utmost, by what he performed and suffered for us on earth. But all is actually conferred on us by virtue of his appearance for us at the right hand of God.

This we may understand by what he tells his disciples he would do in heaven, what he will intercede for, John xiv. 16, 17. The Lord was willing that his people should be saved to the utmost ; but then their salvation must be accomplished in a way that would glorify him, and on such terms as would be for his honour. Those terms are declared in the gospel ; those that will be saved must be both justified and sanctified : justified, since none can be saved unless the sentence of condemnation passed upon all sinners be reversed ; sanctified, because without holiness no man can see God. That they may be justified, they must have faith ; that they may be sanctified, they must have holiness. Both these Christ purchased by his blood, but he works them by his Spirit ; and that the Spirit may be given for this

purpose, he prays, he intercedes. For the word rendered Comforter is of large import, and denotes not only the act of comforting, but in a manner all the offices and operations of the Holy Ghost in reference to his people; and speaks him not only a Spirit of comfort, but of truth, and faith, and holiness. Thus Christ by his Spirit puts his people into a capacity of salvation, and all that salvation to the uttermost comprises. And this is done by virtue of his intercession. That which Christ purchased by his death is not actually bestowed but through his intercession. His people would not be capable thereof, but that the Spirit works them to it. The Spirit would not be sent for this purpose, but that Christ intercedes for it, John xvi. 7; not come, because his coming was to be the issue of Christ's intercession; therefore said to be sent in Christ's name: John xiv. 26, 'In my name,' *i. e.* for my sake, interceding to that purpose.

(4.) Christ's intercession was effectual before he was actually an intercessor. By virtue of this, all believers from the beginning of the world were pardoned and saved. The efficacy of his intercession is as extensive as the virtue of his death, upon which it is grounded. By virtue of his death, believers were freed from guilt in the Old Testament, before he actually suffered, Heb. ix. 15. His death was effectual to expiate the transgressions under the first testament, though it was then future; and so his future intercession was effectual to give them possession of the promised inheritance. Even as a debtor is discharged, when the surety gives sufficient security that the debt shall be paid, though he pay it not presently, 2 Tim. i. 9. Christ engaged himself, gave a sufficient security that he would offer himself a sacrifice in due time, and would present that sacrifice at God's right hand for all believers from the foundation of the world; and upon that account they were pardoned and saved, though they died many ages before he actually suffered or interceded in our nature, Rom. iii. 25. He was set forth as a propitiation, that which rendered God propitious, through his blood, for the forgiveness of transgressions before. The mercy-seat (which the word signifies) shewed that the Lord was reconciled, through the blood there sprinkled, which signified the blood of Christ presented in his intercession. By virtue of this transgressions were pardoned, and a way opened into heaven for those who believed in the Messiah to come; though he came not, though he died not, though he interceded not, as now, till long after. In respect of the eternal purpose of God, and the undertaking of Christ, correspondent thereto, it was as sure to be, as though it had been already accomplished. And so it was as effectual before, as if it had been actually in being, 2 Tim. i. 9. That which is sure to be done, is said to be done already. He was 'the Lamb slain,' *i. e.* sacrificed, 'from the beginning of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8. The virtue of his sacrifice to be offered, and so of his sacrifice to be presented, was vigorous and efficacious in all ages, from the foundation of the world.

3. As to the continuance of this intercession, it is perpetual. The text is express for this, 'He ever lives,' &c. He intercedes while he lives, and he ever lives; he intercedes always: 1, without intermission; 2, without end. It is represented as the end why he lives, and the end of his life he pursues every moment. The high priest did but solemnly intercede for the people once in [a year]; but Christ appears for his people continually. There is not a moment wherein this act of his priesthood is intermitted. He is always at the right hand of God in our nature; he is always ready to justify our cause against all gainsayers, making a legal appearance for that purpose. He is always presenting his blood; his sacrifice is no moment out of the sight and presence of the divine majesty. He is always representing his will and

desires, that those who come to God by him may be saved to the utmost. His requests are not made known now and then, as ours are to him, but without ceasing; this he does every moment. And,

(2.) Thus he will be doing for ever. His oblation was but one act, his sacrifice was finished at once; but his intercession, the other act of his priesthood, is everlasting; it continues while he lives, who ever lives, Rev. i. 18, Rom. vi. 9, 10. He died once to expiate sin; and he did it perfectly, there was no need to repeat it, Heb. x. 14; but there was need to present this sacrifice to God, and to apply the virtue of it to us. And for this he lives unto God, with God, at his right hand, for ever.

Upon this account, the priesthood of Christ is preferred before the Levitical, Heb. vii. 15, 16. He was not made priest by a law that provides for mortality, and appoints priests in succession; but by the power which raised him to an endless life, and so made him priest for ever. So he is said to be a priest after the order of Melchisedek, of whose beginning and end we have no account; on purpose to signify that Christ's priesthood should have no end. And this the Lord, who cannot repent, confirmed by an oath, Heb. vii. 21, 28.

Now, it is upon the account of his intercession that the priesthood is everlasting; for his oblation is past, and he offered himself once for all, Heb. ix. 25. So that, if he do not intercede for ever, he will not be a priest for ever; unless he can be so, without any act of the priestly office.

Obj. But it may be said, the kingdom of Christ shall cease, and therefore his priesthood and intercession may cease; for one office of Christ is not of longer continuance than another. And that there shall be an end of his kingdom, the apostle seems to declare, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

Ans. The spiritual kingdom of Christ here on earth will cease at the end of the world, for there will be none left for the exercise of his government here. There will be no sinners to conquer, no subjects on earth to rule, no enemies to subdue. But his glorious kingdom in heaven shall not cease; he will have the same regal majesty, glory, and power, at the right hand of God, and may exercise his kingly power, though in a different manner, viz., in keeping those enemies under, whom he had before subdued; and in confirming and establishing his heavenly subjects in their glorious condition, Rev. xi. 15, Luke i. 32.

