

SERMON I.

HEB. 13. v. 18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

It is indeed a very exercising, and up-taking business to attain and come by a good Conscience; but it hath a most sweetly refreshing, and strongly comorting fruit growing out of ???, when it is attained; and who ever hath through grace attained it, have never found reason to think their labour ???, or their pains ill bestowed, or too great: The calmnes, composure and tranquility of Soul, with the hoy and ??? confidence, and boldness to God-ward, with the ???, and joy that result and flow from this difficult ex super-abundantly compensate all the labour and pains bestowed on it: That we may be stirred up, and provoked vigourously to indeavour, in the strength o Christ, the having and maintaining a Conscience, void of? offence toward God and Men, and somewhat of the peace and joy that now from the well grounded assurance of its being attained; we have made choice o these words to speak a little to them: Wherein the apostle, 1. asserts his attaining of this, with confidence and boldness; We trust (sayeth he) we have a good conscience. 2. He proves his assertion? y giving an evidence othe truth of it; o by explicating that which he calleth a good Conscience, in all things (saith he) willing to live onestly; endeavouring in every thing to walk according to the rule, and to approve ourselves to God.

Page 273 We shall in the first place, speak some what shortly to the explication, and scope of the words; There are three expressions in his assertion, concerning his Conscience, which hold forth a very high attainment, The 1. Is, a good conscience; The word good signifies not only that which is profitable good, but also that which is a fair, pleasant and delectable good; insinuating, that it is such a Conscience, as hath some what in it commendable, beautiful, and amiable, fitted to make others fall in love with it; so much the word signifies. 2 Timothy 4:7. and Matthew 26:10. The 2. is, We trust, Holding out the confidence whereby he asserts the having of a good Conscience; its not such trust, as many of us have, which we use to call our good hope, Which is rather a conjecturing, or? guessing, then any well-grounded confidence; but its such a confidence, and perswasion, as is founded on good and solid grounds. The 3. is, in all things, holding forth the extent of it, as if he had said? in our privat walk, as Christians; and in our public employment, as Ministers of the Gospel; in our suffering for Truth, and in our doing for it, even in all things, we have a good Conscience? 2ly. There is the evidence, or expication of this, in the words following; because it might be thought strange, that he should so confidently asert a good Conscience in all things, as if he had been without sin; He explains his meaning in other three words, shewing what he takes to be a good Conscience; The 1. word is willing, which holds out his kindly inclination, and the determinatness of his resolution anent the thing, it was his desire, design, and

delight, to be right in every thing; as Nehemias was, to fear God's name; and though he came so far short, as that the evil which he would not, he did, and the good which he would fain have done, he could not come at it; yet he delighted not, he approved not himself in the evil, neither did he design it, but rather had it for his burden and affliction; as he gives us an account, Romans 7. This then is the apostles meaning in that high assertion, viz. that it wasPage 274his desire, design, indeavour and delight to have it so. The d word, is to live, which in the original, is to converse, and looks to his whole conversation? It? was not only to be holy in such or such a duty, as in praying? preaching and the like; but in all manner? of conversation. The 3d word is onestly, Which is the adverb of the same word called good before, and signfies to live pleasantly, desireably, worthily, or honourably; even to live so as the Gospel might not suffer by anything in his walk; and so, as none of the seekers of God might be ashamed for his sake; and so, as none might be fainted, disheartned, or discouraged to pray for him.

As for the scope of the words, You see they are subjoined to, and connected with the immediately preceeding exhortation, to pray for him, and are given as the reason why they should do so; Paul being made use of by the holy Ghost, as his Pen-man, to write this Epistle, he does (as its ordinary for him in others of his Epistles) commend himself to the prayers of the Saints, to whom he writes: and because he was ill spoken of, aud misrepresented, as an enemy to the Law of Moses, and to the Iwish Ntion; least anything of that should sick with them,

or stand in the way of their praying for him; He obviates their objection (as it were) and says, ye may pray for us, for however we be mistaken, and mis-reported of by many, yet we have a good Conscience, willing, designing, and endeavouring to live honestly, so as the Gospel of Christ may suffer in nothing by us; but that rather the repute, and interest thereof, may be furthered and advanced; And by this he binds on them (as ye shall God willing hear) the exhortation to pray for him.

We intend to insist on the latter part of the verse, yet because the consideration of the scope may be of considerable use, we shall shortly, and but in passing, touch on some observations from it; The first whereof (which is???) is, That a man that endeavours sincerely, and seriously to keep a good Conscience, may yet, notwithstandingPage 275be exceedingly mistaken, and mis-represented in the world; Paul here found it needful to clear himself thus, which he needed not to have done, if he had not been much mistaken, and mis-represented.

2ly. Observe, That a man under many mistakes, misrepresentations, and reproaches, may have a good Conscience; so that a man is not in reference thereto obliged to stand to others thoughts, and judgement of him; Thus it was a small thing for this same apostle, to be judged by man's judgement; As he tells us, 1 Corinthians 4. v. 3. Therefore ye would beware to lay weight on mistakes, mis-representations, or false reports of men; since a good report, and a good Conscience go not always together; Paul went through good report and ill

report, and digested all these things; so that his peace, and the Testimony of a good Conscience were not thereby marred.

3ly. Observe, That clearness as to a good Conscience under mistakes and reproaches, is a great and notable ground of confidence and boldness, to such as are so mistaken and reproached; many times men care but little for a good Conscience; but when all the world (as it were) comes in a man's tops, the confidence of a good Conscience is an excellent, and none-such friend and companion; it hath great weight with Paul here, and is a sufficient counter-poise to all the reproaches and calumnes they could load him with; though he was looked on even as the filth of the world, and the off-scourings of all things.

4ly. Observe, That when men meet with many reproaches, and walk in a way that is attended with a multitude of snares, they need more then a guessing or a conjectural un certainty, as to the Testimony of a good Conscience anent their being right; even a-well-grounded certainty and perswasion; Paul doth not say here, we suppose or hope (as many of you understand hope) but we trust, or are firmly persuaded; men would study alwayes to be clear in what they do, butPage 276more especially, when their way may be offended at, and they reproached on account thereof; and most especially as to that part of their way, that is like to be most offended at.

More particularly from these words considered as a reason of the fore-going exhortation to pray for him. Observe, 1. That a man who hath a good Conscience, and is most clear in it; doth ordinarily lay most weight on prayer, and is most in love with that sweet exercise; so that he will not only pray for himself, but will also desire others to pray for him; Its never a good Conscience in a man, that makes him slight prayer himself, or the prayers of others for him.

2ly, Observe, That a man that hath a good Conscience, will desire, and think himself concerned to endeavour not to be mistaken by others; he will not boast of his good Conscience, not caring what others think or say of him; but will seek to remove any offence that may be taken at his way, or that may give any the least ground to make his integrity to be called in question: as Paul doth here, and 2 Corinthians 12. Where he sayeth, v. 11. I am become a fool in glorying; but adds v. 19. but we do all things (and so this amongst the rest) dearly beloved for your edifying; And the reason is, because a man of a good Conscience will not only study to be tender in his walk, so as himself may have peace within; but will also have regard to the Conscience of others, that they may not stumble and sin, nor the way of God suffer, when he may prevent it; and its a sure evidence of an ntender Conscience, when men care not who stumble at their way, or how others account and esteem of them.

3ly. Observe, (Which is of affinity with the former) That a man that endeavours to have a good Conscience, and

to be clear that it is so indeed, will be very desirous to have a room in the prayers of others of God's people; Or such a man is one that will not lippen to, and lay weight upon his own prayers only, but will also highly prizePage 277Christian fellowship, and desire to have the benefit of the prayers of other Christians: Paul seldom misses this in his Epistles; so Romans 15. Eph. 6. Col. 4. and Philip. 1. He is much in putting and pressing them to pray, and to pray and strive for him together in prayer: The reason is, because a man of a tender Conscience hath a kindly sense of his own infirmity, and a great desire to be forward in the way of holiness, and at much injoyment of God; and would therefore ain have a lift from every one that can help him; such a man hath a native exercise in pursuing, not only after fellowship with God, but also with his people; Whereof this is a main part: And though these may be looked at, but as little things, yet if we compare ourselves with the Rule, and with the practice of tender Christians; we will find considerable defects, as to a good Conscience in them: There is a sort of disdain, or shame in many, to seek the help of others prayers, as if it supposed their being assaulted with some un?couth temptation; or the prevailing of some gross corruption; or the lying on of some extraordinary, and un?heard of Cross and affliction; but the single design of having a good Conscience, and of getting it intertained, would put us, not only to pray ourselves, but also to desire the help of the prayers of others: alwayes, this is a most certain truth, that as a good Conscience is not attained without prayer; so its not entertained, but by

prayer: And its indeed a wonder how many can boast of a good Conscience, and yet neglect prayer themselves, and undervalue the prayers of others for them.

But it may be asked here, 1. What influence hath a Christians good Conscience, in laying on the duty of prayer on others for him? 2. What influence hath a good Conscience, to persuade others to the performance of this duty for the person that hath it, more then for others? Our speaking a little to these two, will lead us in to the discovery of some notable advantages, that attend a good Conscience.

