

SERMON

FOR PREPARATION TO THE COMMUNION.

2 TIMOTHY II. 19.

“Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

WITH you of this congregation, I have ado for the present ; as for others, let them take a share, as God’s word is dealt. It is love to your souls, and a longing to see God’s work thriving amongst you, after so long labour, that makes me sharp upon you this evening, and to speak hard things against you. And now, I am sent forth to you with as hard and as comfortable a message as any,—a hard message to you who will not amend, but a sweet message to you who are begun to amend, or have a solid purpose to amend. As for you who will not amend, but will live on in your profanity, drunkenness, worldliness, malice, deceit, ambition, lechery, or in any known sin, I have a message to you this day, to tell you, that ye look like vessels of dishonour fitted for destruction, reprobate, whom God in his justice has rejected, and all the ministers in the earth shall not be able to convert,—yea, albeit Christ himself should preach, a reprobate villain would not be converted,—such as those to whom Christ spake in the days of his flesh, and told them, that they were not of his sheep ; for if they had been his sheep, he says, they would have heard his voice : but they, like stinking gaits,* went away their own way, that they might perish as filthy beasts. So say I to you,

* Goats.

If ye will not turn in to God, he shall turn you from him, when he separates the sheep from the goats; ye shall be ranked on his left hand, and he shall say to you, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not." For ye have said, as those who said, "Make the Holy One of Israel to cease from us, for we will have none of his ways:" so says this hypocritical generation, "that draw near me with their lips when their hearts are far away."

The apostle knowing that such persons are rejected, and that there are others, who for the time, having made defection (such as Hymeneus and Philetus), were a great stumbling-block to the people of God; therefore, in this text, he sets himself to guard those who were not fallen, by laying before them the doctrine of election and reprobation, and the use that should be made thereof. Therefore, I wish that ye would take heed to that which shall be spoken, if possibly the wicked may yet forsake his way, that he may return unto the Lord.

1. He tells us, that Hymeneus and Philetus, counterfeit hypocrites, had brought in damnable doctrine, saying that the resurrection is past, and so had overthrown the faith of some; whom, when the people perceived them to have made defection, might conclude and say, We see the faith of some is overthrown; why may it not fall forth so with us also? Yon men were teachers of others, yet are they fallen from Christ, and have drawn others after them: why may not all fall away as they? The apostle answers, Be not troubled for that; let those that are fallen from Christ go, for none of his will leave him; if they will go, let them go, for Christ may well spare them, they were never his. But never one of the elect shall go from

him, for the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, "The Lord knows who are his; and Let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." God's elect will be kept fast, go away who will; and they will so adhere to Christ, as they will depart from iniquity.

Yet will they object and say, Those who are fallen from Christ, were once in the kirk as well as we; they came to the word and sacraments, they were teachers of others; and now, they are fallen into Satan's net,—what if we fall also? He answers, A fair matter that they were in the kirk, and came to preachings and communions, and now are gone to sorrow: know ye not, that as in a great man's house there are some vessels to honour made of gold and silver, for honourable uses, and some vessels of wood and earth, to carry out the refuse and jugs* of the house; so in the house of God, or bosom of the kirk, as there are vessels of honourable elect souls, so are there filthy vessels, that are filled with the devil's refuse, and their own reprobate persons full of rottenness and uncleanness. Let such filthy buckets and their dirt go away together out of God's house, and let nobody bemoan them. Why should any body be troubled to see such filthy vessels flung to the door?

Yet they may object and say, How shall we be made sure that we shall not follow their course? He answers, "If a man purge himself from those, he shall be a vessel of honour," (verse 21); as if he said, Ye are now in the high-gate; hold you in it; purge yourselves from such errors and uncleanness; keep you well from their fashions, and here I make a promise to you, in the name of the Lord, that ye shall be ves-

* Stale liquids.

sels of honour kept for your Lord's use, and prepared for every good work: let the filthy be filthy still, and hypocrites, like Judas, go to their place, but ye who are holy, be holy still.