Accordingly, as to his intercession, there will be some difference therein, at the end of the world, from what there was before; but no total cessation of it. The state of his intercession will be somewhat different from what it is now, because the state of his people will not then be the same, nor will there be the same occasions or necessities. He will not intercede for those that shall believe hereafter, because all will then be gathered and brought to the obedience of faith; nor for pardon of sin, or power against it, because there will be no sin to be pardoned or mortified; nor for increase of holiness, because all his people will be then come to their full growth, to the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ; nor for the acceptance of imperfect services, because then there will be no imperfection; nor for glory to come, because then it will be present.

Yet his intercession will not cease, there will be occasion and necessity for it in other respects. The virtue of it will be needful for the continuance in their state of perfection and happiness, that so hereby he may be the author of eternal salvation to them. For this he will still appear in our nature at the right hand of God, and appear as our advocate, and present his blood, that, by virtue thereof, they may have eternal redemption; for this he will still present his will and desires, and so will intercede for ever.

Use 1. This leads us to admire the loving-kindness of Christ to lost sinners, in that he lives ever to make intercession for them. His affection to his people, his condescension for them, appears herein every way admirable and astonishing. There are four severals held forth in the text, which may render this for ever wonderful in our eyes.

1. That this should be one end of his life. That he should live for us; live, to make intercession for us; live, that this should be an end and design of his life, to free us from misery, to promote our happiness and secure it; that the Son of God, infinitely happy and glorious without us, should make the concerns of men, inconceivably below him, the design of his life; and declare that he lives for this reason, and will live upon this account, to appear on their behalf. If any one, especially a person far above us, should assure us that he makes it one end of his life, and will design it while he lives, to mind our concerns, to promote all that may be for our advantage and happiness, and to appear for this on all occasions; what greater expression of love could be expected? If one far above you, and who had no dependence on you, should declare this, it would seem just cause of wonder. How much more admirable is it, that the Son of God should give us this assurance; that though we are but as worms and grasshoppers in his sight, yet it shall be one end of his life to do us good, and he will employ himself while he lives to promote our interest, and make us happy!

It was a wonderful favour to man that this lower world should be ordered for his good; that all creatures in heaven and earth should be for his use and advantage, Ps. viii. 8, 6, 7, 8. The consideration of this made David cry out with admiration, ver. 4. How much more wonderful is it, that the great and supreme Lord of heaven and earth should declare that he lives for man; that he lives for this end, to appear for our interest and concerns, that it should be any end of his life to intercede for us!

2. That he should live again for us; live more than once, more than one life for us. He had already lived one life for us, and had already lost one life for us; and when a new life was restored to him, he would live that life or us too. As though he had not thought it enough to live one life for us on earth, he lives another for us in heaven. He counts not two lives too much for us. Oh what manner of love was this! The whole world cannot shew anything like; amongst all the children of men, no instance of love can come near it.

For a man to live a whole life for his dearest friend, to make it the business of his life sincerely to promote his true interest, would be an instance of rare love. But to die afterwards to save his life is rarer yet, and would be more wonderful. But if any one could be found that would die for his friend, yet being once dead, there is an end of his love and the expressions of it.

Oh, but Christ after he had lived one life for us; a life of so many years, a life of sorrows and sufferings; and after he had died for us such a death as no man could endure, considering the unsupportable pains and sorrows of it; yet his love survives his death, and being raised to another life, he lives that for us also, he orders that to be a continued expression of his tender care and love for his people. After he had lived for us in this world, and died for us too; he still lives in heaven to intercede for us.

8. That he lives in our nature, and appears for us, not only as God, but as man, as one of us, as nearly allied to us; as our kinsman, Job xix. 25, *ἰ ἀγγιστεὺς μου*, my nearest kinsman; our brother, so called on this account, Heb. ii. 11, 12. It was a wonderful condescension, that he would take our nature, and unite it with the nature of God in one person; for

what is man to him but a worm ? It is more worthy of admiration than if the greatest monarch should take upon him the form, and live in the likeness of a worm. This was greater love and honour than he would shew the angels, Heb. ii. 16. He chose rather to be lower than the angels ; for so in respect of our nature he is said to be, ver. 9. The great God of angels, upon the account of our nature, being made man, was made lower than the angels, though they be but his mere servitors.

How wonderful is it, that at his exaltation he did not cast off this rag, wherewith he was covered in his low condition ; that he would retain that nature of ours, in which he had been so much humbled and debased, even to the form of a servant ! Was it not enough that he lived in it, and died in it for us on earth ; but will he still live in it for us in heaven ; live again in our nature, have it seated at the right hand of God ; and when he is in the height of his glory, then appear in our nature, as one most nearly concerned for us ?

4. That he lives thus evermore, Rev. i. 18. And for what end he evermore lives, he expresses here by the apostle. This second life he lives for us is not like the first, a life of some certain years, but an endless life. He lives not for us a life of some hundreds, or some thousands, or some millions of years, but beyond all account of years, even for ever and ever. It is an everlasting life that he lives for us ; it is one end and design of his life, while it lasts, to appear for us, and it lasts eternally. He ever lives in our nature ; he is never weary, never ashamed of it, how mean and vile soever it be, as it is ours. He cast not off a human body, no, not when he had finished the work for which it was prepared, when he had offered himself a sacrifice ; but presents the sacrifice, *i. e.*, the soul and body that was sacrificed, for ever before God. It is placed at God's right hand, for an everlasting memorial and representation of his bloody death and sacrifice. The blood is not sprinkled once on the mercy-seat, or seven times before it, as under the law ; but that sprinkling which it signified is continued for ever ; the blood of sprinkling, wherewith our high priest entered into the holy place, remains there eternally.

He appears as our advocate, not only in two or three trials, or in this and that special cause ; but in all trials, in all causes wherein we may be concerned, to eternity. He ever appears. He is always ready to quit us, as to every charge ; to clear us as to all accusations for ever, which law or justice, which men or devils, may form against us.

