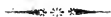


SERMON III.

Men naturally God's Enemies.



ROMANS V. 10.

FOR IF WHEN WE WERE ENEMIES, WE WERE RECONCILED
TO GOD BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON.

THE apostle, from the beginning of the epistle to the beginning of this chapter, hath insisted on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And having particularly spoken to that, in this chapter he goes on to consider the benefits that are consequent on justification. And there are three that flow from justification, which are here spoken of, viz. peace with God, present happiness, and hope of glory. Peace with God is mentioned in the first verse. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." In the following verses he speaks of present blessedness, and hope of glory, as benefits accompanying justification. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

And concerning this benefit of the hope of glory, the apostle does particularly take notice of two things, viz. the blessed nature of this hope, and the sure ground of it.

1. He insists on the blessed nature of this hope, in that it enables us to glory in tribulations. This excellent nature of true Christian hope is described in the following words: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy

Ghost, which is given unto us," verse 3....5. q. d. Through hope of a blessed reward, that will abundantly more than make up for all tribulation, we are enabled to bear tribulation with patience ; patiently bearing, and patiently waiting for the reward. And patience works experience ; for when we thus bear tribulation with patient waiting for the reward, this brings experience of the earnest of the reward, viz. the earnest of the Spirit, in our feeling the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. So that our hope does not make us ashamed ; though we do bear tribulation, our hope is not disappointed ; for in the midst of our tribulation, we experience those blessed incomes of the Spirit in our souls, that make even a time of tribulation sweet to us ; and is such an earnest as abundantly confirms our hope ; and so experience works hope.

2. The apostle takes notice of the sure and abundant ground there is for this hope ; or the abundant evidence we have, that we shall obtain the glory hoped for, in that peace we have with God, in our justification through Christ's blood ; because that while we were without strength, in due time Christ died for us ; while we were ungodly and sinners, enemies to God and Christ, verse 6....10. The apostle's argument is exceeding clear and strong : That if God has done already so great a thing for us, as to give us Christ, to die and shed his precious blood for us, which was vastly the greatest thing, we need not doubt but that he will bestow life upon us, after all this is already done. It is but a small thing for God actually to bestow eternal life, after it is purchased, to what it is for him to give his own Son to die, to purchase it. The giving Christ to purchase it, was virtually all ; it included the whole grace of God in salvation. When Christ had purchased salvation at such a dear rate, all the difficulty was got through, all was virtually over and done. It is a small thing, in comparison, for God to bestow salvation, after it has been thus purchased at a full price. Sinners that are justified by the death of Christ, are already virtually saved : The thing is, as it were, done ; what remains is no more than the necessary consequence of what is done. Christ when he died made an end of sin ; and when he rose from the

dead, he did virtually rise with the elect ; he brought them up from death with him, and ascended into heaven with them. And therefore, when this is already done, and we are thus reconciled to God through the death of his Son, we need not fear but that we shall be saved by his life. The love of God appears much more in his giving his Son to die for sinners, than in giving eternal life after Christ's death.

The giving of Christ to die for us is here spoken of as a much greater thing, than the actual bestowment of life, on two accounts.

1. That this is all that has any difficulty in it.

2. When God did this for us, he did it for us as sinners and enemies. But in actually bestowing salvation on us after we are justified, we are not looked upon as sinners. After we are justified, God does not look on us any longer as sinners, but as perfectly righteous persons ; he beholds no iniquity in us. We are no more enemies, for then we are reconciled. When God gave Christ to die for the elect, he looked on them as they are in themselves ; but in actually bestowing eternal life, he does not look on them as they are in themselves, but as they are in Christ.

There are three epithets used in the text and context, as appertaining to sinners as they are in themselves.

1. They are *without strength*, they cannot help themselves, verse 6...8.

2. They are *ungodly*, or sinners.

3. They are *enemies*, as in the text.

DOCTRINE.

Natural Men are God's Enemies.

God, though the Creator of all things, yet has some enemies in the world.

Men in general will own, that they are, or have been sinners. There are few, if any at all, whose consciences are blinded as not to be sensible they have been guilty of sin. Almost sinners will own that they have bad hearts. They will own that they do not love God so much as they should de-

and that they are not so thankful as they ought to be for mercies ; and that in many things they fail. And yet few of them are sensible that they are God's enemies. They do not see how they can be truly so called ; they are not sensible that they wish God any hurt, or endeavor to do him any.

