

## SERMON XXV.

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HOW ARE WE COMPLETE IN CHRIST?

*But Christ is all, and in all.*—Colossians iii. 11.

THE great concernment of lost creatures is, above all things, to mind salvation. This is “the one thing needful;” this should be the great *inquiry*; (Luke x. 42; Acts xvi. 30;) and in the neglect of this, all our other endeavours are no better than laborious trifles. The great danger which even *they* are in *who* seriously mind salvation, is, lest they build upon some sandy foundation, seeking heaven in those ways which lead not thither. The great design of Satan is, either to detain poor undome creatures in a total neglect of salvation, or to deceive them in the way and means thereof. It is therefore the great care of the apostle, as in other scriptures, so in this, not only to undeceive the world as to those mistakes which prevailed then, but to point out the right, the proper, the only sure, way of salvation; namely, through Christ, whom he here declares to be so complete a Saviour, that, as we have “none other,” (Acts iv. 12,) so we need none other, because “Christ is all.”

In the former part of the verse, the apostle shows the insufficiency of all things on this side Christ, to commend us unto God, or stand us in stead in the matter of salvation; and this he does by removing four mistakes at that time common:—

1. *The mistake of the Jews*; who prided themselves in a genealogical kind of sanctity, as being the seed of Abraham. This they account so great a matter, that they cannot be persuaded it could go otherwise than well with them. Let the messengers of God tell them their sins, warn them of their dangers; yet they shelter themselves under this privilege, as that which would be a sufficient bulwark against all kind of threats and comminations; and though John the Baptist in his time, (Matt. iii. 9,) our Saviour in his time, (John viii. 39, 44,) and the apostles in theirs, do all concur in taking them off from leaning upon this broken reed; yet will they not be beaten out of these strong-holds. Time was, indeed, when “salvation was of the Jews;” but, that wall of partition being now taken down, and the pale of the church so far enlarged as to take in both Jew and Gentile, (Acts x. 34, 35,) no national privilege can now commend us unto God; nor can a succession of Abraham “according to the flesh” avail us, unless we succeed him in his faith.

2. *The mistake of the circumcised*, whether Jews or proselytes; who, because they had this badge of religion upon them, concluded themselves in a priority for heaven, before all the world besides. But however time

was when circumcision was an ordinance of that necessity, that the Lord threatens to punish the neglect thereof, by cutting off that soul from among his people; (Gen. xvii. 14;) yet was it not the *outward* but *spiritual* part God accounted of. The apostle, in excluding this, excludes all outward religious observations; (Rom. ii. 29;) as Davenant *in loc.*\*

3. *The mistake of the Grecians*; who were at that time the masters of all learning; and all other nations, in contradistinction unto them, were styled Barbarians; and of all Barbarians, the Scythians were esteemed the rudest. But whatever worth and excellency may be in human accomplishments; yet all these, in the business of salvation, are but poor matters. It is neither the having nor wanting of these that can considerably advantage or prejudice us in that high concernment.

4. *The common mistake of the world*; who from their rank and quality in the world are ready to promise themselves a more easy acceptance with God. (1 Cor. i. 26, 27.) But "God is no respecter of persons;" (Acts x. 34;) he looks upon the children of men with another kind of eye than man is used to do. (1 Sam. xvi. 7.) Whether our outward condition be high or mean, there is nothing of privilege or disadvantage from hence, in respect of salvation.

And as, in the former clause of the verse, the apostle shows the insufficiency of all things beside Christ; so in this clause he shows the single sufficiency of Christ alone. Whatever the Jews promised themselves from their stock and lineage, the proselytes from their circumcision, the Grecians from their wisdom and learning, the great ones of the world from their outward pre-eminencies;—all that, yea, and much more, is Christ to believers. "Christ is all."

This single sufficiency of Christ the apostle proves by a double argument:—

1. *The completeness and perfection of Christ as a Saviour.*—"He is all." Take salvation from first to last, in all the several parts of it, he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginner and perfecter, the author and finisher, of all. (Heb. xii. 2.)

2. *The way and means whereby Christ imparts and communicates this salvation.*—It is by being "in all." Some read the words as an amplification of the fulness and completeness of Christ: "Christ is all," and that in all things that concern either our present comfort or eternal happiness.† Others refer these words, "in all," to those divers sorts of persons spoke of in the former part of this verse; to whom, that Christ may be a Saviour, he disdains not to take up his dwelling in their souls, though lying under all the disadvantages which were then accounted prejudicial. And thus the apostle seems to explain himself, Gal. iii. 28; a parallel scripture unto this. And according to this exposition, as the benefit of Christ's sufficiency is extended to all believers by virtue of

\* *Circumcisio erat in Judaicâ religione ritus præcipuus; adhibetur itaque ad designandam observationem omnium rituum legalium.*—DAVENANTIUS. "In the Jewish religion, circumcision was the principal rite; and is therefore used to designate the observance of all the rites of the law of Moses."—EDIT. † *Ἐν πᾶσι ἡ πραγμάτων, ἢ τοῖς τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν συνεκτικαῖς, ἢ ἐν πᾶσι ἡμῶν.*—CŒCUMENIUS *in loc.* "Either in all things, or in those intimately connected with our life, or in all of us."—EDIT.

their union unto him,\* so is it restrained and locked up from all unbelievers.†

The case to be insisted on from this scripture is, *How Christians are complete in Christ.*—For the resolving hereof, take this natural deduction from the words :