In his appearance and plea for us there lies an eternal challenge against all adversaries whatever. ' Who can lay anything to the charge ? ' &c., Rom. viii. 34.

He prefers not a petition for his people now and then only ; he prays not for them in this or that season, as he did in the days of his flesh ; but he ever intercedes. His intercession has the virtue of a continued, of an everlasting prayer. It is no less in effect, than if he were praying for them without ceasing, and that for ever. He continually, he eternally, presents his will and desires, that they may be saved to the uttermost. He is ever doing all this, he ever lives to do it ; there is no end of his love, no end of these expressions of it. There should be no end of our praises, no end of our admiration, no end of our affectionate resentments of his endless love, in his everlasting intercession.

Use 2. This teaches us to live for Christ. This highly, strongly engages us to it. Shall he live for us again and again, and live eternally for us ; and will not we live once, live a little while for him ? The love of Christ in living ever for us should constrain us to live our whole life for him. But

how ? Why, after his example and method he shews us. His living for us in the text succeeded his dying for us ; he was made a sacrifice before he lived to intercede for us. There is something we must die to, before we can live for him. We must sacrifice our worldly, carnal, and selfish interest ; carnal and earthly designs, and affections, and inclinations, and actings, must be crucified. We must carefully observe and take notice how far they are alive, by their motions and actings, within and without. We must be sensible how pernicious their liveliness is, how dangerous, both in reference to Christ and our souls, making account they are deadly enemies both to him and us.

And then proceed against them accordingly. Make it the design and business of our lives to get them put to death. Further than we are dead to these, we cannot live for Christ ; these must first be made a sacrifice.

And then positively, to live for him is to make it the chief end and constant design of our lives, to please him and be serviceable to him ; to conform in all to his will, and employ all for his honour and interest. To aim at him in all, even in our earthly business ; to consecrate all we are and have unto him ; to lay out our time, strength, parts, enjoyment for him, and not for ourselves ; not for the pleasing, advancing or securing ourselves, but in such ways as he has declared to be ; honourable and well-pleasing to him : this is to live for Christ ; this is it which his living ever for us obliges us to. And none can be assured that Christ ever lives for them, but those who sincerely endeavour thus to live for him.

This is it which the apostle calls importunately for, Rom. xii. 1, 2.

Mercies. All whose mercies do most eminently appear in the death and intercession of Christ, his giving him to die and live for us.

Your bodies, i. e. yourselves. Your whole persons, in the whole course of your lives.

A living sacrifice. We are not to die for sin, Christ only died for the expiation of it. All that is to die in this sacrifice is our carnal and worldly lusts ; the rest must live to God.

Holy. So it will be, when we consecrate all entirely unto God.

Acceptable. This will be more pleasing to him than any legal sacrifices or burnt offerings.

Reasonable service. The spiritual service which the word calls for, and calls for upon the highest and strongest reason. How this may be done, he explains, ver. 2, 'Be not conformed to,' imitate not the men of the world who live for themselves ; but let your life be conformed to the good, &c., will of God. That is the way to live for God, therein it consists. To be living sacrifices, is to live for God. This is reasonable service, upon account of Christ's living for us. And the apostle would have them argue themselves into it by this reason, because Christ died and lives for us, Rom. vi. 9-11. He died for sin to expiate it, and now lives with God to intercede for you. Therefore λογίζεσθε, count it reasonable, make account there is all reason you should die to sin and live for God. There is the strongest, the most cogent reason from Christ's living for you, that you should live for him.

1. Christ is infinitely above us. It is a wonderful condescension that he will live a moment for us ; he humbled himself that he might do it. But it is our greatest honour and advancement to live for him, we cannot live in a more noble and honourable capacity. It is the honour of the glorious angels to live for him ; and if we live not thus, we live like slaves. The greatest persons on earth, who live for themselves, are no better ; slaves to the world, slaves to Satan, the worst tyrant in the world ; slaves to sin, which is worse than the devil, ver. 16 ; a life, a service, that you may be ashamed

of, ver. 20, 21. It is a life of glory to live for Christ. The more perfectly we do it, the more gloriously we live. This is the difference betwixt earth and heaven : here we live for Christ imperfectly, there we shall live perfectly for him ; that is our shame and disgrace, this will be our complete glory.

2. He does this freely. We never in the least obliged him to it ; there was no engagement on him to live for us, but from his own free grace, and the good pleasure of his will. But there are infinite engagements on us to live for him. The mercies of God, which herein appear most conspicuously, engage us to it. The whole life of Christ eternally obliges us, for he lives eternally for us. His life in heaven, his death on earth, his life before that death, all were for us, all engage us to live for him. He calls not on us to live for him, till he has declared that he is living for us, and will do so for ever. He requires it not, till he have obliged us to the uttermost. It is a free favour in him, it is an absolute debt as to us. His love has so bound us, that heaven and earth may cry shame of us if we pay it not.

3. He had no need of us. He was infinitely happy and glorious without us, and might have been so eternally, if he had neither died nor lived for us. What advantage has he by us ? What could he expect from such impotent, inconsiderable creatures as we are, Job xxii. 28, and xxxv. 7, 8 ; Ps. xvi. 2. The Seventy *τῶν ἀγαθῶν μου οὐ χρείαν ἔχουσιν*. 'Thou hast no need of my good things,' but we have infinite need of, and advantage by him, and so are infinitely concerned to live for him. It is our true, our main interest to live for him, and not for ourselves ; indeed, we cannot live so advantageously for ourselves any way, as by living wholly for him, for thereby we shall gain all that comfort, treasure, and happiness which he died to purchase, and which he ever lives to intercede for.