Page 278As for the first, We say in general, that a good Co science hath a notable influence on prayer, and putting others to pray for us; or there is a strong connexion betwixt a good Conscience, and the advantage of prayer, 1. There is a connexion betwixt a good Conscience, and liberty and boldness in prayer, as it is clear, 1 Iohn 3:21. If our hearts condemn us not, we have confidence towards God: A man that hath an evil Conscience, or an accusing and challenging Conscience, hath a sort of ing at, and at best much discouragement in prayer; so that he cannot lift up his face without blushing and shame, but a good Conscience on the contrary helps to boldnes in prayer, and to the exercise of Faith in God, as a Father, so that he can boldly say, our father. 2ly. A good Conscience hath influence on, or a connexion with ou obtaining a hearing in prayer, and on our being confident that we shall get a hearing; For we know (sayeth that poor man, Iohn 9. v. 31.) that God hears not

sinner, but if any man do his will, e hears him; And David says, Psalm 66. v. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not ear me; And its said, 1 Iohn 3:22. Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do these things that are pleaing in his sight: A good Conscience is not indeed a meritorious cause of the hearing of prayer, yet God hath established a connexion betwixt it, and his hearing of prayer, and it hath influence on our expecting a hearing, and on our knowing that we shall get a hearing, 3ly. And more particularly, as to the Scripture now before us; a man that hath a good Conscience, may be confident to put others to pray for him, which another cannot hve; and herein lyes the weight of the apostles argument, Pray for us, for we have a good conscience; On this ground, he pleads for this privilege of the communion of Saints; which he could not have so done, had he not had a good Conscience. 4ly. A mahat hath a good Conscience may more confidently expect the benefit of others prayers, as well as of his own; Whereas a man whose way andPage 279Conscience is evil, though others prayers may sometimes have weight before God to further his change; yet he himself can have no comfort in them while he is such; Therefore while David is praying for his enemies, he says, his prayer returned into his own bosom; but it did them little or no good: Thus we see what advantage it is to have a good Conscience, it makes us capable of the benefit, both of our own and others prayers; and the want of a good Conscience on the contrary,

excommunicas ??? in a manner from the benefit of the prayers of others.

The 2d. Question is, If this argument ought to have any more weight with Christians, in praying for them then others? or if we should pray for them only, that keep a good Conscience, and not for others? We answer 1. That Christians would not limit their duty in prayer only to these; For we see, Moses, David, and many others of the Saints, pray for such, as had no good Conscience; so that we may warrantably pray for others though not having a good Conscience, and may hope to be accepted therein; and that our praying for them shall not be without fruit, and benefit to ourselves at least. Yet 2ly. There lyes a greater ty, and obligation on us to pray for them that keep a good Conscience then for others; even as there doth, to do good especially to these that are of the household of faith; The communion of Saints here binding and linking (to say so) more straitly and strongly; So we are (I say) proportionably more strictly tyed to pray for sincere seekers of God; as the Aposles practice, Gal. 6:16. shews, Where he prays thus, As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and on the whole Israel of God; He prayes for peace to them, as being the most proper objects of the Saints prayers, especially as to God's peace; not having such ground for presenting that, or other suchlike Petitions to God for ??? Yea, 3ly. Not only does it lay on a stronger obligation, but it gives greater ground of encouragement, and confidence to deal with God on their behalf, and of hope and expectation to be heard; Peace (sayeth

the apostle) be upon them that ??? according to this rule; He finds here firmer ground to stand on (to say so) in praying confidently, and with hope of success, for such then for others. 4ly. Clearness and perswasion (so far as is in this case attainable) that another is keeping a good Conscience, makes a Christian more willing to pray, and more hearty in prayer for such; a person will pray with the better will (to speak so) for others, when he knows that they are tender; whereas any grossenes in a professor will have influence on the cooling of his prayers for them, and he will be in hazard of being tempted, at least, some way to ly by: We will not say, but there may be often a fault in this; yet there is still a truth in the connexion, betwixt supposing a person to have a good Conscience, and our bearing burden with him, and taking a more kindly lift of his condition in prayer: And this is the reason why the apostle makes use of this ground to press and stir them up to pray for him, and to show that he expected the help of their prayers; And indeed its no small encouragement in prayer to make mention of a persons name particularly to God in prayer, when we know that it is the name of one that is a friend of his, as Abraham is called.

All these serve to commend the great advantages that attend the having of a good Conscience, and to lay a strong obligation on us to pursue after it; and they may some way direct us how to walk, so as we may attain, and entertain a good Conscience; and they may withal help to make some discovery to us, if we be tender in our walk. But we come now to the apostles assertion, We

trust (sayeth he) we have a good conscience: from which we would observe a few things, wherein we shall be more general, 1. Then Observe, That there is a very great difference betwixt Consciences; some Consciences are good, some evil; some are clear and pure, some are unclear, impure, and defiled; As the apostle shews, Page 2812 Tim: 1:3. When he says? I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience; and while he says, Tit. 1:15. To the pure all things are pure, but to them that are defiled, and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their conscience is defiled; Every man has a Conscience, but not the like Conscience: So that (I say) there is a great difference betwixt Consciences; even as great as there is betwixt men: As sin has brought a long train of pollutions and defilements with it, so that they reach the whole man, the very Conscience itself not excepted; o special grace hath a mighty powerful influence where it comes; and reaches the whole man, and the Conscience in particular; though not perfely in this life: think no??? that all men's Consciences are alike; and as ye will not trust every man's word, so should ye not trust every man's Conscience.

2ly. Observe, That there is such a thing attainable, as a good, or clear and pleasant Conscience; otherways, if it were simply un-attainable, there could be o ??? no true ground for Paul's assertion here: This good Conscience, in short, is come at thus; 1. There is an exercise, to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men, Whereof we spoke from Acts 24. v. 16. This is the tender Christians design which he drives. 2ly. When a

man has been thus exercised, to have a good Conscience; he is in the next place exercised to know the sense of his Conscience, and to have its approbative testimony; And this we spoke to from these words, 2Corinthians 1:12. This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience: and so forth. 3ly. There is a clear and pleasant Conscience; which flows from the former two; When a man has been exercised to have a good Conscience, and to have the Testimony of his Conscience for him, and comes to discern it; There results from these a clear calm, serene, smiling and pleasant Conscience; which is a most heartsome and solacious thing to dwell with, ??? very desirable, delightsome, refreshing, chearful, and spirituallly jovial companion.

Page 282The se serves to show you, that you should not look on a good Conscience as an empty, or airy fancy, or notion, or as a thing that is not attainable, or as a thing that was never attained by any; ye see the Saints have come a good length in it: and next to the glory of God, this is the end, for attaining whereof, they take all the pains to have a good Conscience; even that they may win at this calmnes and tranquility, at this peace, comfort and joy of Soul resulting from a good Conscience; even as men labour, and take pains to win at some thing in the world, that they may have a more convenient, commodious and comfortable life in it: and comparing the words of this text with these of Acts 24:16. Its very clear, that whoever are seriously, and suitably exercised to have a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men, they may, through God's blessing, win at a

clear, calm and pleasant Conscience: the one was Paul's study there; the other is his attainment here: If we compare the state of our Conscience with the strai of our former walk; it will very easily be found, that the want of this calm and pleasant Conscience, flows from our not being suitably exercised to godliness, and to the having a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men: This, alace! This is it, that wounds our peace, and ??? our spiritual mith, that makes us ow down, and walk heavily (as it were) without the Sun; if there were more serious and hard pressing after holiness, in all manner of conversation among us; we would not readily be such strangers to the serene tranquility, comfort, and refreshing that flow from a good Conscience.

3ly. Observe, That a Believer who is tender in his walk, may win to be very clear, and throughly persuaded, that he hath a good Conscience; and may according to his measure say, as Paul doth here, We trust (or are confident) that we have a good conscience; who is o very firmly persuaded, that he dare, Romans 9:1. (whence we spoke somewhat lately) take the HolyPage 283Ghost to be witnes; so a tender Christian may win to be so very clear and fully persuaded, that he hath a good Conscience, that he may boldly ??? it, and lippen to it, as that which will abide the tryal; yea, in some respect adventure, and hazard his very Soul on it, that it is so of a truth.

But it may be asked, what is it that founds this perswasion, and makes it firm and solid? Answer, The

latter part of the text will give ground to speak to it more fully; but for the time, and in the general, we say that these three do found it, ere ever a man can be thus persuaded that he hath a good Conscience; he must needs take a serious look, and view of his by-gone way, of his present frame, and of his purpose, and resolution for the future, that he may see that all these be in some measure right. 1. Then, for his by-past way, It supposeth that he hath singly indeavoured to have it tender, and conform to the rule, even that he hath been exercised to have a Conscience void of offence, and that he hath reflected, and searched, and found it in some measure to be so; the one of these layes the ground for the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the other draws forth the comfortable evidence of it. 2. As to the persons present frame, there must be Spirituality, Singleness, and some measure of Tenderness; otherwayes it will much obstruct this perswading testimony; for its not enough, that a man has been tender, if he be not in some measure so now; Paul says here, We have (not only we had) a good conscience. 3ly. There must be some deliberatness, and determinatness of his purpose, and resolution to walk with God for the time to come; for if a man do not dedicat and devot himself to the study of holiness for the future, though he be supposed to have had never so much of it in his by-gone life, this firm, and comfortable perswasion will be much marred and obstructed: So then these three must here go together, viz. Holines in a man's by-past life; holines in his present frame, and holines in his purpose for the future:Page 284We will find them all

conjoined in the experience of this same apostle, Philp. 3. where, when he has spoken of his by-gone carriage, how he had counted these things to be loss for Christ, which he sometimes accounted to be gain; and how he had suffered the loss of all things for Christ; Yet he thinks not this enough, but adds as to his present frame, Yea doubtless I count all things to be but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; And v. 12. Not as if I had already attained, or were already perfyte: And v. 13? One thing I do, forgetting these things that are behind, and so forth. He is as serious, and eager, as if he had just now begun; and tells us that for the future, he is resolved to press hard towards the mark, until he obtain the prize: Then he subjoins, Let us then? as many as be perfyte, be thus minded, This is not an absolute perfection in holiness, that he speaks of, or a perfection of degrees, but a perfection of parts, or a perfection of sincerity (though in a higher degree than many Christians win at) as to his by-past life, as to his present frame, and as to his resolution for the time to come: Religion must not be halved, but whosoever would have a clear and calm Conscience, must study to be clear on all hands; no iniquity must be regarded in his heart, no duty resolvedly alked, but holiness in all manner of conversation, must sincerely and seriously, in the strength of grace be followed after.