But we see that the scripture speak of them as enemies to God. So in our text, and elsewhere, " And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works." Col. i. 21. " The carnal mind is enmity against God." Rom. vii. 7.

And that all natural, or unregenerate men are indeed so, is what I shall endeavor now particularly to show. Which I propose to do in the following method :

1. I shall show, in what respects they are enemies to God.
2. To how great a degree they are enemies.
3. Why they are enemies.
4. I shall answer some objections.

1. I am to show, in what respects they are enemies to God.

1. Their enmity appears in their judgments ; in the judgment and esteem they have of God. They have a very mean esteem of God. Men are ready to entertain a good esteem of those with whom they are friends : They are apt to think highly of their qualities, to give them their due praises ; and if there be defects, to cover them. But those to whom they are enemies, they are disposed to have mean thoughts of ; they are apt to entertain a dishonorable opinion of them ; they will be ready to look contemptably upon any thing that is praiseworthy in them.

So it is with natural men towards God. They entertain very low and contemptible thoughts of God. Whatever honor and respect they may pretend and make a show of towards God, if their practice be examined, it will show, that they do certainly look upon him to be a Being, that is but little to be regarded. They think him one that is worthy of very little honor and respect, not worthy to be much taken notice of. The language of their hearts is, " Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ?" Exod. v. 2. " What is the Almighty,

that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" Job. xxi. 15. They count him worthy neither to be loved nor feared. They dare not behave with that slight and disregard towards one of their fellow creatures, when a little raised above them in power and authority, as they dare and do towards God. They value one of their equals much more than God, and are ten times more afraid of offending such an one, than of displeasing the God that made them. They cast such exceeding contempt on God, as to prefer every vile lust before him. And every worldly enjoyment is set higher in their esteem than God. A morsel of meat, or a few pence of worldly gain, is preferred before him. God is set last and lowest in the esteem of natural men.

2. They are enemies in the natural relish of their souls. They have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. God is not such a sort of being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God, yet from what they hear of him, and from what is manifest by the light of nature of God, they do not like him. By his being endowed with such attributes as he is, they have an aversion to him. They hear God is an infinitely holy pure, and righteous Being, and they do not like him upon this account; they have no relish of such kind of qualifications; they take no delight in contemplating them. It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate these attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness, nor taste any sweetness in them. And upon the account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all the other of his attributes. They have greater aversion to him because he is omniscient and knows all things; because his omniscience is an holy omniscience. They are not pleased that he is omnipotent, and can do whatever he pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to his mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like his immutability, because by this he never will be otherwise than he is, an infinitely holy God.

It is from this disrelish that natural men have of the attributes of God, that they do not love to have much to do with

God. The natural tendency of the heart of man is to fly from God, and keep at a distance from him ; and get as far off as possible from God. A natural man is averse to communion with God, and is naturally disinclined to those exercises of religion wherein he has immediately to do with God. It is said of wicked man, " God is not in all his thoughts." Psal. x. 4. It is evident that the mind of man is naturally averse to thinking about God ; and hence, if any thoughts of God be suggested to the mind, they soon go away ; such thoughts are not apt to rest in the minds of natural men. If any thing is said to them of God, they are apt to forget it : It is like seed that falls upon the hard path, it does not at all enter in, and the fowls of the air soon catch it away ; or like seed that falls upon a rock. Other things will stick ; but divine things do, as it were, rebound ; and if they were cast into the mind, they meet with that there which soon thrusts them out again ; they meet with no suitable entertainment but are soon chased away.

Hence also it is that natural men are so difficultly persuaded to be constant in the duty of secret prayer. They would not be so averse to spending a quarter of an hour, night and morning, in some bodily labor, but it is because they are averse to a work wherein they have so immediately to do with God, and they naturally love to keep at a distance from God.

3. Their wills are contrary to his will. God's will and theirs are exceeding cross the one to the other. God wills those things that they hate, and are most averse to ; and they will those things that God hates. Hence they oppose God in their wills : They set up their wills against the will of God. There is a dreadful, violent, and obstinate opposition of the will of natural men to the will of God.