Use 8. Here is great encouragement to faith and hope. Firm ground to believe and expect salvation to the uttermost, for those that come unto God by Christ, *i. e.* to those that repent and believe ; those that abandon sin in heart and life, *i. e.* in sincerity, resolution, and endeavour, and fly unto Christ for refuge, betaking themselves to him, to be ruled and saved by him. Such may have strong consolation from the intercession of Christ, Heb. vi. 18-20. Hope is an anchor fastening upon Christ within the veil, *i. e.* as interceding for us. That is it which is done within the veil ; that is the only act of his priesthood in heaven, and upon that account he is high priest for ever. That which the high priest under the law did within the veil, was interceding. Christ's intercession makes it sure and stedfast ; no waves or storms, from the justice of God, or the malice of Satan, or the weakness of such as cast anchor here, need make them lose anchor's hold, they may ride out all tempests, and be safe for ever, upon the account of Christ's living ever to make intercession.

Christ's intercession gives firm and assured hope of complete salvation ; by virtue of this, whatever is a hindrance to it will be removed, whatever is requisite to begin, carry on, and finish it, will be obtained.

This gives assurance, that all the riches of Christ's purchase shall be actually bestowed upon those that come, &c., for his intercession is the continued representation of his death and sacrifice, for this purpose, that the ends thereof may be accomplished, *i. e.* that believers may be possessed of all the fruits of his obedience and sufferings.

This assures us of all the blessed and comfortable operations and workings of the Spirit in us and for us ; for Christ intercedes, that the Spirit may be sent to supply his absence on earth, and to perform all those acts and offices for us, which are promised, and his titles import ; to be an advocate,

an intercessor in us, a comforter, an enlightening, convincing, persuading, sanctifying, and sealing Spirit.

This gives assurance, that all the great and precious promises, all the articles of the covenant of grace, shall be performed to a tittle. The sum of all we have, Heb. viii. 10-12, all will be performed, because, ver. 6. Christ is mediator, he undertook for the performance, became surety for it, and so appears, ver. 1.

Let me more particularly specify some of those great and comfortable advantages, which flow from the intercession of Christ; in expectation of which it affords great encouragement to our faith and hope.

1. Pardon of sin, Zech. xiii. 1. This fountain was opened in the death of Christ (it denotes the virtue of his blood shed for remission of sins); but it is kept open, and flows out continually, by virtue of his intercession. In reference to that, it is called the blood of sprinkling, the blood of the sacrifice being to be sprinkled upon, and before the mercy-seat by the high priest, when he was to intercede for the people, Heb. xii. 24. The virtue and effect whereof, is to sprinkle his people from an evil conscience, Heb. x. 22, *i. e.* to cleanse the conscience from guilt.

It is not enough to do this once, when we first believe and return to God. For sin being too often repeated, and guilt renewed, the sprinkling must be renewed, there must be fresh and new application of this blood. And we have advantage and encouragement for this from Christ's intercession. For though this blood was but once shed, at Christ's death, yet it is continually presented in his intercession, and so the virtue of it perpetually held forth for the cleansing of guilty souls, and daily sprinkling us from an evil conscience, 1 John ii. 1. The children of God should be careful, above all things, above all persons, that they fall not into sin. Their sins are more heinous than those of others, being the provocations of sons and daughters. But if they be overtaken, though falling into sin should be more dreadful and grievous to them than falling into any calamity, there is gracious provision made upon their repenting and returning. If any man sin, there is an advocate, who pleads for his children. He pleads nothing but what is righteous, and what justice will admit as satisfactory, and pleads satisfaction made for their sin, and that by the sacrifice of himself. So it follows, ver. 2. A propitiatory sacrifice, offered himself for the expiation of sin, made his soul a sin-offering, and so made atonement for us, that so we might find his Father a God of forgiveness.

2. Acceptance of our services; sanctifying of them, that they may be acceptable to a holy God. This is done by virtue of Christ's intercession, and upon the account thereof faith has ground to expect it. Under the law, the priest was to bear the iniquities of the holy things of the children of Israel, that they might be accepted, Exod. xxviii. 38, Num. xviii. 1. This they did by laying those sins upon the sacrifice which was to suffer for them, Lev. x. 17. And to signify the sacrifice was to bear the sin, the priest laid his hand on the head of it, Exod. xxix. 10. Herein the priests were a type of Christ; only he was both priest and sacrifice; he laid not the iniquities of our holy things upon another, but he himself bore our sins in his body, 1 Peter ii. 24. He bore them, so as to carry them away; and so removes what might render them unacceptable.

The high priest, when he was to intercede for the people, is appointed to carry much sweet incense into the most holy place, Lev. xvi. 12, 13. Christ's intercession, in reference to the holy services of his people, is represented by incense, Rev. viii. 3. Christ intercedes, by presenting the merits of his obedience and sufferings; and this is the incense which he offers with the

prayers and services of the saints. Herewith the mercy-seat is covered, and their services (for which they might otherwise die) offered herewith by the hand of their intercessor, become pleasing and acceptable to him who sits upon the throne; by virtue hereof they ascend as the savour of a sweet smell, Philip. iv. 18, 1 Peter ii. 5. Spiritual sacrifices, though accompanied with such failings and weakness as might render them distasteful to an holy God, become acceptable, delightful to him, by virtue of Christ's intercession.

8. Victory over our spiritual enemies, those that oppose Christ's interest, and our salvation. Sin, Satan, his wicked agents in the world, and death itself. The intercession of Christ gives us ground to expect and be confident that these shall all in due time be fully conquered and subdued, Heb. x. 12, 18. Christ our high priest having finished his oblation, his sacrifice on earth, the only act of his priesthood that remains is his intercession; this is here signified by his sitting at the right hand of God. The expression denotes that he is able to bring down these enemies, that he has all power for it, Ps. lxxx. 17, Luke xxii. 69; and that he is willing too. He expects it as that which he deserves. It is the merit of his humiliation and sufferings. This he presents at the right hand of God, and so intercedes for it. Upon this account the Father is engaged to see it done, Ps. cx. 2.