Hereof we gather first, in general, that the doctrine of election and reprobation, is a doctrine which may be safely taught and propounded unto people, without fear of any inconvenience that men would pretend, albeit men use to say, it is a doctrine hard, and should not be meddled with; because (say they) it makes some men despair, and others become careless what they do. I answer, Let God make an answer for his own doctrine, who has commanded us to teach it, and has pointed it out in so many places of scripture. If some abuse this doctrine to licentiousness, and others desperately run away from God, let them answer for it; to themselves be it said. Yet God has propounded this doctrine in such indefinite terms, that no particular person can conclude from anything that God has said, that he is a reprobate; but he has told plainly, that of those who come to him, he will put no man away, he will shoot out none that will stay in his house. Therefore, the apostle says boldly, the election obtained it, and the rest were blinded; and that the god of this world has blinded the eyes of many, who will not receive the gospel. Or would Christ have propounded this doctrine, if it had been dangerous? Therefore, we oppose to such carnal men, secure sleepers in sin, this doctrine of Christ and his apostles, clearly set down in scripture. Let none take offence at this doctrine, for Christ's sheep will hear his voice, and if any will startle away, let them go.

2. The apostle brings out this doctrine of election and reprobation, when filthy errors are risen in the

kirk, that he may stint the defection of those who are not fallen, and make such a bar betwixt them who are fallen, and those who are standing; which lets us see, that this doctrine of election and reprobation, is a profitable and useful doctrine, and brings special vantage to the godly. It is a fence to keep them from defection, a guard to hold them from stumbling when they see others fall, a bar to hold them from running after a godless world; for, take away this doctrine, men would be atheists. If men saw, that the doctrine of Christ's gospel makes no reformation in the life of professors, they might think and say, that Christianity is no religion, seeing the professors of it are of such lewd lives. But this doctrine tells, that God's elect will be loath to make the gospel be evil spoken of by their lewd conversation; albeit the bulk of deboshed titular Christians do so, the elect will leave their courses, let the reprobate abuse religion as they will. And what are the elect the worse, that there be reprobates in the kirk?—as he were an evil-skilled husbandman, who should take a whole bing of stuff* to be chaff, because there is much chaff in it; for the owner of it might say, albeit he counted it but chaff, he will not sell it good cheap; for let his bing go through wind, and the chaff shed from the corn, then the corn shall kythe. So in Christ's kirk, albeit there appear to be many more hypocrites than true Christians, yet when the fan comes to winnow, the chaff shall blow away, and Christ shall gather the good stuff in the gernel,† and burn the chaff in unquenchable fire. Be not troubled then, albeit many knaves haunt the kirk and communions, and the next day turn them to the devil's service; for such fashions keep up their own

* Heap of grain.

† Granary.

damnation, and the means that help others to heaven, help them to hell. Let none scaur* because they see some fall away, but rather be confirmed by their fall: for as a goldsmith, out of ten pounds of drossy metal, can purge out that which is good, and cast the rest away, so God, for one or two pickles of good stuff, will purge it, and cast away the bad.

3. This doctrine is full of comfort, strength, and encouragement to those who are walking in a good way, and aiming to seek God as they should: for if they be purging themselves from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, to them it is an evidence that God has chosen them, albeit thousands should be reprobates beside them; for if their ear be nailed to the post of the Lord's door, and they be contented to be his servants for ever, when they hear the doctrine of election and reprobation, and find themselves in the elect's way, it is to them a sweet leaning-stock, to rest and comfort them.

4. When we consider the apostle's drift, who condemns those for reprobates who are fallen away, and uses the doctrine of election and reprobation as a means to hold the rest from falling, we see, that this doctrine is a strong attractive, to draw back those who are fallen in error or vice, that they lie not in it; for this doctrine forces such men to turn to God, or else, to take on the name of reprobates, and to blot out their own name out of the book of life. It is a doctrine meet for this age, wherein God is mocked and blasphemed by the lewd lives of those who are called Christians, to tell them, that they must either turn in to God, or take home with them those black tidings, that they are vessels of dishonour, fitted for destruction

* Take fright.