## DOCTRINE.

*That Christ is a Christian's all.*

By "Christian," I mean not them who have nothing more to declare them such than only their baptisms and outward professions ; as the church of Sardis. (Rev. iii. 1.) We account them monsters in nature, who have the faces of men, but, in their other limbs, the lineaments and proportions of brute beasts ; and how can we account them better than monsters in Christianity, who have the faces of Christians indeed, but withal the hearts and lives of Pagans ? That "all" which is in Christ, is nothing unto such, except to increase their guilt, and heighten their condemnation. But by the "Christian," I mean him who is *αληθως Ισραηλιτης*, "an Israelite indeed," as Christ speaks concerning Nathanael : (John i. 47 :) one who labours more to be than seem religious ; one whose great care is, that his heart may keep an even pace with his tongue, in all his outward professions. Now to such Christ is "all." In having an interest in him, they have enough for the supply of all wants, for the prevention of all dangers, for the procuring [of] all good ; and therefore, what the apostle speaks here in one word, "Christ is all," he speaks at large, in an enumeration of several weighty particulars : "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) We are *foolish* creatures ; Christ is "wisdom." We are *guilty* ; he is "righteousness." We are *polluted* ; he is "sanctification." We are *lost and undone* ; but in him is "redemption." We are empty of all good ; but he is a full fountain, from whom flow all those blessings which concern either our present comfort or future happiness. We are necessitous and indigent ; "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Yea, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." (Col. ii. 3, 9, 10.) Or as you have it [in] Col. i. 19, *Παν το πληρωμα*, "In him dwells all fulness." The rich merchant

\* *In omnibus, id est, fidelibus hunc in modum sanctificatis, et Christo copulatis.*—DAVENANTICUS in loc. "In all: that is, in all believers, who are thus sanctified, and joined to Christ."—EDIT. † *Quòd lex bona est, nostrum non est ; quòd autem malè vivimus, nostrum est ; et nihil utique prodest quòd lex est bona, si vita et conversatio nostra non est bona. Lex enim bona muneris est Christi ; vita autem non bona criminis nostri ; imò hoc magis culpabiles sumus, si legem bonam colimus, et mali cultores sumus. Quin potius non cultores si mali ; quia cultor dici non potest malus cultor, &c.*—SALVIANUS *De Gubernatione Dei*. lib. iv. "That the law is good, is a result in which we have had no concern ; but that we are wicked in our lives, is a matter in which we are personally concerned. And it will in no respect prove advantageous to us that the law is good, if our life and conversation be not also good. For the goodness of the law appertains to the office of Christ ; but a wicked life has its origin in our own criminality. Nay, we render ourselves the more culpable by our professed attachment to a law which is good, while in our outward observance of it we are manifestly sinful. Indeed, if we be sinners, we are not followers of the law ; because one who really observes the law cannot be called a wicked observer of it."—EDIT.

thought himself no loser by the bargain, in parting with all he had to purchase an interest in Christ. (Matt. xiii. 45, 46.) But when never so much is said, there cannot a greater word be used than what the apostle speaks here: "Christ is all." The Greeks were wont of old to account it an excellency to speak much in few words; to give their auditors *πελαγον πραγματα εν σταλαγματι ρηματων*, "an ocean of matter in a drop of words." Thus does the apostle here give us, as I may speak, gold in the wedge; which I shall endeavour to beat out into the leaf, by showing how much is comprised in this one word, "ALL." The two names by which the most ancient philosophers were wont to speak of God were, that he was, *Το Ον και Το Παν*, "the True Being and the Universal Good;" all the scattered excellencies which are dispersed among several ranks of creatures, meeting in him, as the lines of the circumference in the centre. This does the apostle speak here of Christ: he is "all." Physicians speak of an universal medicine suited to all diseases, and helpful in all maladies; but whether this can be found in nature or not, yet certainly Christ is a *Panacea*; in him we have a plaster for all sores, a remedy against all distempers. There are indeed thousands of cases wherein all other helps are but "miserable comforters," and physicians of no value; but not one case wherein Christ is not a full and proper help. When all that friends can do is only to pity us, he can help us; because "Christ is all."

For the further explaining and confirming of this great truth, three things shall be spoke to:—

I. *Wherein Christ is all.*

II. *How Christ is all.*

III. *What advantage it is to sincere Christians to have their all in Christ.*

I. *Wherein Christ is all.*

In general, he is "all" in all things; for so some of no small account render the following words, "and in all," as hath already been hinted. But, more particularly,

1. *Christ is ALL to sincere Christians, to free them from whatever might hinder their salvation.*—Salvation is not a mere negative thing, nor does it consist in a bare exemption from hell and wrath, but a translation into heaven and glory. But, alas! betwixt us and glory there is *μεγα χασμα*, "a great gulf," many bars and impediments. Aye, but Christ is ALL to deliver us from these; and though our deliverance in this world is not complete or perfect, yet is it so far complete as to render our salvation undoubtful, if we be in the number of them to whom Christ is here said to be "all."