So that how many, how powerful, how prevalent soever the enemies of Christ's interest and our happiness are now in the world, yet faith may certainly conclude from the intercession of Christ, that they shall fall. He will in due time bring them all under his feet, they shall be made his footstool; he will put his feet upon their necks, as Joshua's captains did upon the necks of the kings of Canaan, Josh. x. 24. The intercession of Christ gives us the encouragement which is there given them, ver. 25.

Thus will the Lord do to sin particularly. That is the most dangerous, the most formidable enemy of all other. None of the rest, without this, could hurt you. It wars against your souls, but it wars against Christ too; the war is his, as well as yours; it is his enemy, not yours only. It is his interest, as well as yours, to have it subdued. It is one of those enemies that he appears against at the right hand of God. He is able and willing to have it quite vanquished; he expects till it be done; he intercedes for it as a conquest which cost him his blood. Upon this account the Father undertakes, this with the rest shall be brought under foot. Be but true to the interest of Christ and your souls in opposing it, and maintaining the conflict, and then, as sure as Christ intercedes at God's right hand, so sure will these lusts be subdued and made Christ's footstool; his intercession gives faith assurance of it, Josh. v. 18, 14. Joshua had not greater encouragement, that he should prosper in the war against the Canaanites, by Christ's appearing to him on earth, than we have to prevail against sin by his appearing for us in heaven.

4. For grace and spiritual blessing, for the increase of grace, for the means of grace, the continuance and efficacy. All this he appears for, and his intercession gives great encouragement to our faith to expect them by virtue of it.

For spiritual blessings, Eph. i. 8, *ἐν ἐπουρανίοις*, some render 'in heavenly things,' i. e. blessings which belong to heaven, which come from heaven, and are appointed to lead us to it. But it is better rendered, 'in heavenly places;' for so the word is used both in this chapter, viii. 20, and the next, ver. 6. And so we may read it, 'with spiritual blessings in Christ, who is in heavenly places,' as ver. 20 directs us. We have these blessings through Christ, as he is now in heaven at the right hand of God, interceding for us, i. e. presenting his will and desires that the blessings purchased by his blood

may be actually conferred on us. Hereby faith may conclude that Christ is both able and willing we should be blessed with spiritual blessings. He is willing, because he intercedes for us: he is able, because he intercedes in heavenly places, at the right hand of God.

For increase of grace, John x. 10. What Christ came for to earth, he intercedes for in heaven. For his intercession is in pursuit of the ends of his coming, that they may be effectually accomplished. Now he came, that his people might have spiritual life, and abundance of it; and so he appears in heaven, that they may have it more and more. Therefore in the sense of spiritual wants, weaknesses, and falling short of those degrees of grace you should attain; that strength, growth, liveliness, activeness, you should have arrived at; look up to Christ, as interceding at the right hand of God, and appearing for these ends, that your souls' wants may be supplied, that out of weakness you may be made strong, that of his fulness you may receive, &c, that the smoking flax may flame, and the bruised reed grow strong. He lives to intercede for this, John xiv. 19. If you had no hopes of this, but from the virtue of your own prayers, your hands might be weak. But the power of Christ's intercession is engaged for it; he lives for this end, that you may live, and have life in more abundance.

For the means of grace, Ps. lxxviii. 18. It is spoken in reference to Christ. These gifts he receives as fruits of his intercession. And he receives, that he may give them. So it is in the apostle, Eph. iv. 8, &c. Christ, being ascended to the right hand of God, appears there as a conqueror. And as conquerors were wont, in their triumphs, to bestow largesses, donatives, so he gives gifts. And these gifts are officers for the ministry of the word; and they are to continue, till the mystical body of Christ, all the members, be perfected.

So that, though Satan and his agents design and endeavour to destroy the ministry, and bereave us of the means of grace, yet while Christ has any people in the world to be converted and edified, the ministry shall be continued one way or other. It is as sure as that Christ ascended, and is at God's right hand; for there he intercedes for this purpose.

For the efficacy of the means, John xvii. 17, he prays that the word of truth may be effectual for the working and promoting of holiness. And what he prayed for on earth, he intercedes for in heaven. For his intercession in heaven is conformable to his prayer and intercession on earth. The differences that are between are for the encouragement of faith. He interceded on earth in a state of humiliation; he intercedes in heaven in a glorious condition: his power and interest, at the right hand of God, is in its highest exaltation. He interceded on earth, by virtue of the sacrifice not then offered. He intercedes in heaven, by virtue of his sacrifice already offered. He pleads for the purchase upon account of the price already paid. But as to the things interceded for, they are the same; he presents his will and desires in heaven for that which he prayed for on earth. And here we see he prayed for holiness, the growth and increase of it; for the means, and their efficacy.

Perseverance. The intercession of Christ is a sure ground of this, from whence faith may certainly conclude it. We need go no further for this than the text. He is able to save those who come to him, to the uttermost; and he is willing to save them, for he intercedes for it, and that is a presenting his will and desires for this purpose. Now they cannot be saved unless they persevere in the way to salvation. Therefore, being able and willing to save them, he is able and willing to make them persevere in the way to salvation. And what he is able and willing to have done, shall infallibly be effected.

The apostle from Christ's intercession concludes, that nothing shall sepa-

rate us from the love of God, Rom. viii. 34, 35. While Christ's intercession continues, the love of God to his people will continue; and while his love continues, it will secure them from what is inconsistent with his love. This is it which Christ intercedes for in heaven, for this is it which he prayed for on earth, John xvii. 11.

Joy and comfort. In the day of expiation, after the high priest had been interceding with blood and incense in the most holy place, the jubilee was to be proclaimed, the time of greatest joy to the people, Lev. xxv. 9. The issue and consequence of Christ's intercession is joy, matter of great joy. It is ground of everlasting consolation, 2 Thes. ii. 16. Christ, when he was on earth, promised he would intercede in heaven for the Spirit of consolation, John xiv. 16. He assures his disciples that he will pray the Father to give them his Spirit, as, for other acts and offices, which the word imports, so expressly to be a comforter, and that for ever. Not only for them, but for all his people to the end of the world. He is interceding for this for ever. We have further assurance for this, in that he prayed for it on earth, John xvii. 13.