This doctrine is very needful to put men to their pre-emptours;* and yet it condemns not a man to hell presently, who is lying in sin; but it tells him, that there are some elect, who will come home, and some reprobate, who will not come home. Therefore, if a man be elect, albeit for the time he be a deboshed villain, this doctrine will serve him for the third and last summons: for when he hears that he must either quit his sinful courses, or have no portion with God, presently he must resolve, I will renounce my old lovers, my uncleanness, drunkenness, worldliness, and turn in to God, and seek a covering to hide my vile-ness, and a garment to make me beautiful in the eyes of God. This effect will this doctrine work in the elect.

5. This doctrine is only terrible to those who are walking in an evil way, and will not quit it; who, like swine, delight in filthiness, and will not come out of it; as the adulterer or drunkard, who will come to the communion, and back again to his adultery, and again to the communion, and back again to his adultery. For such a person, it were better for him never to have known the way of righteousness, than after having known, to turn away from the holy commandment. Dearly shall he buy his coming to the communion: better to him to have eaten a fiery coal, than to have eaten the consecrated elements. If any, for that is said, will go on desperately in Cain his way, renounce God and Christ, having preferred their pleasures to him, or with Esau, selling their birth-right for pottage, who can hinder them to go to destruction? But let us tell them their doom ere they go. Because they will not quit their sins, the curse

* Decisions.

of God go with them, for they have chosen to mock God, and dare him to his face, living like filthy dogs; therefore, like dogs, let them be debarred out of New Jerusalem. So, then, this doctrine serves out those who will not come to Christ, and will not quit the devil's service; and it is a doctrine to keep all who have a sore heart for sin; for when others go on in their filthiness, as vessels of dishonour, sealing their own damnation in their bosom, they are preserved, as vessels of honour for their master's use. This in general: now we come to particulars in the text.

“Nevertheless”—that is, for all the falling away of some, and drawing away of other some, yet the foundation of the Lord stands sure; the Lord knows who are his. We see, that albeit there be some in the kirk who depart from the faith and grounds of religion, and by their fall draw others after them, yet the elect shall be preserved, albeit not from falling, yet from falling away; albeit a thousand filthy bodies in a congregation, who call themselves Christians, and live like Pagans, should run away, yet not one shall run away, but shall be severed from them. Let them go; God shall tine* nothing when they are gone; there shall not be a penny or jewel less in his treasury, a sheep fewer in his fold, nor a pickle of stuff less in his garner.

When some see men of lewd lives in the kirk, taking liberty to fall out into the common gross evils of the land, they think they may do as they, and then say, God forbid that all such men go to hell—will any man say, that all proud folk, all greedy folk, all malicious folk will be damned? We answer, whatever they be that live in known sin, albeit they were never

* Lose

so many, shall be damned ; for Tophet is large and wide ; there is fire and brimstone enough, God has wrath enough ; and if there be not room enough in hell, let them be laid on heaps above other, or bound together like bunches of thorns, to burn all together.

2. “ The foundation of the Lord stands.”—Ye will say, How do the elect stand, when others fall ? I answer, The ground of that standing is the foundation of the word, which lets us see, that it is nothing in the elect’s self that makes them stand when others fall, but the sure laid foundation of God’s work in them makes them stand. God’s free love and grace, his solid purpose and decree, brought them to Christ, keeps them in Christ, and lets them not fall into deadly errors : it is God that holds their hearts in the hatred of sin, when others hunt after it. It is not their own strength that makes them stand ; but their strength is of the Lord, who has builded them on his unalterable grace and love, and has fore-ordained them to be partakers of his kingdom.