4ly Observe, That where there is a good Conscience in any one thing, there will be a single and serious endeavour to have a good Conscience in all things; or a good Conscience is of universal extent, as to every thing;

We trust (says the apostle) we have a good Conscience in all things; The reason is, because if a man be conscientious in any one thing, from the principle of a truly good Conscience, that same principle will set him on to endeavour to be conscientious in all things; for its the same Divine Authority that enjoins obedience to all God's Commands; and if Conscience put a man to lay weight on any one thing as commanded, it will put himPage 285to lay weight on all things that are commanded; a quatenus ad omne, and so forth. Therefore David says, Psalm 18:22. All his judgements were before me, and I put not away his Statutes from me; and Psalm 119:6. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have a respect unto all thy Commandments; and of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Its said Luke 1:6. That they walked in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless: This Doctrine hath two Branches, The first is Negative, That there cannot be a good Conscience, but where its universal; The second is Affirmative, That where a Conscience is universal; its an evidence that its a good Conscience; Which we shall not now inist to speak of; I shall only say, that if we compare the universality of the Command, with our obedience thereto; and try if the one be as universal as the other is; if there be a respect had to all the Comnds; to these of the first, as well as to these of the second Table of the Law; to these of the Gospel, as well as to these of the Law; and if we take a view of our Conversation in whole, and in the parts of it, in the Duties of Worship, and in the Duties of our particular Callings, Stations, and Relations; If a good Conscience

hath been singly aimed at in all these, at all times, Sabbath-day and Week-day, in all conditions in prosperity and adversity; in all places, at home and abroad, in the Shop and in the Family; in Journeys by Land, and Voyages by Sea; (for Conscience comes in as concerned in all places, and in all Companies, and will put the question, whether we be called to go to such a place, and to be in such a Company or not, and will expect an answer as to all these Things, Conditions, Times, Places and Companies) If (I say) we try Conscience as to all these, we will find that a good Conscience is a very rare thing; and that it is not so easily, either attained or intertained, as many imagine it to be; and that withall its evident and undenyable hence, that the Consciences of most men and women, are notPage 286so good as they are ready to averre them to be; which they will one day find (if a gracious change prevent not) to their unspeakable and irreparable loss and prejudice.

SERMON II.

HEB. 13. v. 18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

TRUE Religion and godliness consists not only in the illumination of the mind, and in the conception and contemplation of the Truths concerning God and the Gospel; but also and mainly in the practise of the known Duties thereof; and very ordinarily there is more of the concern of Conscience, and of its solid peace, in the practise of more common and well known Duties, that are even at our hand, then in the speculation of, and painful search after things that are more mysterious and obscure: We would decry none of these, nor dissuade any from a sober inquiry after them, who are more called to it than others; yet we would give every one of them their own due place; and would by all means take heed that we separate and divide not the power and practise of Religion from the Theory thereof; and that we prefer not the search after some more cryptick and dark things in Religion, to the serious practice of the more plain and obvious Truths thereof: For the preventing whereof, as by other means, so we find the apostle very ordinarily in the close of his EpistlesPage 287after more Doctrinal Discourses, subjoining some plain and familiar Directions, concerning the practice of such Duties, that are generally known and acknowledged; amongst which this is one, viz. Prayer for one another, and more particularly and especially for the Ministers of the

Gospel, pray for us (faith he) in the first part of this Verse: We would then learn conscientiously to improve our Light and Knowledge towards the practice of the Duties of Religion, and most, of these that are most necessary; And particularly we would learn to lay due weight on the practice of this Duty; Ministers would neither disdain, nor think shame to call for the help of the people's Prayers; Neither would people neglect, nor think it needless, or a burden to them, to take a serious lift of their Ministers, in their prayers to God: When we press obedience in all things, as the evidence of a good Conscience, we would press obedience to this amongst the rest, which whoever neglect, will in so far mar the peace of their Conscience before God; For they cannot have a good Conscience in all things, if they neglect or flight this piece of their Duty: Therefore without further insisting in it, we exhort you in the Name of the Lord, Pray for us.

The other thing in the Verse, whereof we began to speak the last day, is the Reason or Motive whereby Paul presses them to this Duty; by which an Objection is obviated; They might be-like say, at least think, that he was an aspersed, reproached, and ill-spoken of man; and that therefore they had but small ground of encouragement to pray for him; No, sayeth he, notwithstanding these aspersions (which are false and groundless) pray for us; for we trust we have a good Conscience in all things: And because this assertion might look bigg, he qualifies it in the words following, wherein he clears what he means, and proves that he

spoke not at random, We have a good Conscience, willing in all things (sayeth he) to live honestly: We may, and doPage 288fail and come short, as to the length we should be ??? but its beside our purpose; our desire, design, and indeavour is faithfully to approve ourselves to God in all things.

Observe 1. Here, that an honest and good Life, or Walk, and an honest and good Conscience go together; There is always a suitableness betwixt the testimony of a persons Conscience within, and the ordering of his Walk and Conversation without; Or thus, as a man's life is, so is his Conscience: If the Life and Conversation be honest, then a man may have, and hath an honest, and good Conscience; but if his Life and Conversation be untender, dishonest, profane and louse, he cannot possibly have a good Conscience, as the apostle plainly affirms, Titus 1:15. And the reason of it is clear, because Consciences well grounded Testimony must be according to Truth, and speak out the thing as indeed it is; and as when the thing is ill and wrong, it cannot speak peace and good; so when the thing is right, it will not speak ill.

For Use of it, do not separat these things which God hath conjoined; Think never to have a good Conscience, when ye have not an honest Conversation: It may be found without the accomplishment of a very diligent search, that many do presumptuously and groundlesly speak and boast of a good Conscience, when there is nothing in their Conversation that looks like it, let be warrands it;

but if ye would certainly know the companion of a good Conscience, take it from Paul, it is even a living honestly: I would only here have you to take this Caveat in the by, when we say that a good Conscience, and an honest life or walk go together, we would not have you to look to the connexion of these two, so severly and rigidly, as if there could not be a good Conscience, but where there is an honest walk in its perfection, without all slips or failings; for we are now speaking of a deliberat, fixed, and settled purpose, and sincere indeavour to live and walk honestly; which mayPage 289consist with slips and fallings of infirmity; This willingness to live honestly can never be separate from a good Conscience: Neither would we have you thinking, when a Christian miscarres in his Conversation, that he can never recover a good Conscience: There are two wayes whereby a Believer may come to quietness in his Conscience. 1. By the exercise of Sanctification which prevents a Challenge; and that is it which the apostle speaks of here, and Acts 24:16. and it is that which we mean in the Doctrine. 2. When he fails and miscarries, there is a recovering of quietness, and of the Testimony of Conscience, by the exercise of epentance and Faith, sprinkling the Conscience with the blood of Jesus; Which flows not so much indeed from the man's holiness and tenderness, for preventing of a Challenge, as from Justification, and the right that the Soul gets to pardon of Sin thereby, wherein the Blood of Christ removes the Challenge and quiets the Conscience; and a Soul may have the one of these, when to its sense it wants the other; or hath indeed but little of

it; It may have some comfortable clearness of interest, or at least the faith of it, when it has in some respect an ill Conscience; as we may see David had Psalm 51. So upon the other hand, we conceive it is not impossible for a Believer to have some tenderness, and a testimony thereof from his Conscience, when he is much in the dark, as to his interest in God.

2ly, From Paul's knitting of these two together, viz. A good Conscience and the qualification of it, an honest walk. Observe, That such as would confidently assert, and assume to themselves this Testimony, that they have a good Conscience, would do it on well qualified grounds and evidences; therefore the apostle here does not content himself simply to assert it; and generally, wherever he asserts this, he holds out something of his practice, shewing thereby, that he was not mistaken, nor presumptuous in his asserting of it: If we consider the extremities that men are disposed to run into, in this matter,Page 290some too soon, and too easily assuming to themselves this Testimony of a good Conscience; others again in a manner shuing, and shifting all things that may give them clearness, as if it were impossible to be win at; We will find that there is good reason to qualify it thus, so as the golden mediocrity, or raids betwixt these-extreams, may be duly observed.

More particularly, It may be asked here, what is the qualification, or evidence, whereby a person may clear, and prove that upon good and solid ground, he assumes to himself this Testimony of a good Conscience, and may

not scrupulously reject it? The apostle holds it out in these words, willing to live honestly; and ye may take it in this Observation, That a firm and settled serious purpose of universal holiness, and honesty in our life, and walk, hath great influence on the peace and tranquility of our Conscience; and is a good evidence of a good Conscience; and withal a choice companion, that waits continually on it: I put these three together, as included in the words, in all things Willing to live honestly; The latter words respect the former, the design being as broad as the effect; and the former prove the latter, the study of universal holiness, a willingness to live honestly. 1, then we say, That this universal honest design is the companion of a good Conscience, it waits always on it; or a good Conscience and this go together, he that hath a good Conscience is honest in his walk, and he that is honest in his walk hath a good Conscience. 2ly. We say, that it is an evidence of a good Conscience; for, if they only have this good Conscience, who are honest in their walk, then where this honest walk is, there must be a good Conscience. 3ly. We say, that it hath much influence on a good Conscience, its in some sort a procurer of it, in which sense, a good Conscience is an effect of an honest walk; so that the more honest a man be in his walk, the more quietness will he have in his Conscience.