Glory. Christ's interceding in heaven makes it as sure that they shall be glorified in heaven with him, as though they were already, Eph. ii. 6. He sits in heavenly places interceding; and, upon this account, those that come to him are as sure to be saved to the uttermost, as sure to sit in heavenly places with him, as though they were already with him. He sits there in our nature, as one with us; we are one with him who is in heavenly places; while we look upon him at the right hand of God, we may see ourselves in heavenly places. He sits there as our head; the body is so far in heaven, as the head is there. He is there as our forerunner, Heb. vi. 20. He is there to make way for us, John xiv. 2, 3. He prepares it by interceding, that is his great work for us in heaven. What he intercedes for there, we may understand by what he prayed for on earth, John xvii. 22, 24.

Relief in all weaknesses, infirmities, troubles, sufferings, whatever needs compassion or relief. Heb. iv. 14, 15, Christ our high priest is now passed into the heavens, and the only act of his priesthood in heaven is intercession for us. And he intercedes as one touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He sees all that we suffer by, in soul or body. He sees it all, so as to feel it, to be touched with the feeling of it. He is touched with the feeling of it, as one that has felt the like himself. He feels it effectually, so as to appear for our relief, so as to intercede for the procuring of what we want, securing us from what we fear, easing us of what is grievous, or obtaining for us that which is as good or better.

He accommodates his intercession to all our infirmities, according to the exigencies of them, so as to intercede for supply, ease, deliverance, relief, so far as it is needful, as soon as it is seasonable, whenever it will be good for us.

The intercession of Christ affords support to faith, and comfort to souls compassed about with infirmities, in the worst circumstances that can befall them, in all that may be grievous to them. All grievances whatever are comprised under infirmities, and this gives ground to expect relief, as to everything that is a grievance; especially taking in the ground of it in those words, 'but was in all things tempted,' or exercised like unto us.

Art thou poor? &c. Why, Christ is touched with the feelings of a poor condition, and intercedes as one touched with the feeling of it. It was once his own case. And so in other cases. *Vide* Serm. on Heb. iv. 15.

Answer of our prayers. The intercession of Christ gives great encouragement to come to the throne of grace, and ground to believe that we shall have admission and success, Heb. x. 19-22. The people under the law

were excluded from the holiest, the high priest alone was to enter it with the blood of the sacrifice ; but, by the blood of Jésus, presented in his intercession, all believers have boldness to approach the holiest, and make their addresses there. By him way is made for us, a new and living way, through him who ever lives, in opposition to the old veil, which was an inanimate thing. It is made for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, which, when it was separated from his soul by death on the cross, it is said the veil of the temple was rent, Mat. xxvii. 51. That veil, which excluded priest and people from access to the most holy place, and the sight of the mercy-seat there. This was rent, to signify that now a way was made to the mercy-seat, and nothing left to hinder our access to it ; especially having an high priest, an advocate, an intercessor, there ready to appear for us. By virtue of this we may draw near, not only with faith but full assurance, that we shall obtain our requests, Heb. iv. 14-16. Since we have an high priest, whose office and work it is in heaven to make intercession for us, and who intercedes as touched with the feeling of what we want, or fear, or suffer ; upon this ground we may approach the mercy-seat, we may come to the throne of grace, and come boldly, without fears, or doubts, or jealousies ; without making any question, but that we shall obtain, &c. Faith is hereby assured, that we may obtain whatever will be a mercy to us, and that is all which is desirable. We may have it freely from grace, which gives to those that are most unworthy. We may find grace, which gives without money, without price, which expects no valuable consideration for it at our hands. We need but come to meet with it ; we need but ask to obtain it. We may have it in abundance from the throne of grace, from him who sits on the throne to shew himself gracious ; whose glory it is, to give like himself, the King of kings, to give royally, liberally, magnificently. We may have all this in time of need, whenever we need it, whenever it will be seasonable to have it. We shall not want what is best for us, nor when it is best. All this we have assurance of, because we have such an high priest interceding for us ; upon this account we may come boldly for it, and expect it.

There are many things in Christ's intercession which encourage us to come to the throne of grace, and to be much and often there ; and also give assurance that we shall not come in vain ; that we shall find the mercy we seek, and obtain the grace we desire, even all those great and glorious things already specified which Christ makes intercession for. When we pray for the same things for which Christ intercedes, and consider that while we are praying, Christ at the same time appears at the throne of grace on our behalf for the same things, how can we doubt but they will be granted ? Though we deserve to be denied, Christ our intercessor will meet with no repulse.

That our prayers may be prevalent, this is one condition requisite, that they be made in faith, James i. 6, Mark xi. 24, Mat. xxi. 22. Now, there is no stronger ground in the world for the establishing of faith in prayer than Christ's intercession.

His intercession gives assurance of the success of our prayers upon another account. It is by virtue thereof that we have the Spirit to help us to pray ; and that which proceeds from the assistance of the Spirit will be acceptable and prevail, Zech. xii. 10. It is by virtue of Christ's intercession that this promise is accomplished, John xiv. 16. The word *παράκλητος* signifies not only a comforter, but an advocate ; and the Spirit is promised, and declared to be an advocate for his people, both unto men and unto God, to plead for them or help them, to manage their plea, both with men, Mat. x. 20, and with God, Rom viii.

So that when Christ promises that he will pray the Father to give us an-

other advocate, he promises to intercede for us that we may have another intercessor in us ; and if we take notice how the Spirit acts as an intercessor, how he helps our infirmities, what he is ready to do for us in prayer, it will be a great encouragement to believe that our prayers, through his help, shall succeed.

I have shewed particularly what great things the intercession of Christ gives assurance of. Let me shew upon what ground we may have assurance hereof by his intercession.