If any run not away with the wicked, let them thank God, and not their own strength ; for it is the strong arm of God’s decree that holds them, and the mighty pull of his hand that pulls them from among the wicked. Thank God that thy heart scunneth* at the conversation of the wicked, and that Satan’s chain is loosed from thy neck—that they are strong in sin, the devil and they going on together, when God’s strength has made thee to stand.

3. The apostle propounds here the doctrine of election, to fortify them who are not departed from the faith. We see, that those who stand when others fall, and depart not when others make defection, may

* Nauseates.

take that standing for an evidence of their election, and lean to it, as a strong ground of their strengthening, to keep them from staggering when others fall: for if they stand when others fall, it is a token God has begun, even here, to separate the sheep from the goats, the metal from the dross, and the chaff from the corn; and if he has done so now, much more hereafter. It is, because God has tane pleasure in thee, to make thee confirmed to his son Christ. Take it then for a token of election, and lean upon it as a rock. Let it be an encouragement for farther well-doing, yea, a confirmation of thee in the way, and a thing to make thee bless God that thou standest when others fall. Even now, the Lord's fan is in his hand by the preaching of the word, severing the good from the bad; and the preaching is like the wap* of a fan, to tell the one that they are chaff, and the other that they are corn, but with this difference—albeit the preaching call the one chaff, and the other corn, yet that which is chaff now, may become corn, by earnest prayer and dealing with God to make a change: but not hereafter. Here is a vantage by the fanning of the word: that which is on the worst side, may be brought to the best. But hereafter, that is, after this life, that which is set apart to the worst side, shall not come to the best; they who are ranked to the left hand, shall not come to the right. Therefore I wish, that those who now, by the preaching of the word, find themselves to be chaff, would pray to God, to fill their chaff with some good stuff; for he can put his Spirit in them, to make of chaff, corn; for if he was able to cause the rod which was in Aaron's hand, bud, flourish, and bring forth ripe almonds in

* Sweep.

one night, why can he not make of chaff, corn ? Therefore call upon him that he may change thee.

4. "Having this seal."—He takes a comparison from things kept under lock and key ; or things stamped with a seal, which men would have closed and confirmed. It lets us see, that all the elect are under God's great seal and sure custody, reserved for himself ; and their election is a secret thing kept up with God from the world, and from the elect themselves, till he be pleased to reveal it. Seldom are the elect revealed to the world, albeit in due time he will reveal it to themselves, so as he will make them cry, "Abba, Father," and make his Spirit bear witness to their spirits, that they are the children of God : he seals them to the day of redemption.

If election be a thing sealed and secret, let none unreverently break up the Lord's seal : but if ye would know it, know it the way that God has ordained, and wait for his revealing of it. This I speak, to reprove those who will not serve God, till he reveal to them whether they are elect or not. I tell them it is a wrong question at the first : for first, they must set them to do God's bidding, and then, speir if they be elected ; but use not preposterous haste to break up God's seal and coffers, till he like. It is not for the profane to win in upon God's counsel : the secret of the Lord is revealed to them who fear him ; it is the pure in heart that see God. If then thou would know God's love and purpose about thee, purge thine heart ; for the love of sin must be out, ere the love of God be shewn. If thou scrape not out of thy heart the love of sin, thou shalt never read thy name written in the book of life truly.

5. "The Lord knoweth who are his."—Here is the seal of the ministry of election; and it lets us see, that God has chosen a number to himself out of the world, to be his peculiar people, to whom he will shew mercy, reveal and communicate himself, and take for his inheritance. These He knows for his; others he knows not, for they are of their father the devil, and his will they do. As for His own, he will purge them, and make them zealous of well-doing, when others run to the devil. That he says God knows them, it is not only that he is at a point with himself about them, or knows their number and name, what they are, what they were, and what they will be; but also, he knows them, while he sets his eye of pity, care, love upon them, and his good hand to preserve them; he knows when they were born, when they will die; he knows them, while he calls them to his kingdom both of grace and glory; he knows them, when it was agreed betwixt him and his Son about the price of their redemption, when he gave them to Christ, and Christ took in hand to satisfy for them; he knows them whom he called according to his purpose, when he gave them saving faith, and his Holy Spirit to dwell in them; he knows them from his first purpose about them, to the last perfecting of them in glory; he knows them, by loving them, approving them, keeping them [that they fall not, and when they fall, to raise them up again. All is concluded with him, from his first foresight and falling in love with them; and he still keeps them, and preserves them, for he is stronger than all, and none shall be able to reave them out of his hand.