The wrath of an offended God, which, like that flaming sword that kept our apostate parents from returning into Paradise, (out of which, because of their apostasy, they had been ejected,) would render our admission into heaven equally impossible. But Christ, by bearing the wrath of God in his own person, hath taken it off from ours; and therefore he is said to "deliver us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. i. 10.) He who was the Son of God's love, became the subject of his displeasure; as appears by comparing Matt. iii. 17, with Isai. liii. 10; that we, who

were children of wrath, might become the objects of his favour: and, however Christ hath not delivered believers from the anger of God as a Father, yet from the anger of God as a Judge. There is an anger that proceeds from love, as the anger of a parent towards that child whose good he desires; and there is a vindictive anger: *the former*, believers are neither freed from, nor would it indeed be their privilege; (Heb. xii. 6—8, &c. ;) there is not a greater judgment can befall poor sinful creatures here on earth, than for God not to discover himself angry with them for their sins. (Isai. i. 5.)\* God then deals with men as a skilful physician with an unruly patient, whom he gives up as desperate; or as a tender parent with a graceless child, whom he utterly rejects. In a word, whatever kind of anger might tend to the prejudice of believers, THAT they are delivered from; but what is for their advantage, THAT they are subject to. That "Christ is all" in delivering from the wrath of God, may further be evidenced by these considerations:—

(1.) *The adequate [cause] of God's wrath is sin.*—There is this difference betwixt wrath and mercy in God: that mercy flows, as I may so speak, naturally from God, and hath no other motive but only the gracious and merciful disposition of God. But wrath hath always its rise from us; and nothing in us but sin can draw down his wrath upon us. Our meanness cannot, our afflictions cannot: these may sometimes be *the effects* of God's wrath, but never *the causes*. No, it is "because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." (Eph. v. 6.) *Because of these things*, that is, because of these sins, as appears from the verses foregoing. What is it that hath filled every age and place of the world with so many dreadful tokens of God's displeasure, but only sin? What was it that cast the angels out of heaven, and degraded them from their first station, but only sin? What was it that drove our first parents out of Paradise, and subjected them, and all their posterity, to so many miseries, but only sin? What was it that brought destruction upon the old world, upon Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zebaim? What was it that broke off the natural branches, and hath for so many hundreds of years continued them under a divorce from God, but only sin? In a word, look over all those miseries under which the whole creation groans; (Rom. viii. 22;) and though those miseries in several creatures are divers, yet do they all proceed from the same fountain, namely, sin.

(2.) *Christ is ALL, in making expiation for sin.*—He is that "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John i. 29.) He is our *ιλασμος* and *ιλαστηριον*.† (1 John ii. 2; Rom. iii. 25.) It was not "thousands of rams," nor "ten thousands of rivers of oil," could have borne any proportion in point of satisfaction for our sins. It was not all the legal sacrifices of old could do any thing, nor can all our duties now; but Christ is ALL in expiating for sin. (Heb. x. 5—7, 14.) And such is the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, that he hath not only freed

\* *Magna ira est quando peccantibus non irascitur Deus.*—HIERONYMUS. "Great indeed is that wrath which God is treasuring up, while he manifests no tokens of his displeasure against sinners."—EDIT. † "A propitiation, atonement, or expiation for us."—EDIT.

such as are united unto him from condemnation, but purchased for them the adoption of children. (Rom. viii. 1, 14—16.) And thus Christ is ALL in removing this bar, and opening this door to salvation, which, had it not been for his mediation, would for ever have remained shut against all the children of men. The pollution and prevalency of corruption, how great an impediment this is to salvation and happiness, was typified by the lepers and unclean persons of old, who were not admitted within the camp. (Lev. xiii. 46.) Heaven is no common receptacle for all persons, as Noah's ark was for all sorts of creatures. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor. vi. 9.) *Know ye not?* If you know any thing in religion, you cannot but know thus much. In the church of God on earth, there is a mixture of corn with chaff, of wheat with tares, of good fish with bad, of sheep with goats; but there shall be a separation of the precious from the vile, and God will come with his "fan in his hand, and throughly purge his floor." (Luke iii. 17.) Do but consider, and pause a while upon that mischief which sin hath done poor creatures by its pollution. How hath it stained their glory, cast them down from their excellency, turned angels into devils, and debased man, who was once almost the top of the whole creation, in whom all the scattered excellencies in the book of nature were bound up together in one volume, and met together in a blessed union! How unlike hath sin made us to what God at first made us! Those souls of ours, which were once as so many pure beams of light, —how is the beauty of them now blotted and darkened! But Christ is that "Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;" (Zech. xiii. 1;) in his blood is virtue enough to fetch out "scarlet" spots, and "crimson" stains; (Isai. i. 18;) and if any of the children of men perish in their pollutions, it is not because he wants sufficiency, but because they want faith. (John iii. 16.) Christ is "all" in the business of cleansing and purifying. But, alas! beside the pollution of sin, there is the prevalency of it. This was to St. Paul so great an affliction, that he who could bear the greatest of outward afflictions patiently, (2 Cor. xi. 23, &c.,) cannot but express something of an holy impatience under this burden; (Rom. vii. 24;) he that could triumph over principalities, powers, life, death, &c., (Rom. viii. 38, 39,) is yet more than a little discouraged when he reflects upon the corruptions [which] he found lodging in his own heart. Corruption is the great tyrant that hath usurped over the whole world; the bounds of its dominion are almost as large as all mankind: there is not a man in all the world, (except the first man Adam, made after God's image, and the Second Adam, who was God as well as man,) but he is born a slave, a vassal to this usurper. The four great successive monarchies, Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, Roman, though the extent of them were great, and the circumference vast, yet were all these limited and bounded: some parts of the world there were which knew nothing of their yoke. But, alas! the empire of corruption reaches every corner of the earth, every person born into the world. We may therefore not unfitly compare it to Nebuchadnezzar's tree, the top whereof reaches heaven, from thence it threw the angels, and the boughs thereof spreading themselves to the ends of the earth; (Dan. iv. 11;)

yea, this vassalage unto corruption, as it is the largest and universalest, so also the miserablest and most dreadful. All other slaveries compared with this, are but like Rehoboam's government compared to his father Solomon's, the least finger of whose dominion, he threatens, should be heavier than his father's loins. (1 Kings xii. 10.) We read in Scripture of an Egyptian slavery; in history, of the Spartan slavery, and of the Turkish: all these sad and lamentable; but yet all these reached but the body, and that for a time only; whereas the slavery of corruption reaches the soul, and that for ever, unless Christ become our "Jesus" in saving us from our sins. (Matt. i. 21.) He hath purchased our freedom, and that with a great sum; as the centurion speaks of his Roman freedom. (Acts xxii. 28.) There are none [who] can say with St. Paul, they are born free, except they who are born again, and they are free indeed. (John viii. 36.) Christ is "all" in removing this impediment also, in setting our poor captive souls at liberty from the bonds and fetters of our corruption. (Rom. vi. 6, &c.; vii. 25.) It is he alone can conquer these great Goliaths, these untamed affections. But yet even this deliverance is also incomplete in this world; he delivers his people from corruption as to the reign and dominion of it, though not as to the presence and disturbance of it: *ut non regnet, sed nondum ut non sit.*\*