1. Christ has power, all power, to effect what he intercedes for ; and this is a great support to faith, and that which we often doubt of, though we do not observe. Can God prepare a table, &c. ? can Christ do all those things for me which I hear he intercedes for ? Yes, assuredly he can ; for his intercession imports no less power than good will. He is at the right hand of God interceding, Rom. viii. 34. That is his work at the right hand, &c. Now, his sitting at the right hand of God is a metaphorical expression ; we must not take it literally ; for God is a spirit, not a body ; he has no right hand nor left. But thereby is signified the fulness of power which Christ our intercessor has in heaven, and so it is frequently used in Scripture. Ps. lxxvii. 10, in opposition to his own infirmity and weakness, he would consider the right hand, *i. e.* the power of God ; so Ps. cxviii. 14-16, he expresses the power of God by the right hand ; and Luke xxii. 69, Christ intercedes at the right hand of power, *i. e.* he has all power to accomplish what he intercedes for. He not only desires these great things for his people, but is able to effect them. He intercedes for the Spirit, John xiv. 16, and he sends the Spirit, John xvi. 7. He receives gifts as the effect of his intercession, Ps. lxxviii. 8. And he gives those gifts, Eph. iv. 8. He does not only ask and receive in behalf of his people, but has power to give. He intercedes that those who come unto God by him may be saved to the uttermost. And he is able to save, &c. He is able to remove all impediments, to conquer all difficulties, to bestow every degree of grace and spiritual strength, which is requisite that they may be saved to the uttermost, to make them conquerors, and more, &c.

2. He has right. He intercedes for nothing but what he has right to obtain, nothing but what is due to him. He sues but for his purchase, that for which he has paid the full value to a righteous God. He has bought his people, 1 Cor. vi. 20 ; he has purchased their persons, Acts xx. 28 ; and so has right to dispose of them as his own, according to the purpose of his grace ; he has purchased the kingdom of heaven for them, Eph. i. 14 he has purchased grace, and the means of grace, faith, holiness, perseverance, and all spiritual blessings ; glory, and holiness the way to it, and all good things on earth. This is the sum of what he intercedes for, and this is no more than what is due to him. His blood was the price of it : the price is paid and accepted, and he appears for the possession ; and his intercession will as certainly prevail for it, as it is certain that God is just and righteous, 2 Thes. i. 6-10.

To us, upon our account, belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face ; we have nothing to plead but free mercy. But that which Christ pleads for on our behalf is due to him, and therefore will assuredly be granted. His intercession, as I shewed before, is grounded upon merit.

3. He has interest, the greatest imaginable, as much interest as is possible. He intercedes, not with a stranger, or a friend, or a common relative, but with his Father, one who loves him as himself, John v. 20, and withholds nothing from him ; he has as much interest in him as in himself, and can prevail as much with him as with himself ; and can no more be denied

by him in what he desires than he can deny himself, for they are both one, John x. 30; they have not only one interest, and one design, but one essence and one will. What Christ wills, the Father wills, and therefore what he desires it is granted, it is done; that which he intercedes for is his Father's will. Christ will have us say to the Father, when we pray, 'Thy will be done,' for it is no other than his own will; and heaven and earth shall pass away, rather than one *iota* or tittle of it shall not be fulfilled.

4. He has affections and compassions for us, and so intercedes affectionately, compassionately, as one greatly concerned for us; and that assures us we shall not miss of the great advantages he intercedes for, Heb. iv. 15. The apostle shews what an high priest we have, how he executes the office of an high priest in heaven for us, *i. e.* how he there intercedes for us; for his intercession is the only part of his priestly office that he performs in heaven; and he does it as one touched, &c. Herein the comparison holds betwixt him and the Levitical high priest, expressed Heb. v. 2 and ii. 14. And as he is high priest and intercessor, both as God and man, so he has for us the affections, not only of God, but of a man; and accordingly intercedes for us, as one that has such love, care, pity, compassions for us, as are in the hearts of the children of men, the weaknesses excepted.

5. He is obliged; invested in an office, he is under the obligation of it: it is his office, as he is mediator, to intercede. His honour is engaged, and depends both upon the execution of his office, and the success of the performance. If he should either neglect it, or be unsuccessful in it, it would reflect ill upon him. It is impossible that either should fall out.

He took not the office upon him of his own accord, without a call, but the Father called him to it, engaged him in it, expects the discharge of it, Heb. v. 4, 5. The Father called him to be an high priest, and so to intercede; he would not have called him to it, but with a design to comply with him in it, and to be prevailed with by his intercession, Isa. xlii. 1. This is spoken of Christ, and applied to him, Mat. xii. 18. He is called his servant, in respect of the office of mediators, a principal act of which is his intercession. Uphold; the Hebrew doctor renders it, whom I lean upon, *i. e.* whom I trust to or rely on, for the performance of the office I have called him to. *My beloved*, one whom I have chosen, beloved and preferred before any other to this great office, and well pleased with him for his undertaking and discharging it.

Now, if intercession be an act of Christ's office, and his honour engaged upon his success therein; if the Father employs him in it, loves him for it, is well pleased with his performance, with his interceding: there can be no question but it will be admirably, eternally successful, John x. 17. He laid down his life to give satisfaction, he took it up again to make intercession. The Father loves him for both, and in both the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.

6. He has a personal, a particular respect for every of his servants in his interceding. It is as comfortable, will be as effectual, and gives as much assurance of success, as if now in heaven he did pray and intercede for every of us by name. If you knew that Christ now in heaven were praying for you by name, you would not doubt of being saved to the uttermost. Why, that which his intercession imports is no less in effect. The high priest under the law carried the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast when he went into the holiest. Christ does not carry the names of the tribes of his people upon his breast only, but every of them in particular is in his mind and heart while he is interceding. There is in heaven a special, a personal regard of all that come unto God by him, as if their names were there recorded,

Luke x. 20, Rev. xxi. 12. Christ remembers them as effectually, as if he presented them by name to his Father in his intercession, Rev. xiii. 8. Their names are written in the Lamb's book, that was slain, that was sacrificed, and he that was sacrificed is the same who intercedes. He knows who are his, 2 Tim. ii. 19, and how; he knows them by name, John x. 3; and as he knows, so he presents, so he intercedes for them. Those who come unto God by him, may have as much assurance of the comfort and advantage of his intercession, as if they heard him in heaven interceding for them by name.