Because the Doctrine is very broad, and affords much profitable Use; I shall first clear it, Then 2ly confirm it, and 3ly. make some use of it, and remove some practical doubts that may arise from it.

1. Then for clearing the Doctrine by parts; in it we take in these three ingredients, to make up the evidence of a good Conscience. 1. That a man's walk be honest 2ly. That it be an universal honesty in all things. 3ly. That there be an willingness, or hearty purpose towards universal honesty, whereon the great stress of the quietness of a persons Conscience lyes, viz. The sincerity of the purpose, or a heart-willingness: And we may consider all these, either negatively, so that without this evidence there cannot be a good Conscience; or positively, so that where this evidence is, there is a good Conscience.

For the First, What is an honest walk? 1. We conceive it is not that which most men count honesty, viz. For a man only to think, or fancy himself to be honest; a man's own apprehension is not the rule of his trial, but that which will abide the trial before God. 2ly Honesty here, looks not to absolute perfection, and such as hath no defect; it is a thing that is not ruled, and measured by our will, but by God's will revealed in his word, though it come not up the full length of that which his revealed will calls for: And we conceive that it doth more particularly consist in these four, 1. That on the matter, it be in things allowed and approved of God; For there neither is, nor can be any honest living, except our supposed duties, and our practices be allowed and commanded of God; and here a good intention, or an honest mind, if the thing thwart the word of God; will not prove honesty, because, as to the matter it is not right, as Paul shews, Romans 10. Speaking of the Jews their zeal. 2ly. That there be an

honest end, else though the action be good on the matter, if our end be sinister or selfie, it will marr the honesty of the action; Thus Christ says, Matthew 26:10. of that good woman, She hath wrought a good, or an honest work on me; which he clears to be so, from her end, inPage 292that she poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. It was not out of vanity and otentation, but from an inward hart-respect to me; and at least in God's design, she hath been fore-signifying my burial.

3ly.Honesty takes in rectitude, or straightnesse in the manner of our going about the duty; For if the manner be not right, as well as the matter, the action will not be honest; The word honestly (as we show) signifies honorably, pleasantly, desirably, worthiy; as that word, Matthew 26:10. doeth; Now a thing cannot be commondable and worthy, if it be not right for the manner, its but hypocritical; Therefore its said of the woman that brake the Bx of Ointment on the Lord, That she did wash his feet with tears, and ipe them with her hair out of love, she was tenderly affctionat, and very real in her going about that work: This will seclude many good works on the matter, which are called in this same epistle, dead works, because not done in the loving, lively, spiritual manner, that God requires.

4ly. An honest walk must be from an honest principle; though it were possible, that a man could do all things called for, never so well for the manner, if they be not done from a right principle, he is not honest in his walk; and its on this ground, that all the duties of natural men, of meerly moral men are rejected, as having no honesty in them (as

being but the fruit of corrupt trees, which can bring forth no good fruit, as the Lord expressly affirms) and therefore can have no influence on a good Conscience, because, from a corrupt principle: We need not stand here particularly to prove the branches; they being obvious, To live honestly, takes in all these four, without which a man cannot have a good Conscience; as we suppose will be granted, at least in word, by all.

The next thing to be cleared, is, the universality of this honesty; how it is, that a man in this honest walk, must be universal; A good Conscience must have this property, and he that would have it, must needs study toPage 293live honestly in all things; In things of the first Table of the Law, and in things of the Second; in things that concern the Law, and in things that concern the Gospel; Though a man should ??? never so much external holiness, if he neglect the exercise of Repentance, of Faith, of Mortification, and of other inward Gospel-duties, or Graces, he is very defective, and pursues not an honest walk, in the just extent and latitude of it: So then, a man that would live honestly, must study to be honest in all, not only in duties of Religious worship, but also in the duties of his calling, station, and relation, even in every thing; whereof we had occasion to speak more particularly and fully in the close of our last Sermon.

For further clearing of this universality, Take these qualifications of it; first, this universality must be designed and endeavoured, in respect of men's light and

judgement, to which their walk must be answerable: A man that would walk honestly, must endeavour to know what is commanded, and the meaning of the command; if the eye (in this respect) be not single, the whole body will be full of darkness: the want of this qualification hath made many Legalists, think themselves to be far advanced in holiness, because they were ignorant of the spiritual meaning of the Law; as we see in that man spoken of, Matthew 19. who said to the Lord, pressing on him obedience touch and such commands, all these things have I kept from my youth up; and its like he thought as he said, not knowing the spirituality and extent of the Law; Therefore men's apprehensions and thoughts of their universalness in the study of holiness, cannot be a good and sufficient ground of peace, when they are ignorant of the rule of holiness. 2ly. This universality must be in respect of affection, and estimation; men would not only know their duty, as it is commanded of God, but they would esteem and love every commanded duty; people may know many duties, and yet have but very little, or no love at all to them or esteem of them; which speaks their obedience not to be universal, Page 294 and so not sound: I will not say but a Believer i Christ may find some singular Sweetness, and Soul-refreshing, in some duties of Religion, beyond what he doth in some others; whereby they may be the more endeared, and made the more delightsome to him; yet in respect of the same divine authority, injoining obedience to all the commands, he hath an equal respect and estimation to and of them all; I esteem all thy

precepts concerning all things to be right, sayeth the Psalmist, Psalm 119. v. 128. O! what an estimation puts he on every precept of God; and as if it were not enough for him to say, that he esteemed all his commandments to be right; He adds, concerning all things; and in the preceeding verse he says, I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold; These words hold forth his affection to, and esteem of them; and the universality thereof, is expressed in the following words; many times men are dragged (as it were) by the heels, or by the hair to the obedience of a command, who yet have little, or no love to it, or esteem of it; much therefore of our sincerity may be gathered from our affection to, and esteem of duty; when we are drawn to it, not so much from fear of the punishment that may follow on disobedience to the Command, as from love to and esteem of the thing commanded; which doth not so much force and compell, as it doth sweetly incline and move us to it. 2ly. This universality must be in respect of men's design? and deliberat purpose, to practice all commanded duties, without allowed balking any one of them; which is, when in the prosecuting of holiness, they lay all God's Commandments before them, as David said he did, Psl. 18:22. All his judgements were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 4ly This universality must be in respect of our endeavour to prosecute, and use all the midses and means that may further us toward the suitable discharge of all called for duties, and towards the promoting of holiness in all manner of conversation; and endeavouring to carry a

long all thePage 295circumstances that are requisite, to the making of our ctions truly Godly: A man that would have a good Conscience, as to the honesty of his walk, would omit nothing appointed by God, that may promote him in the way of holiness: And, O! how vastly comprehensive this is; it takes in endeavour to prevent and eschew all temptations, snares and impediments, of what ever sort that may marr and let him in, following forth his course of holiness; and in his exercising of Faith in God, through Christ, and dependance on him, to be with speed brought forward to the end thereof; that he may in some measure be in case to say with the apostle, I have finished my course: These words of the wise man, Prov: 3:5, 6. are to this purpose observable, in all thy ways acknowledge thou him, and he shall direct thy paths; Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; There would not only be an acknowledging of God in this, and that particular action, but in all our wayes; as we would be careful to make use of him, and to trust him, so we would eschew leaning to our own understanding. This universal extent of our endeavour is so necessary, that without it we cannot have peace; for true peace is the result of a man's designed, and in some measure seriously endeavoured conformity to all God's commands; and the breach of any one command will some way marr his peace; There must be then an universal design, and endeavour to keep touches with God, we can never else have solid peace: But where this is, there is fair and ready access to peace, and a good evidence of a good Conscience; according to that notable

word, Psalm 119:6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments. Its only this universal respect to God's commands that prevents shame, and gives the Believer boldness; and therefore it must needs be a good evidence of, and have a great stoak and influence upon a good Conscience.

The 3d. thing in the Doctrine to be cleared is,Page 296 what is meant by willingness, and a hearty purpose to be univerial, in the practice of holiness, or of an honest life and walk? whereupon, as on its base, we said, the great stress of the evidence lyes, and therefore we would clear it the more fully; and that we may do so, we shall, . premit some distinctions of willingness, that we may know of what willingness it is, that the apostle means. 2ly. We shall confirm both parts of the Doctrine after some few things permitted. 3ly. We shall show wherein this willingness consists, and what are its characters.