(3.) *The oppositions of Satan, his wiles and subtilties.*—These are another impediment, and that no small one neither: for if [in] our first parents, in whom there was nothing of ignorance, but a sufficiency of knowledge, there was indeed a nescience of many things, so is there also in the angels; (Matt. xxiv. 36;) but yet their knowledge was both full and clear in things necessary and pertinent. (Col. iii. 10.) This was no small advantage against the methods of Satan; because his usual way of mischieving poor creatures hath not been so much by force as fraud; not as a lion, but as a serpent; not so much by conquering, as cheating; acting all his enmity under a pretence of friendship, and tempting us to no evil, but under the pretence of some good. The advantage of our first parents was, in this respect, great in respect of their knowledge. Besides, in them was nothing of weakness, but a sufficiency of strength; in them was nothing of corruption, but an universal rectitude and uprightness. The ways by which Satan ordinarily prevails is, either by our ignorance or by our weakness, or else by making a party within us against ourselves. The advantages of our first parents were, in all these respects, far greater than any have against Satan now; yet Satan prevailed against them. What cause, therefore, have we to fear! (2 Cor. xi. 3.) But "Christ is all" to free us from these dangers, to carry us through these oppositions, who hath "led captivity captive," (Eph. iv. 8,) who hath "spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them." (Col. ii. 15.) But yet, even this deliverance is at present incomplete; for, though Christ hath delivered believers from Satan as a *destroyer*, yet not from Satan as a *tempter*: he may disquiet such, but he cannot ruin them.

(4.) *The disturbances and interruptions of a profane world, its allurements, discouragements, promises, threats, smiles, frowns.*—Our difficulties

\* "That it may not reign; but not yet that it shall not exist."—EDIT.

and dangers from hence cannot be little, since the people of God in all ages have found them so great. The great advantage which all these outward things have against us, is their suitableness to our senses; for though believers are said to "live by faith," (Heb. x. 38,) yet the best of men have had something to witness they were but men of "like passions," *ὁμοιοπαθῆς*, as it was said of Elias; (James v. 17;) but "Christ is all" to free us from these dangers: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John xvi. 33.) He hath overcome it *for us*, and in some measure *in us*.

2. *Christ is ALL, to fill the souls of believers with all that good which may capacitate and qualify them for happiness.*—It is the decree of heaven, that none be admitted into glory but those on whom God hath wrought the truth of grace. Heaven must first be brought down into our souls, before our souls are capable of ascending up thither: we must first be "made meet," before we can partake of that "inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12; Eph. v. 5.) We are by nature unmeet, because we are carnal and earthly; and should God dispense with his own decree, and open so wide a door unto heaven and happiness as to let-in carnal and sensual persons, heaven would be no heaven unto such; carnal hearts can never relish the sweetness of spiritual enjoyments. (Rom. viii. 6, 7.) Philosophers observe, that all delight arises from a suitableness betwixt the person and the object. What is the reason of that diversity of delights which is among the children of men? That which is one man's joy is another man's grief; and that which is one man's pleasure is another man's pain! The only reason is, because of the diversity of tempers and dispositions. Some there be of such a brutish and swinish temper, that nothing is so pleasing unto them as wallowing in the mire of their sensualities; others, again, of so refined a temper, that they esteem these sensual pleasures very low, and much beneath them. But still every man's delight is according to his temper and disposition; and therefore heaven would be so far from being a heaven unto such, that it would be a kind of hell to them; for as delight arises from an harmony betwixt the person and the object, so all kind of torment, from an unsuitableness and contrariety. Hence is it, that although God vouchsafes us something of heaven here on earth, namely, in his ordinances, yet to unheavenly hearts, every thing of this nature is a *tædium*, "a burden." "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" &c. (Amos viii. 5.) Ælian reports of one Nicostratus, who, being a skilful artificer, and finding a curious piece of art, was so much taken therewith, that a spectator, beholding him so intent in viewing the workmanship, asked him what pleasure he could take in gazing so long upon such an object; he answers, "Hadst thou my eyes, thou wouldest be as much ravished as I am." So may we say of carnal persons: had they the hearts and dispositions of believers, they would be as much delighted with all means of communion with God as *they are*, and account *that* their privilege *which* now they esteem their vexation. The Greeks tell us, that *καλον*, "good," is derived *απο του καλειν*, "from calling," because all good is of an attractive and magnetic nature, to