For temporal deliverance. Christ, the great intercessor, is greatly concerned for his people in their outward distresses and calamities. Let me insist a little on this, as being seasonable. Our danger and distress is very great: we are threatened with ruin in all our concerns, and our posterity after us. Our main support in this sinking condition is, that Christ appears for us, and lives to do it. He is concerned for his people when they are in the depths, he has always been so, Gen. xlviii. 16. This angel is Christ, who redeemed him. The word is מֹשֶׁה, the Redeemer, as Christ is called, Job xix. 25, Isa. lix. 20. He redeemed Jacob not only from eternal miseries, but delivered him out of all the troubles and calamities he had met with in the world.

But how does he deliver his people from outward calamities? Why, by his blood, by that presented, by his intercession, Zech. ix. 11. They were delivered out of Egypt, out of the wilderness, out of Babylon, by which the eternal redemption of believers is shadowed out, and confirmed by the blood of the covenant, by this blood presented in his intercession. Upon this account, when our condition seems helpless, as theirs in a pit of water; when we see not either how we can live in our present circumstances, or how we can get out of them; when we are encompassed with dangers and distresses on every side, as if we were in a strong prison, without means, and so without hopes, either to subsist in it, or get out of it: yet by virtue of this blood we may be 'prisoners of hope.' Upon the account of Christ's blood shed and presented, there is hope concerning this thing; even concerning temporal deliverance, when all things seem to look upon us with a hopeless aspect.

Deliverance out of all sorts of troubles seems ascribed to Christ as interceding, Isa. lxiii. 9. Who is this that saved and delivered his people in all their troubles and calamities? to whom so much love is ascribed, so much sympathy, so much compassion, so much tenderness and relief towards his people, in their distresses and dangers, all their days? Why, it is Christ, called 'the Angel of his presence,' Heb. ix. 24. All this was expressed to, all this was done for, his ancient people. Not some, but all the days of old, by the Angel of his presence, by Christ appearing in the presence of God for them; i. e. by Christ interceding for them. And all this may be expected, and will be done for his people now, by the Angel of his presence; in all days of distress and calamity, present or to come, even all their days, because he ever appears in the presence of God, he ever lives to make intercession.

Further, Christ is represented plainly, expressly, actually interceding for his people in reference to their outward distresses and calamities, Zech. i. 12. This angel is Christ, God and man in one person. He is called God, Jehovah, ver. 9, and he is called man, ver. 8, 10. It is Christ, the Son of God, who in the fulness of time became man, who expresses such an affectionate resentment of the sufferings and calamities of his people; who is tenderly sensible both of the weight and continuance of them, and impor-

tunes the Father to turn from his indignation, and shew them mercy in sending relief and deliverance. And his intercession was effectual, and prevails for a gracious return, ver. 18. And this particularly expressed and opened in the following verses. The return was gracious and full of consolations.

Hereby it appears that faith may expect great and comfortable advantages from the intercession of Christ, in reference to outward sufferings and calamities.

1. The turning away of God's anger and indignation. Upon Christ's interposal, the Lord's indignation was diverted from his people, and turned upon their oppressors and persecutors, ver. 14, 15. When the Lord's anger is turned away, the bitterness of any affliction is past. Though the Lord writ bitter things against his people before, yet upon Christ's appearing for them, he speaks good and comfortable words.

2. Faith may expect sympathy and compassions under sufferings, instead of wrath and indignation. Our great High Priest, who intercedes for us, is touched with the sense of our sufferings; and sufferings pass under the name of infirmities in the style of the apostle. He has as effectual a sense of them as if himself felt them. The Angel of his presence, he who appears in the presence of God for us, in all our afflictions he is afflicted. Whatever pressure lies upon us he bears us, and so is apprehensive of the weight of both.

3. Faith may expect that sufferings shall be proportioned to our strength. If our strength be small, sufferings will be, some way or other, made lighter; or if they be heavier, our strength will be proportionably increased. He who intercedes for us, as he is a merciful, so he is a faithful high priest, 1 Cor. x. 18. He will take care that they shall not be too heavy, nor lie too long. When Satan or his agents would sink them, Christ interposes with a *The Lord rebuke thee*, Zech. iii. 1, 2.

4. Faith may expect on this account that we shall be secured from the evil of sufferings; and when the evil is gone, there is nothing in them to be feared; for nothing is reasonably an object of fear, but something that is evil, John xvii. He prays not they may be taken out of the world, nor that they may be kept from troubles and sufferings, but from the evil of them. And what is there else to be desired? We cannot desire to be freed from the good of them, we need not desire to be freed from that which is neither good nor evil in them. All that we need, all that we can in reason desire to be freed from, is the evil; and this Christ prayed for, this he intercedes for.

5. Faith may expect deliverance in due time, when it is best, when most for his honour and interest, and most for our spiritual advantage and comfort. And that is as soon as we can in reason desire it; for before it be good in those respects, it is not desirable. Upon Christ's interceding for his people in their distress, the Lord prepares instruments from all quarters to cut off the horns which pushed, and gored, or dispersed his people. Their power and greatness could not secure them. Horns, in the prophetic style, signify kings or sovereign powers. Upon Christ's appearing for his people, they are cut off, their power is broken, so that the oppressed are no more in danger of their push.

6. Faith may expect, till deliverance come, that which is better than deliverance, *i. e.* an holy and fruitful improvement of suffering; and such an improvement of them is better than freedom from sufferings.