They are very opposite to the commands of God. It is from the enmity of the will, that " the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. vii. 7. Hence natural men are enemies to God's government. They are not loyal subjects, but enemies to God, considered as Lord of the world. They are entire enemies to God's authority,

4. They are enemies to God in their affections. There is in every natural man a seed of malice against God : Yea, there is such a seed of this rooted in the heart of man naturally. And it does often dreadfully break forth and appear. Though it may in a great measure lie hid in secure times, when God lets men alone, and they meet with no great disturbance of body or mind ; yet if God does but touch men a little in their consciences, by manifesting to them a little of his wrath for their sins, this often times brings out the principle of malice against God, which is exercised in dreadful heart-risings, inward wranglings and quarrelings, and blasphemous thoughts ; wherein the heart is like a viper, hissing, and spitting poison at God. There is abundance of such a principle in the heart. And however free from it the heart may seem to be when let alone and secure, yet a very little thing will set it in a rage. Temptations will show what is in the heart. The alteration of a man's circumstances will often discover the heart : A change of circumstance will bring that out which was hid before. Pharaoh had no more natural enmity against God than other men ; and if other natural men had been in Pharaoh's circumstances, the same corruptions would have put forth themselves in as dreadful a manner. The Scribes and Pharisees had naturally no more of a principle of malice in their hearts against Christ than other men ; and other natural men would, in their case, and having as little restraint, exercise as much malice against Christ as they did. When wicked men come to be cast into hell, then their malice against God will appear. Then will it appear what dreadful malice they have in their hearts. Then their hearts will appear as full of malice as hell is full of fire. But when wicked men come to be in hell, there will be no new corruptions put into their hearts ; but only old ones will then break forth without restraint. That is all the difference between a wicked man on earth and a wicked man in hell, that in hell there will be more to stir up the exercise of corruption, and less to restrain it than on earth ; but there will be no new corruption put in. A wicked man will have no principle of corruption in hell, but what he carried to hell with him. There are now

the seeds of all the malice that will be exercised then. The malice of damned spirits is but a branch of the root, that is in the hearts of natural men now. A natural man has a heart like the heart of a devil ; but only as corruption is more under restraint in man than in devils.

5. They are enemies in their practice. " They walk contrary to him." Lev. xxvi. 21. Their enmity against God does not lie still, but they are exceeding active in it. They are engaged in a war against God. Indeed they cannot hurt God, he is so much above them ; but yet they do what they can. They oppose themselves to his honor and glory : They oppose themselves to the interest of his kingdom in the world : They oppose themselves to the will and command of God ; and oppose him in his government. They oppose God in his works, and in his declared designs ; while God is doing one work, they are doing the contrary, and as much as in them lies, counter working ; God seeks one thing, and they seek directly the contrary. They list under Satan's banner, and are his willing soldiers in his opposing the kingdom of God.

I proceed now,

II. To say something with respect to the degree of this enmity ; tending in some measure to show, how great enemies natural men are to God.

1. They have no love to God ; their enmity is mere enmity, without any mixture of love. A natural man is wholly destitute of any principle of love to God, and never had the least exercise of this love. Some natural men have had better natural tempers than others ; and some are better educated than others ; and some live a great deal more soberly than others ; but one has no more love to God than another ; for none have the least spark of that. The heart of a natural man is as destitute of love to God, as dead, stiff, cold corpse is of vital heat. " I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you," John v. 43.

2. Every faculty and principle of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity against God. The nature of man is wholly infected with this enmity against God. He is tainted with it throughout, in all his faculties and principles. And

not only so, but every faculty is entirely and perfectly subdued under it, and enslaved to it. This enmity against God has the absolute possession of the man. The Apostle Paul, speaking of what he was naturally, says, "I am carnal, sold under sin." Rom. vii. 14.

The understanding is under the reigning power of this enmity against God, so that it is entirely darkened and blinded with regard to the glory and excellency of God. The will is wholly under the reigning power of it. All the affections are governed by enmity against God : There is not one affection, nor one desire, that a natural man has, or that he is ever stirred up to act from, but what contains in it enmity against God. A natural man is as full of enmity against God, as any viper, or any venomous beast, is full of poison.