For the First, we would have you to distinguish, 1. Betwixt a willingness in reference to the end or benefit itself, and a willingness in reference to the mids whereby that end, or benefit is attained; betwixt willingness to have a quiet Conscience as to the end, and willingness to live honestly as the mids; There is nothing more common among people, then to think that they are willing to have heaven, and to have Christ, that they may get heaven: they think they are very sure, that they are very willing, and love well to be in heaven, when they die, and leave this present world; and yet if this be put to a narrow and just tryal, it will rather be found to be a willingness to

have some benefit, then to be at the mids that leads to it, they would have Christ, peace with God, and Heaven, because they are good, and men naturally have an appee and desire after good; but a desire towards the mids, that leads to the end, is a willingness to be at the practice of holiness, by which we come to a good Conscience, a willingness to deny our own righteousness, and by faith to betake ourselves to Christ for peace with God, and for the pardon of sin, and a willingness to have grace to make us fruitful in every good work: many men and women have the first sort of willingness, who have not the second; therefore so soon as it comes to the use of such means, as may help to further holiness, and to attain a good Conscience they are at a stand; as it was with that man mentioned, Matthew 19. who questionless would have been at heaven, butPage 297when Christ tells him, If he would be persyte, he must sell all that he hath, and give to the poor, and come and follow him; And so puts him to a proof of his willingness, by putting him to will the mids, as ever he would come by the end; It's said, He went away sorrowful for he had great possessions; He was loath and unwilling to want heaven, and he was as unwilling and loath to forgohis riches; and at length, in this debate and struggle, his wealth prevailed, and carried him quite off from Christ; alace! There are many such hearers of the Gospel: however a desire to the mids, as well as to the end, must be in right willingnesse to live honestly; which is the first thing wherein this willingnesse consists. 2ly. We would distinguish, and put difference betwixt willingness to the mids

abstractedly (to speak so) considered, and a willingness to the mids considered complexly with other things, and wayes that ly cross to it, which yet the man loves: Thus when a man is convinced, that such a thing is good and desirable, he will have a sort of desire after it; (as that an spoken of, Matthew 19. had after heaven, and salvation) but when he comes to to look at the thing complexly, as it may be thwarting with some other thing, that he loves better; he doth not actually will it; because he sees that for the attaining of it, he must part with, and forgothat other thing, which he preferreth to it; in this respect, many men may love holiness as good and desirable, and they will readily say, O! to be holy, as that wretch Balaam wished to die the death of the righteous; but when it comes to particulars, that thwart and cross their lusts, and corrupt inclinations, as when they are told, that they must forgive such wrongs, restore such things as they have unjustly taken, and detained, that they must deny themselves, and so forth. they are at a stand: Hence some will give very fair and pertinent advices and directions to others, in reference to the study of holines; and even some very prophane men will sometimes commend the fear of God to their children, while yet in their ownPage 298practice, they lay no weight on it, no regard it; because they consider it not in itself, but as it is complicated with the apparent necessity, of parting with, and closing of such and such particular things, that they have no will to forgoe. 3ly. We would distinguish betwixt a willingness, that is, by fits, and is but some accidental motion (to speak so,) and a willingness that is

deliberat, resolute, fixed and habitual; The former may be under convictions, challenges, and fears, as appears in many of these spoken of, Exod. 19. and Deut. 5:27. Who readily say, under a fit of conviction and of fear, all that the Lord as commanded us we will do; And in many persons in their afflictions, and on their sick-beds, who will say, if they had their health again, and were delivered from such and such a trouble and distress, they would study to be better men; But so soon as they recover health, and such a tempest of trouble is over, they return with the dog to the vomit, their goodness is like the morning cloud and early dew that goeth away; as it is, Hos. 6:4. Its not this willingness that we speak of, but its an habitual fixed willingness, a settled design as to such a thing; as these words, Acts 24:16. hold forth, Hrein do I exercise my self, alwayes to have a conscience void of offence; Its not to have a willingness this or that day or hour, and then to lay it quite by; but its in all our conversation to be willing to live honestly, as the apostle hath it, Romans 7. To will is present with me; This willingness is alwayes in some measure present with serious Christians, it waits still on them; its a constant habitual inclination and propension to such a thing. 4. We would distinguish betwixt a crooked willingness to holiness, out of some by-respect; and an out-right and straight willingness, when holiness is willed and loved on an honest account, o for a straight end: The crooked willingness is a servile and mercenary desire of holines, to pure by it freedom from Hell, and coming to Heaven at best, and often to have respect from men, especially in

a time, when holiness is in any request and respect,Page 299as the Pharisees had in their giving of alms, and making long prayers; and whereof the Lord seems to mean, when he says, Hos. 10. Ephraim is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit to himself; all holiness that is designed or pursued for this? end, for any predominantly selfy-end is nothing before God, but an unstraight or crooked willingness: or ye may look at a single willingness to holiness, as that which is out of respect to holiness for itself; and when we love holiness, and an universality in it, because God loves it, and because its like him, and beautifully conforms to his Image; Thus David sweetly expresseth himself, Psalm 119:127. I love thy commandments above gold, yea fine gold; when there is a worth, amiableness and excellency seen in the Commands, and the things commanded; when they are prized, and a dear respect is had to them all for themselves. . 5. We woulddistinguish betwixt a sluggish willingness, or desire after holiness, and an effectual willingness; There is a sort of willingness that suffers men to ly still with the sluggard; such would fain have knowledge, but they dow not take pains to read, if it were but the Catechism, that they may come by it; they would ain have lusts mortified, but they dow not fast and pray, that such Devils may be made to go out; they would be at holiness, but they dow not use the means appointed by God, to win at it; there is such a desire spoken of, Prov. 13:4. The soul of the sluggard desires and hath not, because his hands refuse to work; he rests contentedly in his desire, and takes no pains to prosecute it, to the

obtaining of that which he desires; even as many lazy bodies would fain be rich, but do not take pains and labour to come at riches; even as it is storied of the Roman young Gentleman, who laid himself down on the grass, and rolled and tumbled there a while, and said, *utinam oc esset laborare*, O! if this were to labour and work: even so it may be in spiritual things; there may be a sluggish desire to be holy, and yet great negligence as to any suitable pains to come byPage 300it: But effectual willingness is that which yoaks the man in good earnest to the use of all appointed means, whereby he may obtain his desired end; as he desires to be holy? so he presses to be at it through all obstructions and difficulties; and though he win not up to perfection, in respect of degrees; yet he dispenses not with himself in his short-coming, nor in the allowed neglect of any mean that may help him forward; Not as if I were already perfete (says the apostle, Philippians 13:14. meaning as to the degree) But one thing I do, forgetting these things that are behind, and reaching forth unto these things that are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: and vers. 16. he says, Let as many as are perfect be thus minded; where he speaks of a perfection attainable even here, and implys, that those who are not thus minded, endeavouring through grace to reach forward, to press towards the mark, making it their one thing to attain to perfection in holiness, cannot lay claim to this willingness, which is an evidence of perfection in the sense the apostle speaks of: Now from all these distinctions put together, we may find a clear

answer to what natural and carnal hearts will readily object here, and make discovery of the unwarrantableness, nay of the rottenness of the grounds whereon they found their peace; for since this willingness hath such influence on men's solid peace and tranquility of Conscience; it is not sure, every willingness that will be a certain evidence of it, nor a solid ground to build it upon.

SERMON III.

HEB. 13. v. 18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

THOUGH a good Conscience be the thing in all the World, in reference to which, men ought to carry most tenderly; yet if we shall take a view of the way of the generality of people, even living under, and making profession of the Gospel of Christ, we will find that there is nothing that they deal more untenderly in; some on the one hand accounting that to be a good Conscience, which is nothing so, and so, basely prostituting and abusing this excellent thing; others on the other hand looking on a good Conscience, ??? but an airy notion and fancy, never knowing, nor studying to know what the benefit and advantage of it is, they make it useless and comfortless to themselves, and so are utterly deprived of that sweetlyserene tranquility, which is God's gracious allowance on them, that make it their business to have a tender and truly good Conscience.

The Doctrine that we proposed last, was for directing us how to keep a just mids betwixt those two extreams; and its this, That where there is a sincere willingness to be universally honest in the whole of our Conversation, It hath great influence on the peace of our Conscience, Is a notable evidence of a good Conscience, and a choice companion that waits continually on it: Paul here assertsPage 302his tranquility of Conscience on this

ground; and withal explains and qualifies the same, by telling us that in all things he had a willingness to live honestly: Now because this Doctrine is of great concernment to Believers in Christ, as to their solid peace and comfort; and deals with several sorts of men; some of whom, as Antinomians rejecting any such evidence, and disputing against the possibility of universal sincerity; so that according to them there can be no solid conclusion drawn hence for the comfort of Believers: Others, such as Hypocrits, snatching at this consolation, when they have no honesty in their walk; and a third sort (better disposed) who from seen defects and failings in their walk, refusing all the consolations that flow from this ground; say on the matter to the weakning of their own hands, and to the fainting and discouraging of their own hearts, that they have nothing of this honesty, nothing of this willingness to live honest by; We insisted the more on the clearing of these three in the Doctrine: 1. What is meant by an honest Walk. 2. What is meant by universal sincerity, or honesty in our Walk. 3. What is meant by this willingness to live honestly, which is the base on which the testimony of a good Conscience doth mainly lean, and the very hinge on which it is mainly turned, as being the greatest evidence of sincerity: We shall yet premit some things further for clearing of the Doctrine, and then we shall confirm it, which is in substance, and in short this, That a man who hath an universal willingness to live honestly, may have Calmness and tranquility of Conscience,

though there be manythings in his life, for which he may very justly censure himself.

First. Then? let it be premitted, that when we speak of this calmness of Conscience flowing from the universal honesty of a persons Life and Walk; We mean nor, 1. Such a perfection of calmness and tranquility as may stand before God's Judgment-seat; for though we were in case to say with the apostle, 1 Corinthians 4:4. That we know nothing by ourselves; yet are we not thereby justified,Page 303but he that judgeth us is the Lord; who is greater than our Conscience, and sees manythings in us, that we see not selves: Who ever therefore supposeth such a perfection, can never have calmness of Conscience while he lives in the World. 2ly. Nor is this such a calmness as prevents all challenges; a man may have challenges of Conscience and yet have a good Conscience. Neither 3ly. Is it such a calmness, as under it Believers have no ground for, nor use of Repentance and Humiliation; nay Repenis not only consistent with this calmness, but it is a notable mean of it, and a main ingredient in it; its a thing whereby in part it is both attained and entertained; The kindly Gospel-exercise of Repentance for sin will not break our peace, but very readily vacation from this exercise will do it to purpose: And therefore we would carefully distinguish betwixt Repentance, Humiliation and Self-loathing for sin, and the marring of the peace of our Conscience; Yea there may be much exercise wrestling and fighting inwardly in the Spirit of a Christian, and yet considerable calmness of Conscience in that same condition: for that which

gives peace, is not so much the want of all exercise of mind, as a suitable behaviour under that exercise; As we may see in the apostle Paul, who though he was deeply exercised, and sorely combatted with the remainder of a body of Death within him, as he gives a lamenting account. Romans 7. Yet he is the man here who hath this calmness of a good Conscience.