"And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."—Thou wilt say, I wot

well God knows all his own ; but what wot I, if he knows me for one of them ? Here a mark to know,— Let him that names the name of the Lord, depart from iniquity. That he puts this for one part of the seal, it lets us see, that the matter of election is not so secret, that God has given no revelation of it. Some evidences may be of it, both to a man's self and others. A man's election may be evidenced to the kirk, but more powerfully to a man's self ; and possibly the Lord will not reveal to others such a man's election, but he will tell a man himself, and so fill him with the sense and assurance of his favour, that from the spirit of adoption he will cry, “ Abba, Father !” with a good heart ; and God again will acknowledge him for his child : which makes sweet embracement betwixt the soul and God ; and the soul heartily blesses God, and magnifies him, when it perceives what he has done for it.

Question. What then is the mark of the seal of election ? *Answer.* So far as it may be seen of men, it has two parts—calling upon, or naming of Jesus, which also includes depending upon him, and believing in him, or adhering to him—and departing from iniquity. Then we see, that the seal of the elect has two sides ; the one is read of God, the other toward us, is read of us. The side toward God is, that he knows who are his : he knows whom he has loved, and fore-ordained for heaven ; and the side of the seal which is toward us is, “ Let every one that names the name of Jesus, depart from iniquity.” And as in a common or ordinarily current coin of money, if ye let a man see the one side of it, he can readily tell what is on the other side of it, so, in this seal, he who knows the one side, will also know the other ; for God has

no adulterate or false coin as uses to be among men, but if any can find that they adhere to Jesus and depart from iniquity on the one side, they may be sure to find that God has elected them on the other side. Whosoever thou art that believest Christ, and adherest to him, and art daily more and more shedding* from sin, mayest conclude thou art an elect.

If adherence to Jesus and departing from iniquity do evidence election both to the world and a man's own soul, then the soul that wants these two, can have no comfort: they who have not fled to Christ, and have not put the back of their hand to sin, want the comfort of election. I dare not say, they are not elected, for God can change a filthy sinner into a washen saint. But I dare to say, while a soul is separate from Christ, and adheres to sin, that soul can have no comfort in election, nor yet say that it is elected. If thou then would be out of the black band and rank of reprobates, haste in to Christ, and from sin, as thou would be free of hell and damnation. Haste thee from the service of thy old lusts and lovers, and come in to Christ, if thou would eschew that dreary sentence, "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Haste, I say, in time, for thou hast too long dwelt in the tents of Kedar: get thee speedily from the tents of these wicked men; turn, and seek the living God.

"Let depart."—He says not, *has* departed, but *let* them depart, by way of command. This presupposes, that elect souls are not yet departed from the way of sin and death. It lets us see, that all who lie in sin be reprobates for the most part: yet it is possible

* Parting.

that some elect souls may be sticking in sin, and living an evil life, who will turn quickly; and therefore it is not a mark of reprobation to be in the estate of sin, for one may come out of that estate. An elect may be lying as deep in the devil's service as a reprobate; but incontinent he will haste from that estate.