3. The power of the enmity of natural men against God, is so great, that it is insuperable by any finite power. It has too great and strong a possession of the heart, to be overcome by any created power. Natural men cannot overcome their own enmity, let them strive never so much with their own hearts. Indeed, a natural man never sincerely strives to root out his enmity against God ; his endeavors are hypocritical : He delights in his enmity, and chooses it. Neither can others do it, though they sincerely, and to their utmost, endeavor to overcome this enmity. If godly friends and neighbors labor to persuade them to cast away their enmity, and become friends to God, they cannot persuade them to it. Though ministers use never so many arguments and entreaties, and set forth the loveliness of God, and tell them of the goodness of God to them, and hold forth to them God's own gracious invitations, and intreat them never so earnestly to cast off their opposition and enmity, and to be reconciled, and become friends, yet they cannot overcome it : Still they will be as bad enemies to God as ever they were. The tongue of men or of angels cannot persuade them to relinquish their opposition to God. Miracles will not do it. How many miracles did the children of Israel see in the wilderness ! Yet their enmity against God remained, as appeared by their often murmuring. And how often did Christ use miracles to this end

without effect? But the Jews yet obstinately stood out. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matth. xxiii. 37. And how great did the enmity of these people appear to be after all; how spiteful and venomous were their hearts towards Christ, as appears to be after all; how spiteful and venomous were their hearts towards Christ, as appears by their cruel treatment of him in his last sufferings!

They are mortal enemies to God, i. e. They have that enmity in their hearts, that strikes at the life of God. A man may be no friend to another, and may have an ill spirit towards him, and yet not be his mortal enemy: His enmity will be satisfied and glutted with something short of the death of the person. But it is not so with natural men with respect to God, they are mortal enemies. Indeed natural men cannot kill God. They have no hope of it, and so make no attempts. It has ever been looked upon so much above their power, that, it may be, it is not thought of. But this is no argument that this is not the tendency of the principle.

Natural men are enemies to the dominion of God; and their nature shows their good will to pull him down out of heaven, and dethrone him if they could! Yea, they are enemies to the being of God, and would be glad if there was no God, and therefore it necessarily follows, that they would kill him, and cause that there should be none, if they could.

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Psal. xiv. 1. This saying in his heart, there is no God, implies in it, not only an aptness to question the being of God, but it implies that he inclines it should be so. His heart says, i. e. his inclination says. The words in the original are thus: "The fool hath said in his heart, no God." The words, *there is*, are in the original, but were put in by the translators. Now, if we read the words so, "The fool hath said in his heart, no God," they will perhaps show the Psalmist's meaning more fully than as they are now translated. "The fool hath said in his heart, no God," That is, I would have none, I do not

desire any, I wish there was none ; that would suit my inclination best. That is the language of the inclinations of a natural man ; no God. Let there be no God for me, let me have no God ; let the world be emptied of a God, he stands in my way. And hence he is an Atheist in his heart, he is ready to think there is none ; and that also is ready to be the language of his heart, " There is no God."

The viper's poison is deadly poison ; and when he bites, he seeks the precious life. And men are in this respect a generation of vipers. Their poison, which is enmity against God, seeks the life of God. " O generation of vipers." Matth. iii. 7. " The wicked are estranged from the womb..... Their poison is like the poison of a serpent." Psal. lviii. 3, 4. " For their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah ; their grapes are the grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps," Deut. xxxii. 32, 33.

The divine nature being immortal, and infinitely out of our reach, there is no other trial possible, whether the enmity that is naturally in the heart against God, be mortal or no, but only for God to take on him the human nature and become man, so as to come within man's reach, that they should be capable of killing him. There can be no other experiment but this. And this trial there has been. And what has been the event ? Why, when once God became man, and came down to dwell here among such vipers as fallen men, they hated him and persecuted him ; and never left him till they had imbrued their hands in his blood. There was a multitude of them that appeared combined in this design. Nothing would do, but he must be put to death. All cry out, " Crucify him, crucify him. Away with him." They had rather Barabbas, who greatly deserved death, should live, than he should not die. Nothing would restrain them from it ; even all his preaching, and all his miracles ; but they would kill him. And it was not the ordinary kind of execution that would satisfy them ; but it must be the most cruel, and most ignominious they possibly could invent. And they, in the time of it added to it, and aggravated it as much as ever

they could, by mocking him, and spitting on him, and scourging him. This shows what the nature and tendency of man's enmity against God is ; here it appeared in its true colors.

5. Natural men are greater enemies to God than they are to any other being whatsoever. Natural men may be very great enemies to their fellow creatures, but not so great as they are to God. There is no other being that so much stands in sinners way, in those things that they chiefly set their hearts upon, as God. Men are wont to hate their enemies in proportion to two things, viz. their opposition to what they look upon to be their interest, and their power and ability. One that is looked upon a great and powerful enemy, will be more hated than one that is weak and impotent. But none of their enemies are so powerful as God.