2ly We premit, that this peace and calmness consisting with Challenges and Repentance, and with deep inward exercise, may be, first, where there is no absolute perfection of holiness; though I grant there must be no lower, nor less design, then perfection? Because this peace and calmness in sojourning Saints (of whom we mean all along) is mostly founded on sincere and serious endeavours to attain it, as the apostle speaks Philippians 3:12, 13. Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, viz. In holiness? But I follow after, and so forth. and yet vers. 15. He asserts a perfection; There is not an attaining of perfection as to degrees, and yet there is a perfection in respect of parts, and in respect of sincere endeavour, and pressing to be at perfection. 2. This peace and calmness that we speak of? may consist with the indwelling of corruption, though not with the reign and dominion of it; I say with the indwelling of corruption, where the stirrings and actings of it are (as it were) protested against, groaned under, and opposed; as it was with this apostle, Romans 7. Who notwithstanding the law of his members rebelling against the law of his mind, yet maintains his peace; because this peace is grounded, not so much on

the intire and absolute Victory over Corruption, as on a real hatred of, a real enmity at, and a real fighting against it. 3. This peace and calmness may consist, not only with corruption indwelling, but sometimes with the prevailing and captivating power of corruption; which is also clear from Romans 7? Where the law that is in the apostles members prevails so far against the law of his mind, that it leads him captive to the law of sin that is in his members; and yet he hath peace; the reason is, because this peace does not only flow from the event of the wrestling or fight, but also from the Christians not yielding in the fight, though he be captivat, and from his entring as it were a dissent from, and protestation against the captivating power of corruption; Therefore (saith he) The thing I do, I allow not and its no more I that doth it, but sin that dwelleth in me) Not, but it was he that sinned, but he allowed it not; Nay (as I said) he protested against the prevailling of sin in himself; Therefore the words in the Original are, The thing I do, I know not, that is, I will not in some respect own it for my deed; and on this ground he maintains his peace, and from it draws his consolation, Romans 8:1. There is therefore now o condemnation to them who are in ChristPage 305Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit: for though sometimes the flesh may prevail, yet (says he) we walk not according to the principles of flesh, but we endeavour, though we? come not up to perfection, to walk according to the Rule, Principles, and dictats of the Spirit.

3ly, We premit, that this peace and calmness of Conscience, may consist with many defects, infirmities, and sailings; yet we would beware of, and watchfully guard against two sorts of sins, that are inconsistent with it; 1. Conscience? wasting-sins, that raise a storm and tempest in the Conscience, such as were Davids Adultery and Murder, Peters denial of his Master, and the like; Which though they may consist with an interest in God, standing still inviolated and not nulled; and though peace may be recovered by the renewed exercise of repentance toward God, and of faith toward the Lord Jesus; yet for the time of the prevailing of such sins, and before such exercise of aith and Repentance, they are to the? Believers Conscience as boisterous Winds are to the Sea; we do not therefore admit of all sorts of sins to be consistent with this Peace and Tranquillity of Conscience; but such only as are sins of more ordinary infirmity against the Souls actual dissent and protestation to the contrary. 2. We would beware of such Aggravations of sin, that make little sins (little I mean comparatively) to become great sins; a man may be captivat by some sins? and yet retain peace; and yet these same sins in another person, by reason of some grievously aggravating circumstances, as if they be committed deliberately, and out over the belly of Light, and of Checks and Challenges, may much waste his Conscience, and greatly wound and mar his peace: In this respect (I say) though the sin in its own nature may be lesser, yet it is greatned by these and such other Aggravations: They are strictly and properly sins of

infirmity, that the Believer doth not consent to, wherewith he is surprised, against which he fights and wrestles, seeking after, and Page 306 longing for Victory over them, and with which he admits of no truce, even when they prevail; as for other ins they will very readily mar the Believers Peace and Tranquillity.

The Doctrine being thus qualified and guarded on all hands, we shall now at length proceed to the Confirmation of it, which is, that wherever there is a sincere willingness to be universally honest in our Life and Conversation, there is good ground for peace and calmness of Conscience; or it is an evidence of a good Conscience and a companion of it.

It may be confirmed from these grounds; 1. Either we must say that no Believer has ever had Tranquillity and calmness of Conscience, which were absurd; or we must say that these who had it, did attain to perfect holiness, and needed no Repentance, which the forenamed Instances of most eminent Saints, as of David and Peter will confute; or if we can say none of these two, we must needs assert the third, viz. That a Believer on his sincere design to live honestly in all things, though he come not up the full length he should be at, may have Peace. 2. That which hath quieted many Believers before us, may be a ground of calmness and quietness to us; for as the ground and cause is common, the effect must also be common; But on this ground many Believers have been quieted before us, Therefore we may likewise on it quiet ourselves: If we look thorow the Scriptures, we will find

the Saints thus quieting and comforting themselves; What is the ground that David comforts himself on? Psalm 18:21, 22, 23. Is it not on this? I have kepted the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God; This sure is not absolute perfection that he means of, for we know he had many defects and failings, but sincerity; for, says he, All his Iudgements were before me; he had honestly designed the keeping of them all; I did not put away his Statutes from me; he balked none of God's Statutes; I was also upright before him, and I kepted my self from mine iniquity; ThePage 307strain of his way was honest, and his slips? and failings were (hitherto its like) of infirmity, and therefore he has Peace: We may see that it was thus also with Hezekiah, Isa. 38. with Job chap. 31. and with Paul Philippians 3. Who was not perfect already, but pressing hard towards it. A 3. ground of Confirmation is drawn from the Scriptures giving such Characters and Descriptions of Believers, and affirming such qualifications of them; on account of which they have a testimony from God, and ground of holy boldness in their pleadings with him; all which look to their honest willingness and sincere endeavour after perfection, and not to their attainment of it; as we see inNehemiah who thus speaks to God, chap. 1. Let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy Servant, and of thy Servants who desire to fear thy Name; Where we have the asserting of an interest in God? and of a kindly relation to him with holy boldness; And yet they plead not a perfection in the fear of God; but a desire to fear him; Their desire, design,

resolution and endeavour, was to fear him; So Matth 5. vers. 6. They are pronounced by the Lord to be blessed who hunger and thirst after righteousness; Which speaks plainly no absolute perfection; And say they, Psalm 44. All this is come upon us, yet have we not forsaken thee, nor dealt falsely in thy Covenant; Though they had many infirmities and failings, which they did not deny but take with; yet they humbly avouch adherence to God and to his Covenant, so as they did not forsake him, nor deal treacherously in it; they assert their sincerity in cleaving to him, notwithstanding of all that came upon them: This ground is frequently made use of, Psalm 119. and particularly vers. 6. Where the Psalmist says, Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy Commandments; as if he had said, my Conscience shall not blush, nor be confounded, but have confidence and quietness, though there be not a perfect up? coming in obedience to all things commanded, if I have a respect to all, and an honest design and purpose to be at all. 4. it cannot be otherwise, if wePage 308consider, that Conscience will, and must be calm and quiet, when God accepts of a man's way? Now though there be not absolute perfection, yet if there be reality and sincerity, and no short-coming allowe, approven, nor consented to, but wrestled against and opposed; God will accept of our way: Its said, 2 Corinthians 8. vers. 9, 10. That God accepts of a willing mind, according to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not; If a man improve well, seriously and sincerely the outward things given him, though there be some providential

obstruction to the performance, yet on account of his honestly willing mind, he is graciously accepted; Which holds proportionably in other points and parts of obedience; Thus the Lord says, Mal. 3:17. I will spare them as a man spares his Son that serveth him; and Psalm 103:13. Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so doth the Lord these that fear him; The force of the comparison shows that things are not at perfection in them, for then there were no need of sparing or pity; but as there is such compassion in a Father, that though his Son cannot perform things commanded him exactly and perfectly; yet if he be readily and honestly doing what he dow, he will spare and pity him, and he would be an unnatural Father that should do otherwise; So will I do says the Lord with my Sons that serve me: and in this respect the ground of a man's peace and calmness, is not any absolute perfection in himself, but God's Covenant and free grace, and his way of dealing with his own Children, who will in some cases say nothing against them, and Conscience is not allowed to say anything, where he says nothing.

Now if it be Asked how this comes to pass? We Answer? that there are three things that accompany real willingness? that contribute to, and give ground of peace? even though there be failings, 1. A real hatred and abhorrence of the sin. Psalm 119:128. I hate every false way. There is a keeping at a distance with Conscience? wasting sins, so that the man not only abstains fromPage 309acting them, but out of Conscience towards God, from Filial awe and reverence, from love and respect to

him, hates that which he hates; Do not not I (says Davia Psalm 139.) hate them that hate thee; I hate them with a perfect hatred. 2ly. Real willingness keeps off Conscience wasting-aggravations, so that Believers fall not in sins of infirmity with full deliberation; Neither do they allow or suffer themselves to ly still in them; Now its such as these that especially wound the Conscience and raise the storm and tempest of a contraversie there, which greatly marris peace. 3ly. Where this real willingness is in exercise, though sin prevail, yet (as I oftner then once said) it puts the Christian to enter his dissent from, and protestation against it, which in some respect exonerates him; even as in a humane julcatory, where a thing is carried by the peat of the plurality of voices, any Member thereof that protests is exonerated by that his protestation; just o its here, when the soul is surprised, taken unawares, and hurried by the violence of temptation; and though it do not simply and altogether free and excuse him as to the sin, as it may do a man in the other case; Yet it keeps (as it were) a legal right to him, whereupon he may humbly plead with God against his unrenewed part, complain of it, and come to him, and say, It is no more I, but sin that dwells in me: And therefore, from all we may very confidently conclude, that it is not absolute perfection that is the ground of the Conscience its good Testimony, and of the peace that results therefrom, but sincerity, or real willingness to live honestly.