“Let depart” shews, that there are none departed from iniquity, but they must depart farther, and never return again to it, if they would have the comfort of election. So, then, the elect soul may not do as it likes. By this, Satan deceives many, making them trow they are elect, and so cannot fall away, and so may do what they like; and makes them trow they are elected, because after the committing of grievous sins, they have gotten a wound of conscience, and have thrust out some tears for sin, being forced, by the gnawing of their conscience, to take with their faults. On finding this, they trow they are elected; and being elected, must remain so, and so may take on a new lease of sin. But I say, many a Pagan has repented thus far; for the Pagans had fears or terrors of conscience that did chase them from their sins, which fears being ceased, they ran back to sin. Even so, thou who sayest thou hast repented all thy villanies, and yet returnest again, and hardenest thyself more, wilt thou call that repentance? No, for albeit God took instruments that he had tane thee in the fang,* yet I speir, where is thy new life? Therefore resolve upon a new life: depart from iniquity, or count not thyself an elect; for Christ leaves his blood to no sow to wash in, to go back to the puddle: but having your garments clean, be loath to defile them.

Mark the order here: 1. Name,—the LORD. 2.

* Fact, deed.

Then,—DEPART. By naming of Jesus, is meant coming to him, and believing in him; professing him, worshipping, and taking him for your master. And depart from sin. We see then, we must first be joined to Christ, come to him, believe in him, and possess him, before we can depart from iniquity; for how shall we either get strength or feet to flee from sin, till we come to Christ? Who shall loose our chains and fetters, or who shall cleanse us, and make us new? Must not fleeing and departing from sin, be from faith in Christ? Whatsoever is not from this fountain, is unclean. Let the vile who would be clean, go to Christ, and say, Draw me, we will run after thee; sever me from sin.

Verse 20. “But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.”—Ye will say, Is not that great dishonour to God, to have hypocrites and chaff always in his house? He answers, No, no more than it is dishonour to a great man, to have vessels of dishonour in his house, to carry out refuse and rubbish. In this comparison, that as a man has power to appoint the vessels of his house, some for honourable uses, some for sordid uses, so God in his house; and man takes also great authority over the creatures given to him, as God doth over men in the matter of election and reprobation. This being well weighed, would stop all men’s mouths from quarrelling God for electing some, and reprobating others. Man will say, Whereto Christian souls, to cast them into hell? I answer, Man, takes not God as great authority over the creatures, as the potter takes one piece of clay, and makes a vessel of it, and casts away another piece of clay?

And man saves the life of some of his beasts, and kills others: shall not God have as great liberty over his creatures, as man has over them? What the Lord doth in the matter of election and reprobation, he doth it justly; for he says to man, Leave thy sins, and come to me, and thou shalt get heaven. Man answers, I will not leave sin. Then says the Lord, Thou shalt go to hell. Is not this justice? From these words, no particular person can gather a mark of reprobation, or conclude that he is a reprobate; but contrarily, there is here a mark of election. Why then should any quarrel God, while he shews a possibility of election, and no mark of reprobation? Doth he not lay before all, life and death, and bids choose? And why then should any carp if thou canst not come to Him, and choice bade him draw thee, and he shall do it?

We see it is no dishonour to God nor his kirk, to have wicked hypocrites in the bosom of it; as it is no dishonour to a great man, to have vessels of dishonour in his house. We see, that God makes use of these hypocrites to purge the rest of his household, as vessels of dishonour to keep clean a great man's house: when they go out, the filth goes out with them. Hypocrites and filthy persons serve to make the rest honester and cleaner; for the sight of their filthiness makes God's children labour to purge themselves, and by their falls they are made wise, to stand the better. As to the wicked's abomination, it is their own, and the dishonour is their own; and when they go out of God's house, the filth goes out, so that God has no dishonour by them. Albeit God has letten them in to his kirk, yet they hurt not his kirk; but their falls make his children wise, for they say, I

am of the same stuff by nature; Lord, cleanse me. When they feel the stench of the wicked, they flee up to a higher house, and by all means seek to cleanse themselves. So God can make use of the wicked, albeit not for their own, yet for others' vantage.