draw forth and call our affections after it. But yet it is not the intrinsic excellency of any object that renders it taking with us ; but our affections are accordingly exercised upon all kinds of objects, as representations are of those objects from the understanding ; for it is the understanding which sits at the stern of the soul, that is the *primum mobile*, “the master-wheel,” that puts the affections, as so many lesser wheels, upon motion : therefore, unless our judgments be both enlightened and sanctified, we can never “approve the things that are excellent.” Naturalists observe, that, though the loadstone hath an attractive virtue to draw iron to it, yet it cannot exercise that virtue upon iron that is rusty. Ignorance is the rust of the soul, that blunts the edge of our affections to whatsoever is spiritually good. There must be, therefore, some kind of suitableness and harmony betwixt our souls and heavenly mercies, before we are capable of tasting the sweetness of them. Now, “Christ is all” to believers in this respect also : it is from “his fulness they receive, and grace for grace.” (John i. 16.) That we have any thing of grace, it is from him ; and that we have such a degree or measure of grace, it is from him : “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John x. 10.) The essence and the abundance are both from him. All those miracles which Christ wrought in the days of his flesh upon the bodies of poor creatures, in restoring sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, life to the dead,—all these does Christ work over again upon the souls of them whom he prepares for heaven. (Eph. v. 8 ; ii. 5, 10.)

3. *Christ is ALL, to fill all ordinances with power and efficacy.*—These are the means of salvation ; and, through his concurrence, effectual means. As they are his institutions, we are under an obligation of using them ; and as they have the promise of his presence, we are warranted in our expectations of benefit from them. (Matt. xxviii. 20 ; xviii. 20.) But yet ordinances are but empty pipes, but dry breasts, unless Christ be pleased to fill them, who “fillet all in all.” (Eph. i. 23.) That there should be such a might and efficacy in things so weak, such miraculous and strange effects by means so inconsiderable ; that the foolishness of preaching should be powerful to salvation ; it is because it is not man, but God, that speaks : “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God : and they that hear shall live.” (John v. 25.) Look upon ordinances in themselves, and so they are *τα μη οντα*, “things which are not ;” but as they are accompanied with the power of Christ, so they “bring to nought things that are.” (1 Cor. i. 28.) It is he who in baptism baptizes “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” (Matt. iii. 11.) It is he, in preaching the word, [who] speaks not only to the ear, but to the heart : “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures ?” (Luke xxiv. 32.) In a word, “Christ is ALL” in every ordinance, in respect of efficacy : while the disciples fished alone, “they caught nothing ;” but when Christ is with them, the draught of fishes is so great they are scarce “able to draw it.” (John xxi. 3, 6.)

4. *Christ is ALL, to fill every condition with comfort.*—“The best of

conditions is not good without him, nor is the worst bad with him." \* Alexander accounted himself to live so many days as he obtained victories; but David accounts himself to live more in one day's communion with God, than in a thousand days' enjoyment of all earthly comforts; (Psalm lxxxiv. 10;) yea, in the midst of all his earthly confluences, he looks upon all as nothing in comparison of communion with God: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." † (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) Though he had a kingdom, he values not that. And well might David be of this mind; for, could we add kingdom to kingdom, and world to world, yet all these, in comparison of the least smile or love-token from God, are no better than nothing; for, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life." (Psalm lxxiii. 3.) The ancient philosophers distinguished betwixt *bona kata φυσιν*, and *bona kata τιμην*, "Some things good in their own nature:" thus only God: "There is none good but one, that is, God:" (Matt. xix. 17:) "Others good by way of opinion or estimation;" and thus all the comforts of this life: whence that maxim of the Stoics: Βίος ὑποληψίς, "Life is but opinion and fancy;" and whatever good is in these things is but like those pictures of most deformed and monstrous creatures, which, the poet tells us, had no other beauty than what they owed to the painter's courtesy, namely, the offspring of our own fancies: those who were virtuous were only, by the philosophers, accounted to live; others might *degere*, but not *vivere*; they might "be," but they could not "live." The only true comfort of life consists in living in communion with God. It is his presence [which] fills heaven with all its glory, and it is his presence that fills every condition with all its sweetness. But, alas! how "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) And what agreement can there be betwixt light and darkness, the glorious Majesty of heaven and sinful dust, but only through a Mediator? And the only Mediator is Jesus Christ. (1 Tim. ii. 5.) What was it that enabled the blessed martyrs to account the scorching flames to be beds of roses? What was it that enabled St. Paul to triumph over all kind of adversaries, but only the "love of God in Christ Jesus?" (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) Herein alone consists our comfort, our happiness. Now "Christ is ALL" in this respect also.

5. *Christ is ALL, in furnishing us with strength and assistance to persevere.*—The way to heaven is no smooth or easy way, but beset with many difficulties: Τεθλιμμενη ἡ ὁδος ‡ (Matt. vii. 14;) and "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 22.) Yea, though the calmness of our passage through this world should be in a perfect serenity from all outward enemies, yet can we not expect a total freedom from the worst of enemies,—our own hearts, our corruptions. All the prejudices and mischiefs we either do or can suffer from others, are nothing to what we suffer from ourselves: it is not, *Homo homini lupus*, but, *Homo sibi lupus*, "Men are to none such

\* *Ubi bene sine te, aut ubi male cum te.*—BERNARDUS. † *Non dicit, Nihil habeo, sed, Nihil concupisco.*—MUSCULUS *in loc.* "David does not say, 'There is none upon earth that I have beside thee, but, 'There is none that I desire,' &c."—EDIT. ‡ "Confined and difficult is the way."—EDIT.

wolves as to their own souls." Now, inasmuch as the crown of happiness is reserved for the head of perseverance; (Rev. ii. 10;) and inasmuch as perseverance in conflicting with such kind of adversaries, (as, though we conquer them yet they are in us, and though we vanquish them yet still we carry them about us,) must needs require a greater strength than our own; (Rom. vii. 24;) it cannot but be esteemed an eminent privilege to be under the continual supplies of Christ by his Spirit, that after we have put our hand to God's plough, we may not look back, (Luke ix. 62,) and after we have "begun in the Spirit," we may not end "in the flesh." (Gal. iii. 3.) I speak not this as doubting the perseverance of them who are sincere, but as declaring the true foundation on which their perseverance is bottomed, namely, not any inherent strength [which] they have in themselves, but those supplies of grace and strength [which] they continually derive from Christ. There is a vast difference betwixt the best of Christians, considered singly in themselves, and considered relatively in respect of their union unto Christ: in themselves, so weak and impotent that they "can do nothing,"\* (John xv. 5,) "not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves," (2 Cor. iii. 5,) and yet what can be less than to think? but in Christ mighty and powerful, able to do and bear whatever God would have them: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.) And thus is Christ the Christian's "all;" thus are they "complete in him." (Col. ii. 10.)