The 1. Use of the Doctrine, serves to show us, That it is a tenet contrary to Scripture, cross to Believers

consolation, and to the nature of hollness, and that withall makes way for lousness, to say that there is nothing in in sincerity, and willingness to live honestly, that can give a Believer quietness, and calmness of Conscience; which Antinomians (on the matter at least) to skar, and fright Believers, not from peace of Conscience, butPage 310from the study of holiness, maintain and press; whereby they labou to ruine, and raze this most comfortable Doctrine two wayes; both which are removed, and refuted by these forgoing caveats, which we gave. 1. They say, that none at all wins to this universal willingness or sincerity: But for answer (as we said before) we speak not of universal perfyt willingness, but of sincere real willingness; There is a great difference betwixt universal honesty up at perfection, and an endeavour after universality of honesty; and its the last that that we say, a Believer may have, and hath (when in case) in its more lively exercise. 2ly. (Which overthrows the former) They say, That a natural man may have this willingness, and so it can be no ground of peace to the Believer: But for answer, we speak not of what a natural man may think he has, but if the qualifications of this willingness (whereof we spoke the last day) be remembred, and well considered, it will be found, that no natural man hath it, neither can have it while he is such; We speak not of what a demented person may fancy he hath, but of what a sober and composed Christian hath.

The 2d. use serves to discover the great unsoundness, and strong delusion, that is in the conclusion, that

hypocrites (the second sort of persons whom this Doctrine deals with) are disposed to draw from it; who are ready to bless themselves, and to think and say, Well's us that there is such a truth as this; for though we fail and come short in manythings, yet we have a good mind, and meaning; and under this specious, and plausible-like pretext, they shrewd, (and as it were) hide all their voluntary neglects, and ommissions of these things which they are called to, in the practice of Religion, and in living honestly, in order to winning at this solid peace and tranquility of a good Conscience; But let me ask such, have ye the qualifications which we assigned of this willingness? Is it a willingness that carries you forth towards coming at the mids, to will holiness,Page 311as well as at the end to will happiness? and that carries you towards the mids, viz. Holiness for itself, and not for heaven or happiness only? is it an habitual willingness, and not by fits and starts? is it single, and not mercenary, nor crooked? And is it effectual, and not sluggish? Though God will graciously accept of willingness, where persons are honest and sincere in their aim and endeavour, notwithstanding of much failing and short-coming; yet where men allow themselves in their short-comings, he will not there accept of willingness: Therefore that word opportunity, is o put in by the apostle, Gal. 6:10. As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to them that are of the houshold of faith; and Philip. 4. Ye were careful, but ye lacked opportunity; If there be not an opportunity, God will accept of a willing mind, as he did

from the Thief on the Cross; Or, if a man be poor, and have not to give out towards the supply of others, but yet if he have, and yet by shutting of his purse, he shut up his bowels from his poor Brother; Yea, if a man through his own culpable accesion hath disabled himself from that charitable duty, if it be not sincerely repented of, (For he should work with his hands, that he may give to them that want) his willingness will not be accepted: Therefore let none think, that this willingness looseth any, the least latchet or buckle to loosness and sinful liberty; Wo be to them that resolvedly make so cursed an use of such comfortable Doctrine and that suck such poison out of so sweet and strong a cordial, for fainting Saints, under the deep sense of their short-comings, in that which they would as fain be at, as ever they would be saved, and be in heaven: God will not certainly take that for willingness, nor will it be a ground of peace to the Conscience, that is not waited with designes, and endeavours through grace to improve and make use of present opportunities of doing duty, and with some measure of serious pressing towards the mark.

But it may be Asked, Wherein consists this willingness,Page 312or what is implied in it? For answer, I would say there are (beside what is held forth in the distinctions that we offered the other day); These five things in it, 1. An high esteem? an pryzyng of all the steps of Holiness (as was said before) I esteem, (sayeth the Psalmist, Psalm 119. v. 128.) all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; There is no peice of holiness, but the man that is thus willing loves it, and

esteems it, were it to give all his goods to the poor, and his body to be urned, when he is called to it, to be reproached, demed, and ill spoken of, for Christ's and the Gospels sake, as well as to pray, hear the word read, and sanctifie the Sabbath, o do anything that may gain respect to him from men; and that not only from the awe of God, that is on his Spirit, but out of love to the thing; he would not wish oe command to be changed, or alered? even the most sublimely spiritual, and most difficultly practicable, letbe dashed out of the book of God: Whereas th hyporire. f he try narrowly, will find that he doth on the matter, at least wish, that such and such a sin had been allowed, not forbidden at least; and that such and such a duty had not been commanded; as the young man, who was bidden sell all that he had, and give to the poor, could not digest that command, but declared by his practice, and refusing to obey i, that he thought it not to be right, and that he esteemed it not as such and o on the matter wished, there had ever been such a command.

2ly. It hath a desire to be at the thing, the? man's hearts desire is to be at holiness; his great wish is that of the Pslmist, Psalm 119:7. O that my wayes were directed to ??? thy precepts The desire of his Soul is towards the remembrance of him, and of his Name; as it is Isai. 26:8. d with Nehemiah, he desires to fear God's name; He not only desires Peace with God and Heaven, but also holi and honesty in his Walk; He breaths after that as after Heaven; And he cannot be satisfied with the hope o Heaven, some few years hence, if he want holinessPage 313for the time, that want makes his very heart sick. 3ly,

It hath an exceeding great delight in holiness; Nothing is more refreshing to him, thousands of Gold and Silver, a Crown and a Kingdom will not satisfie him so much as holiness; I delight in the law of God (saith the apostle Romans 7.) After the inner man; The Word of God is sweeter to him then the honey? and the honey Comb; Its the joy and rejoycing of his heart; And when he finds any sin prevented, or stricken at the root of it, its refreshing, delightsome, and satisfying to his very Soul. 4. It hath a pressing endeavour after the use of all Means whereby he may win to that pitch of Holiness which he would be at; He would ain be spontaneous, willing of his own accord in following his duty; as its sai oIacob, that he thought his seven years service for Rachel, to be but as a few days, for the love he had to her; so this willingness maketh the Sabbath seem short, and many years in the painful Service of God? when it goes with him, to seem but as a few days; because of the love that he hath to him, and the delight that he hath in the Service of so sweet a Master; It puts him to press hard towards the mark, as a man on the Spur running a Race out over all Rubs in his Way, he pursues as earnestly and eagerly after holiness, as if his Justification before God depended on it. 5. It hath all these deliberately, and some way constantly, and not by guess, as it were, and by fits and starts, or by evanishing little flashes at a Communion, under sickness, or some great fear; out it is (as I just now said) a deliberat and continued willingness, as to the series and strain of it, though it hath its own failings intermixed and partial interruptions; its with him as it was with him who

said, Psalm 119. ver. 57. I have said that I would keep thy words; It is his deliberate choice, as when a man chooseth such a thing, his willingness to it is the result of his deliberation and choice; so this man's heart willeth holiness as his deliberately resolved and determined choice: All ye then that lay any claime to this willingness to live honestly, see well that it be thus qualified;Page 314And I do in the Name of the Lord solemnly Charge such of you whose hearts were never towards holiness, that ye presume not to meddle with the Consolation that waits on this honest willingness, or this willingness to live honestly; and if any such shall offer to drink it, God shall make you with pain, even to renting (as it were) of your very Bowels, vomit it up again, and your confidence shall be utterly rejected, and root you out of your Tabernacle.

The 3, Use serves to clear, ease and comfort, these that design and endeavour to be tender in their Walk (the third sort of persons, with whom we said this Doctrine deals) who will be ready to object, alace we have much corruption, and many failings and breakings forth of that corruption: We shall not deny but take for-granted what ye say; yet your great corruption, and many sins should put you to the serious exercise of Repentance, and self-loathing, but should not where this willingness is, break your peace; because Conscience should pity where God pities, who pities his honestly willing people as a Father pitieth his Children. But such will further object,Ah! our sins have sad aggravations, we know we are wrong, and in ill case, and yet we some way ly still, at least do not

effectually bestir ourselves to win out of it: For Answer, I would enquire, do you allow yourselves in that? There is great difference betwixt your knowing that ye sin, and your sinning willingly; Paul sees a law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind, and yet says, what I do, I allow not; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I know not: I shall readily grant that there would be much honesty, singleness and humility here: Yet God allows peace on a poor captive sinner, who knowing the thing that he doth to be ill, yet approves it not, nor himself in it? But such will yet again object, How can we have peace, so long as we have sin in us? For answer, I would say, That its one thing to have peace with corruption, and another thing to have peace with Conscience;Page 315Corruption and Conscience are as two contrary parties; a man may be in league with the one party, when he is pursuing the War with the other; yea, except a man have War with corruption, he cannot have peace with his Conscience; And though when two parties are in confederacy, a third may come and beat the one of the two off the Field, yet that will not dissolve or break the League, except there be a willing yielding toward compliance with the contrary party; yea, fighting still, and refusing to yield when the beaten party is weak, is the greater evidence of honesty; so is it when Conscience and we are in League together, though corruption beat us, if we yield not, it will not break peace; as it was with holy Ioh, chap. 31. who will do nothing that may wrong his Conscience; and though corruption should sometimes prevail over him, who hath made a

League with Conscience, yet he will not submit to it as his Lord? and lawful Sovereign; and so long as it is thus, it will not break the peace; yea, there may be a good testimony of Conscience under such a sad and wrestling exercise: And though we would not have every Traitor, base compliant, or run-away, to meddle with this Consolation; Yet sincerely-willing Souls, that are doing their outmost to maintain the fight, and to keep the field, and yet fall under a surprisal, and get some defeat, may warrantably lay claim to it, though with much repentance and self-loathing; and may have some peace and calmness in this, that they had not a voluntary hand in their own defeat; Whereas he that is not serious in the fight, can have no such ground of peace, because he has been complying with, or conniving at Corruption, or not seriously striving, nor protesting against it; but where there is a testimony that none of these things are, the League and Covenant that is betwixt the man and his Conscience may stand, and he may have, and ought to maintain his peace.