Question. How shall I know whether I be a vessel of honour or dishonour? *Answer.* Look what stuff is in thee. Wherein delightest thou? If it be in the devil's vessels, worldliness, filthiness; if thy mind, will, affections, be upon the filthy puddle of the devil's abominations, thou art a vessel of dishonour. See what employment thou givest to the vessel of thy mind, heart, memory, and by that try thyself.

OBJECTION.—Are there any so clean and holy, that their mind and heart have no filthiness in them? *Answer.* I grant, the holiest have their own filth and dirtiness: but they are not vessels to keep still that dirtiness; their vessels are ordained to keep holiness, the graces and gifts of God's Spirit; and if dirtiness be gathered, they are daily washing again. Is thy ear then a conduit to bring in knowledge to thy mind; thy eye, tongue, heart, all to keep and vent holiness? Then thou art a vessel of honour: albeit thou contract filthiness, yet the Master of the household, Christ Jesus, has a care that thou be daily washen, and thy organ is sanctified for a holy use. But thou to whom holy discourses are a burden and weariness to hear, and in a conference of good things will be tickled with delight in songs and tales, thou lookest like a vessel of dishonour. Thou art like those of whom the prophet speaks; thy "throat is an open sepulchre;" the stench of thy oaths, blasphemy, lewd language, defiles all that are about thee, so that the godly soul is vexed with thee, as Lot was

in Sodom: thy deeds, plots, courses, desires, tell thou art a vessel of dishonour.

Question. But how shall I be made sure that I am one of that number? *Answer.* In the next verse (verse 21), the apostle gives thee a counsel what to do. Purge thyself from these, and thou shalt be a vessel of honour. So then, he that would be a vessel of honour, must purge himself. This is not, that any *can* purge himself, or that a tree of itself can bring out good fruit. But he shews here, what is required of us; and to shew the order of God's working, which is, to work in us, and by us, using us as instruments, albeit he be the chief doer of the work. The right use of this doctrine, is not to dispute what strength a man has to purge himself, but to set himself to the practice of it; not to be discouraged finding his own weakness, but to set to a reformation; and whatever estate he find himself in, set to, and purge himself: for if such be, he looks like a vessel of honour, for all holy vessels are making for some honourable use, and purging from dishonourable. Art thou then purging thyself from thy old deeds? crying with David, "Purge me with hyssop, cleanse me from my sins?" breaking thy heart for grieving the Holy One of Israel? thou carriest the mark of a vessel of honour.

"Sanctified for the Master's use."—The hypocrite or the foul vessel has this mark; whatever he doeth, it is all for his own ends, not to God, if he be not swearing, lying, drinking, &c. But if they be not for God's use, they are for dishonest uses: following of their lawful calling, working, ploughing, making merchandise, are all dishonest uses with them, for they do these to make themselves rich and honourable.

They are not done as service to God, therefore they are unclean; and to the unclean, all things are unclean: their eating, drinking, working, not being for God's use, are turned into sin. But the vessel of honour goes to the plough, and makes merchandise, for God's use; for albeit he might deceive in bargains, and so get gain, he will not, because he is for his Lord's use. He goes to the kirk, not to see and be seen, but to meet God in the assembly; he comes to the communion, to get the seal of God's love.

Let a man be what he may for the time bygone and present, yet if you fly to Jesus, seeking to be purged, come to Jesus, and be ranked the morn at the table, with the vessels of honour. Repent thy bygone misbehaviour; cast out jugs* by confession; or rather, hold to the well of Christ's blood; to that clean water, and washing of his Spirit. Pray Christ to purge with his Spirit and with fire. If so thou wilt do, thou shalt be a sanctified vessel for the Lord's use. Either obey this doctrine, or carry with you the appearance of reprobation, and a forerunner of hell. Either live a clean life, or I debar you from the Lord's table. Fly both from evil company, vessels of dishonour, and eschew works of dishonesty; else quit you and God. Depart from foul company, and foul ways, as ye would not depart from God. To that God, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all praise and honour, for now and ever Amen.

* Foul or stale water.