## II. *How Christ is all?*

The resolution of this query is therefore necessary, because many there are who, instead of sucking milk from this doctrine, are ready to suck poison; but, for prevention of all dangerous and unsafe inferences from this great truth, consider,

1. *Negatively*, how Christ is not all.—Not so as to excuse us from all endeavours in the use of means for working out our own salvation. Christ's sufficiency does not excuse but engage our industry; for thus the apostle argues: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do." (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) As if he had said, "It is God [who] does all; therefore do you what you can."

2. *Positively or affirmatively*, and that in these two respects especially:—

(1.) *Christ is ALL by way of impetration*:—Inasmuch as our salvation was his purchase. We may say of our hopes, our helps, our advantages, as the chief priest said of the moneys which Judas had received for the hire of his perfidiousness: "It is the price of blood." (Matt. xxvii. 6.) Whence is it that they who have brought themselves under the deserts of hell, may have hopes of heaven, enjoy the means of heaven, taste the first-fruits of heaven? All are the price of Christ's blood. (Eph. v. 25—27; Acts xx. 28; John xv. 13.) It was by his own blood that he entered into heaven himself, and hath opened the door

\* *Non dicit, Parum potestis facere; vel, Difficuller potestis facere; vel, Nihil potestis perficere; sed, Nihil facere.*—AUGUSTINUS in loc. "The Lord says not, 'Without me ye cannot do much;' neither, 'Ye will find great difficulty in doing any thing;' nor, 'Ye cannot perfect any thing;' but He declares, 'Without me ye can do nothing.'"—EDIT.

to heaven for all that are incorporated into him. (Heb. ix. 12; x. 19, 20.)

(2.) *Christ is ALL by way of application*:—Inasmuch as he brings home the blessings he hath purchased unto the souls of his. He hath not only purchased salvation for *them*, but them for *it*; not only the possibility of heaven, but a real propriety [proprietorship] in it; and certainly propriety is absolutely necessary unto the refreshment of every comfort. “What are all the treasures of either or both the Indies, to him who only hears of them?” But mere stories. “What all the glories of heaven, to him who is thrust from the enjoyment of them?” But mere torments. There must be a propriety in all spiritual blessings before they can be refreshing; and this alone from Christ. “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.” (John x. 28.) “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John xiv. 2, 3.) And what is clearly asserted in these scriptures, is strongly intimated in those emblems by which Christ is described. What the root is to the tree, the vine to the branches, the head to the body, all this is Christ to believers; (Col. ii. 7; John xv. 1, 5; Eph. i. 22, 23;) namely, not only a treasury of all good, but a fountain continually streaming down all kind of spiritual blessings into their souls; and though faith be both the eye that discerns, and the hand that receives, all from Christ’s fulness, yet it is he that by his Spirit works this grace in us. Faith is our *act*, but it is his *gift*: it is we that believe, but it is Christ [that] enables us to believe; so that both in purchasing and applying salvation “Christ is all.” (Gal. v. 22; Eph. ii. 8; Phil. i. 29.)

III. *What advantage is it to believers to have their ALL in Christ?*

1. *Because our salvation could have been in no hand so safe, so sure, as in the hand of Christ.*—Had it been in our hand by any inherent righteousness, our sad experience [which] we have had of our own unfaithfulness, in sinning away that happiness wherein we were created, may cause us for ever to be jealous of ourselves; but to have it in the hand of Him who is mighty to save, even to the utmost, who is so faithful that in all our distresses he is touched with our infirmities; we cannot be so sensible of our own miseries, but Christ is much more; (Psalm lxxxix. 19; Isai. lxiii. 1; Heb. iv. 15; vii. 25;) and hence it is that as we have no other Saviour beside him, so is it impossible we should have any like unto him. (Acts iv. 12.)

2. *Because our salvation could have been in no way so comfortable.*—Because as God hath *the glory* of every attribute, so have Christians *the comfort* of every attribute in this way of salvation; for as God hath the glory of his justice from them (in their Head and Surety) to whom in this way he shows mercy, “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” (Psalm lxxxv. 10.) Justice itself, that dreadful attribute to guilty creatures, is in this way of salvation so far from being their enemy, that it becomes their friend, and speaks nothing but what is to their encouragement. And hence it is that sincere believers have, from the very justice of God, answered all

manner of discouragements arising from their sins. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died;" (Rom. viii. 34;) that is, Since God hath already received satisfaction from Christ, he cannot in justice require it from the members of Christ, but is just in the "justifying him that believeth in Jesus;" (Rom. iii. 26;) and "if we confess" and forsake "our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 9.) Thus hath the justice of God been their great support in the time of their outward dangers also: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." (Psalm lxxxix. 14.) In a word, this way of salvation (which was the contrivance of infinite wisdom, and is in itself so mysterious that the angels delight to look into it) does so fully correspond with the condition of poor, weak, sinful, mutable creatures, that it lays a double obligation of praise upon us, that salvation is possible, and that the way of salvation is so complete and full.