That we may come to a close of this Discourse and Text, take some Characters of this willingness to live honestly,Page 316where its sincere: And 1. Where it is, the more that Corruption get victory, the more it is hated, and the more holy discontentment follows upon it; The prevailing of corruption stirs, awaks and provocks the Christians indignation the more against it; he was angry at it before; but when at any time it makes him founder, or fall before it, his anger increases and rises to a holy rage against it; Yea when he is wrestling with his own

corruption, and cannot get it mastered, and brought down as he would, he is the more set against it; and in his complaining of it, he will readily have the more weighty and aggravating Expressions of it; as the apostle hath it, Romans 7. when he crys? O wretched man that I am and as Asaph hath, Psalm 73. When he says, So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee: Which is a real proof that he connives not at Corruption, even when it it prevailing over him; he hath not only a hatred of the evil, but even then when it prevaieth, and the more it seemeth to prevail, the more he hates it. 2. Where this willingness is, there is much prayer to God, and wrestling with him therein, to attain more and more holiness; as we may see in the Psalmist, who says to God, Psalm 119. vers, 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy Statutes; and verse 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from thy Commandments; and verse 27. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts; and verse 35. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight, and so forth. We know not if there be many that are much in prayer to God for holiness as a choice and desirable mercy, and that are striving to maintain and keep up the fight against their corruption; but surely if this be not, men cannot have peace on this ground of willingness to live honestly. 3ly. Where this willingness is, there will be nothing a greater burden and affliction to a person, then when corruption prevails; as we use to say, there is nothing that troubles a man more then not to get his will, or to have his will thwrtd and crossed; even so there is

nothing that troublesPage 317the sincere man more than when hypocrisie steals ??? upon him, and his corruption prevails over him, so that he cannot get his will of it: Here we would distinguish betwixt thwarting of the mind, and interrupting the calmnes of the Conscience; The mind may be thwated and crossed by the prevailing of sin, when there is still ground of peace, and calmness of Conscience; its one thing to have disquietness of mind, and another thing to have peace of Conscience broken, the least stirring of corruption may and should, yea, very readily will cross and afflict the sincere Christians mind, when he cannot get his will of it, but holiness being his honest design and purpose, it ought not to break his peace, though I grant it often does so; However sincere willingness makes the man to look on the prevailling of corruption, as his greatest burden, to lament heavily over the body of death, and to cry o because of it, O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver? me from it? Alace, I cannot get my will of it, nor because of it, to be so holy as I would; It is not unworthy the remarking, that all the outward afflictions, and persecutions that the apostle met with, never drew such an expression from him, as the indwelling and stirring of the body of death did, O miserable man tha I am! He could and did rejoyce in the midst of these other tribulations; which plainly says? that he looked at this, as his greatest cross and affliction; and the thing in all the world that made him account himself most miserable: They who under the pretext of willingness to lie honestly, are not troubled with the stirrings and

prevaillings of their corruption, nor know what it is to groan under them, as their burden, who slight challenges, and neglect repentance, neither have, nor can have the solid peace and calmness of Conscience that flow from it. 4ly? A man that is seriously willing to be at holiness, and to live honestly, is a man who is often viewing the inward sinfulness, and corruption of his nature, who is well acquainted with it, and who loaths it, and himself becausePage 318of it, he can (to say so) tell two ill tales of himself, when another, it may be, has not one to tell of him; O! (says he) its at my heart that ails me; none could speak of the sin that was in Paul, at the rate that himself does, though he had less of it dwelling in him, then most of Christians living have: O! but a man that is seriously aiming at holiness, is well acquainted with the frowardness and rebellion of his own heart, and large in the expressions of the deceit, and wickedness that is in it; he will be far from coming to God, as the Pharisee did, in the ruff of his spiritual pride. with Lord, I thank thee. I am not as other men, nor like this Publican; And as many carnal gossellers do, with, we thank God, we have an honest mind, while in the mean time they take liberty to sin, and are at no pains to mortify it, nor to live to God; Nay, but his complaint will sadly be, ah! I have a heart that is like the raging Sea, my corruption leads me captive, all the thoughts and imaginations of my heart, naturally are wicked and ill, only, and continually ill; and yet he rests not on his complaints, but seeks to win above the grounds of them; the reason is, his great desire to live honestly, makes what is contrary to it, to be so much the

more hated, wearied of, and even despyted; he likes his corruption worst, and abhors it most; when it prevails over him; he loves to have sin discovered, but he hates that which is discovered. 5ly. The sincerly willing man makes no great account of his own honesty, he is far from thinking that he hath anything to boast, or to be proud of, he loves holiness so very well, that he thinks not much of what he hath attained, so as to make him halt and sit down there as if he needed go no further; he forgets all that's behind, in that respect, and says with the apostle, Philippians 3. according to his measure, Not as if I had attained, or were already perfyt, one thing I do, forgetting these things that are ehind, and reaching forth unto these things that are before, I press towards the mark, for the ???; He is so taken up with pressing desires, and endeavou to bePage 319forward, that anything he hath attained, he is not much taken, and far less vainly tickled with it, as these proud Pharisees were with their giving of almes: The attainment that many offer, as an evidence of their honest willingness, and their pleading for it with their proud boasting of it, is a shrewd evidence of their real unwillingness, in so far as they sit down contently with what they have attained, and press not at ??? to be forward, as it becomes those to do, that are far behind; The truly willing honest man sees so great a deal of his way before him, that he scarce endures to look back on what of it is past; he is ready to think and ay, I have so manythings to do for God, that I someway forget all the good turns that I have done, as to sitting down with them, or boasting of them. 6ly. The seriously willing man can

never be fully satisfied with any victory he hath obtained over his corruption, or out-gate from it, nor dare he rest on it; Neither hath he peace, until he come to look to God in Christ, and to the hope of outgate through him, I thank God (sayeth the apostle, Romans 7.) through Jesus Christ our Lord; and then followes the conclusion, so then with my mind I my self serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin; And Chap. 8:1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit: This character hath three branches, 1. The man that is wrestling with, and groaning under the body of death, loves well and dearly the hope of an outgate, and now and then longs to have the pins of his tabernacle loosed, and to be freed from that evil neighbour, and troublesome guest of indwelling corruption; and it is unexpressibly sweet and refreshing to him, to look to that desirable day, when he and it shall finally part company. 2ly. He hath never the settled hope of an outgate, but when he looks to God, through Christ; he looks to God, and thinks himself eternally obliged to him, for his giving Christ to deliver him; and he looks to Christ for strength to stand it out in the battel. and for obtaining a full and final out-gate in the close, and at last. AndPage 3203ly. A man that hath this willingness, It highly commends the free grace of God to him, it makes Christ very lovely to him, and withall it makes sin to be exceeding sinful in his own eyes; he loves Christ well, because he hath the hope of an out-gate through him; and he loves grace well, because the poor man, who is wrestling and warring with

his corruption, and often plunged in the puddle, and mire by it, hath through grace the hope of a final out-gate from it; and it makes sin to become out of measure loathsome to him; and the higher Christ Jesus and his grace are exalted, the more vile and abominable is sin in his sight, O! but it be safe for the Soul to ride at anchor betwixt these two.

We shall only add, That this sincerely, and honestly willing man, is one that hath two parts in him; and as he hath two parts, so he labours to give every part its own due; and unless this be done, there is no keeping of peace and calmness in the Conscience; if a man should look on himself, as wholly renewed, it were rank presumption, having still a remainder of corruption in him; And if (being a sound Believer in Christ) he should look on himself, as wholly unrenewed, It were gross unbelief: Therefore he attributes to corruption its due, and is humbled for it before the Lord; and he acknowledges the grace of God in him, and any honest protest against in, attributing it to grace; and gives God the praise of his grace, after Paul's example, who says, Romans 7. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord; so then with my mind, I my self serve the Law of God, and with my flesh the law of sen; He takes with it, that with his unrenewed part, he serves the law of sin, so that he was not come at perfection in holiness; and yet asserts, that in his mind he serves the law of God, yet so that he served not the Law of God, as of himself, or in his own strength, but as renewed and assisted by grace; For 2 Corinthians 3:5. He says, Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, as of

ourselves to think anything, but our sufficiency is of God; He acknowledges that of himself, as of himself he sinned,Page 321and could not so much as think a good thought, but as renewed, and that not as of himself, but a of God, he served God; his sufficiency being allennarly of him, who enabled him to anything that was good; and as it is, 1 Corinthians15. Not I, but the grace of God in me: the same man that says, he cannot so much as think what is good as of himself, that he can do nothing, yet says, I can do all things through Christ strengthning me, Philp. 4:10. O strange! This way of distinguishing is both a notable evidence of a man that aims honesty at peace, and is the way to peace of Conscience; and otherwayes, if it be neglected, whilst Christians have corruption in them, they can never have solid peace.