The doctrinal part of this observation being thus cleared, one word by way of application.

#### USES.

**USE I.** *If Christ be ALL, then is there no ground of despondency either from your own defectiveness, or the defectiveness of all creature-helps.*—Your duties are defective; your endeavours defective; your very righteousness unsafe to confide in. (Phil. iii. 9.) But though you have nothing in yourselves, yet if you have an interest in Christ, you need nothing more, because in Christ you have ALL.

1. *You have the sum of all.*—Though you have not estates, friends, worldly comforts; yet in Christ you have what does more than make up the want of all these. We may be as impatiently desirous of this and that earthly comfort, as Rachel was of children, whom we find quarrelling with Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." (Gen. xxx. 1.) But what Elkanah said to Hannah in the like condition, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" (1 Sam. i. 8;) the same we may say much more to persons interested in Christ: "Is not Christ better to you than all?" The absence of the cistern may well be dispensed with by him who lives at the fountain; and the light of a candle, by him who enjoys the sun. All those seeming contradictions, which so frequently occur in scripture, can no other ways be reconciled but by the acknowledgment of this. For example: "A father of the fatherless:" (Psalm lxxviii. 5;) how can they be fatherless who have a father? Thus we read of them who were rich in the midst of poverty, (James ii. 5,) who, "having nothing, possessed all things;" joyful in the midst of sorrows; (2 Cor. vi. 10;) that is, though they had not these comforts, yet they had an interest in Him who is infinitely more and better than all those comforts. Nay, as to inherent righteousness, though you cannot attain a perfection, yet in Christ is perfection. He is ALL.

2. *You have in him the pledge of all.*—According to the apostle's argumentation, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) The inference is strong. Had there been any one mercy that God had thought too great, too much for worthless crea-

tures, it would certainly have been this; but since God hath not stuck at giving his Son, this instance of God's bounty is so high that it removes all grounds of questioning his bounty in any thing else. The apostle from this mercy might very well infer a certain subsequence of all other mercies, that might be profitable or beneficial. No ground of despondency, therefore, unto such as are interested in Christ.

USE II. *What cause have we to be thankful for Christ!*—We have cause to be thankful for the meanest of mercies, inasmuch as we are less than the least of all; (Gen. xxxii. 10;) much more for this which is the highest of mercies. The mercies of our creation, preservation, &c., though never so many and great, are little in comparison of this. It is mentioned as an astonishing act of love, that God should “so love the world, as to give his only Son,” &c.; (John iii. 16;) so beyond all comparison, so beyond all expression. If God hath given you his Son, it is more than if he had given you a whole world; because it is in him that God hath “blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.” (Eph. i. 3.)

USE III. *How great is their folly and misery who keep at a distance from Christ!*—Our Saviour mentions it as the highest folly in the Jews, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” (John v. 40.) There is in Christ the life of justification, to free us from that eternal death to which the law sentences us; the life of sanctification, to free us from that spiritual death under which our apostasy hath brought us. There is in him an all-sufficient fulness, for the repairing of all our losses. And are these mercies not worthy the coming for? The apostle puts the very emphasis of the Heathens' misery in this, that they are “without Christ,” and therefore without hope. (Eph. ii. 12.) And what is *their misery* shall any of us make *our choice*?

#### USES OF EXHORTATION.

USE I. *Let it be your care that Christ may be ALL to you.*—It is no small, nor is it any common, privilege. Many there are who live “without Christ;” (Eph. ii. 12;) others, to whom all that is in Christ is so far from being to their salvation, that it only aggravates their destruction. He that is to some the “chief corner-stone,” is to others no better than “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.” (1 Peter ii. 6, 8.) This was prophesied of Christ: “This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” (Luke ii. 34.) There is no mercy so eminently good, but through our corruptions it may become an occasion of evil. Christ himself, the greatest of mercies that ever God vouchsafed to creatures, is yet so far from saving some from their sins, that he only increases their sin. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.” (John xv. 22.) Those who enjoyed the ministry of Christ in his own person, and were not wrought upon thereby, all their sins would comparatively have been a kind of innocence, had they not discovered such an height of obstinacy. It is therefore no common privilege. “But what should we do that it may be ours?” Take these few directions:—

1. *Labour to get your judgments settled in the belief of this great truth, that all things in the world are a very nothing without Christ.*—

That you are poor in the midst of worldly riches, and miserable in the midst of all earthly happiness, while you remain in your estrangements from Christ; and that, of all kind of poverty and misery, this is the worst, because it is in those spiritual blessings wherein consists both our present and future happiness. It is but little those persons understand of their great concernments, that can, with that Gospel "fool," think themselves sufficiently provided for in the things of this world, and say to their souls, as he to his, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." (Luke xii. 19.) Dost thou know thou livest in this world upon the very brink of eternity? And dost thou know whether there be more than "one step between" thee and another world? (1 Sam. xx. 3.) And canst thou take up with any thing on this side Christ? It is an argument [that] you know but little of your own concernments. Some of the grosser Platonists thought the world to be a great animal, and the soul which acted it was God. Now, if the soul be departed from the body, what is it but a mere carcass without life? Christ is the very life and soul of all our comforts; and without him all our creature-enjoyments are but as so many ciphers without a figure, which have no significancy in them, but are so many nothings; nothing in respect of true comfort here, nothing in respect of your preparations for another world. Labour, therefore, through the glass both of scripture and experience, to behold all the excellences of this world as so many bladders filled with wind, and, at best, to be like Hagar's bottle, which was soon empty, (Gen. xxi. 15,) or as broken cisterns. *Cisterns*, and therefore cannot hold much; *broken cisterns*, and therefore cannot hold what they have long. (Jer. ii. 13.) And withal, let it be your wisdom to look upon Christ as that everlasting Fountain of all good which can never be drawn dry; as that never-failing Spring of all those blessings which will not only sweeten every condition here, but go with us beyond death and the grave. Such fixed apprehensions of these things will be singularly useful to engage our souls in an earnest pursuit after Christ; or, in the Psalmist's words, to "follow hard after him;" (Psalm lxiii. 8;) and it is his promise, that they that come to him, he will in no wise cast out. (John vi. 37.)

2. *Be speedy in casting out those inmates which, because they are unmeet companions for Christ, may hinder his taking possession of your souls.*—The ark and Dagon could not stand together in the same room; but if the ark stands, Dagon falls. (1 Sam. v. 4.) "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) Christ and our corruptions are at no agreement: these two cannot dwell together under the same roof. If you would have Christ to take up his abode in your hearts, you must prepare a place for him. It was said of David, "He would neither give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, till he had found out an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (Psalm cxxiii. 4, 5.) The souls of most men are so crowded with other guests, that the best entertainment they can afford Christ is but such as he found in his first entrance into the world,—an out-room, a stable, a manger. But let it be your care to renounce communion with all things that might hinder your communion with him, to "forget thine own people, and thy Father's

house ; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty ;" (Psalm xlv. 10, 11 ;) *so*, not otherwise ; he will have no rivals, no competitors ; not a part of our heart, but all.

3. *Be willing to accept of Christ upon his own terms.*—There can be no terms hard on which we may gain an interest in him. The great and main condition is self-denial, together with a full resignation of ourselves to him ; (Matt. xvi. 24 ;) and self-denial, if duly considered, is the greatest self-advantage. (1.) Because he calls us not to deny ourselves in any thing that is truly for our spiritual good, or at least so far as it is for our good. (2.) Though he calls us to deny ourselves in many outward good things, yet it is not so much to part with them, as to exchange them for what is better. (3.) The main objects of self-denial are those things which it is our privilege to be freed from ; no reason, therefore, to be offended at such terms as these, to resign up our mistaken judgments to the guidance of Infinite Wisdom, our corrupt wills to his most holy and gracious will, to be in all things at the command of Him whose commands are in nothing grievous, but in all things truth and righteousness. (1 John v. 3 ; Psalm cxix. 151, 172.) Be therefore as willing to be his, as you are desirous he should be yours : the consent must be mutual, or else the match can never be made up betwixt Christ and your souls.

4. *Measure all things by their reference unto Christ.*—Of all good things, account them the best which may promote your endeavours after that good which is the highest ; as ordinances, the means of grace, which at how high a rate they are valued by David, may appear from his pathetic and most affectionate desires of waiting upon God in them. (Psalm xxvii. 4 ; xlii. 1, 2 ; lxiii. 1, 2.) Of all evil things, account them the worst which estrange you from Christ, the truest good ; and therefore let your only impatience be of sin, as that which only "separates between you and your God." (Isai. lix. 2.) The observation of this rule will very much secure you from all diversions, and quicken you in your endeavours after an interest in Christ.

USE II. *Be serious in resolving this great question,—whether Christ, who is ALL to sincere Christians, be ALL to you.*—It is a question of that importance, that all your comfort depends upon the resolution of it, yea, all your hopes. Take these two characters :—

1. *Are you conformable unto Christ.*—Is the same mind in you that was in him ? (Rom. viii. 9 ; Phil. ii. 5.) Are you holy, and humble, and self-denying, and in all things followers of that pattern which he hath set before you in his own example ? "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) "Old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) Causes are best known by their effects, trees by their fruits, fountains by their streams ; so is our interest in Christ by this effect thereof, our conformity unto Christ.

2. *Are you ALL to him ?*—It is but a just retaliation in Christians to be so, and it is withal an evidence that "Christ is all" to them.

(1.) Are you ALL to him in your *affections*, in prizing him above all ? Can you, with the spouse, esteem the love of Christ "better than wine ;"



(Canticles i. 2 ;) with David, "better than life?" (Psalm lxxiii. 3.) Can you, in the midst of all your creature-comforts, account all as nothing in comparison of him? and say, with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) So high were Moses's affections, that he esteems "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." (Heb. xi. 26.) And, indeed, if Christ be but an underling in our affections, it is an argument we have no part in him. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. x. 37.) The affections are the truest pulse of the soul, the most genuine and natural symptoms of its frame and temper. It is these that speak the proper idiom and language of the heart. Make use of this rule therefore,—Is Christ uppermost in thy heart? Thy affection to him is an evidence of his to thee.

(2.) Are you ALL to him in your *acknowledgments*, in ascribing all to him? Thus St. Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) That my condition is not better, it is from myself; that it is so good, it is from him. (Eph. v. 20.)

(3.) Are you ALL to him in your *contentment and satisfaction*, accounting you have all in him, though you have nothing beside him? "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. iii. 17, 18.)

(4.) Are you ALL to him in your *dependences and expectations*, in seeking all from him? The highest condition of grace needs further grace; but in Christ are all supplies. It is an argument of our interest in him, when in all distresses we make him our refuge, in all weaknesses our strength.

(5.) Are you ALL to him in your *designs and aims*, in seeking his glory, beyond your private advantages? This was St. Paul's design in life and death, that Christ might be magnified; (Phil. i. 20 ;) and if you be thus all to Christ, it is an evidence "Christ is all" to you. And how well are they provided for, who have Him who is all for their portion!