Man's enmity to other enemies may be got over : Time may wear it out, and they may be reconciled and be friends. But natural men, without a mighty work of God to change their hearts, will never get over their enmity against God. They are greater enemies to God than they are to the devil. Yea, they treat the devil as their friend and master, and join in with him against God. " Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do : He was a murderer from the beginning," John viii. 44.

I now proceed,

III. To show why, or on what account they are enemies to God.

The general reason is, That God is opposite to them in the worship of their idols.

The apostacy of man does summarily consist in departing from the true God to idols ; forsaking his Creator, and setting up other things in his room.

When God at first created man, he was united to his Creator ; the God that made him was his God. The true God was the object of his highest respect, and had the possession of his heart. Love to God was the principle in his heart, that ruled over all other principles ; and every thing in the soul was wholly in subjection to it. But when man fell, he departed from the true God, and the union that was between

his heart and his Creator was broken : He wholly lost the principle of love he had to God. And henceforward man cleave to other gods. He gave that respect to the creature which is due to the Creator. When God ceased to be the object of his supreme love and respect, other things of course became the objects of it.

Man will necessarily have something that he respects as his God. If man does not give his highest respect to the God that made him, there will be something else that has the possession of it. Men will either worship the true God, or some idol : It is impossible it should be otherwise ; something will have the heart of man. And that which a man gives his heart to, may be called his god ; and therefore, when man by the fall extinguished all love to the true God, he set up the creature in his room.

And so man came to be at enmity against the true God. For having lost his esteem and love of the true God, and set up other gods in his room, and in opposition to him ; and God still demanding their worship, and opposing them in their worship of those false gods ; and man continuing still to worship idols, enmity necessarily follows.

That which a man chooses for his god, he sets his heart mainly upon. And nothing will so soon excite enmity as opposition in that which is dearest. A man will be the greatest enemy to him who opposes him in what he chooses for his god : He will look on none as standing so much in his way, as he that would deprive him of his god. " Ye have taken away my gods ; and what have I more ?" Judg. xviii. 24. A man in this respect cannot serve two masters that stand in competition for his service. And not only if he serves one, he cannot serve the other, but if he cleaves to one he will necessarily hate the other. " No man can serve two masters : For either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Matth. vi. 24. And this is the very reason that men hate God. In this case it is as when two kings set up in one kingdom in opposition one to the other ; and they both challenge the same throne, and are competitors for the

same crown ; they that are loyal, hearty subjects to the one, will necessarily be enemies to the other. It always happens so, nor indeed can it be otherwise.

As that which is a man's god, is the object of his highest love ; so that God, who chiefly opposes him in it, must be the object of his greatest hatred.

The gods which a natural man worships, instead of the God that made him, are himself and the world. He has withdrawn his esteem and honor from God, and proudly exalts himself as Satan did : He was not willing to be in such subjection ; and therefore rebelled, and set up himself for God. So a natural man in the proud and high thoughts he has of himself, sets up himself upon God's throne. And he gives his heart to the world, worldly riches, and worldly pleasures, and worldly honors ; they have the possession of that regard which is due to God. The apostle sums up all the idolatry of wicked men in their love of the world. " Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John ii. 15, 16. And the Apostle James observes, that a man must necessarily be the enemy of the true God, if he be a friend of the world. " Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." James iv.

All the sin that men commit, is what they do in the service of their idols : There is no one act of sin, but what is an act of service to some false god. And therefore wherein so ever God opposes sin in them, he is opposite to their worship of their idols ; on which account they are enemies to God.

God opposes them in their service of their idols in the following respects.

1. He manifests his utter abhorrence of their worship of their idols. Their idols are what they love above all things ; they would by no means part with them. This wickedness is sweet unto them, Job'xx. 12. If you take them away what have they more ? If they lose their idols, they lose their

all. To rend away their idols from them would be more grievous to them, than to rend body and soul asunder ; it is like rending their heart in twain. They love their idolatry ; but God does not approve of it, but exceedingly hates it ; he hates it implacably, and will by no means be reconciled to it ; and therefore they hate him. God declares an infinite hatred of every act of sin which they do ; or every act that they do in the service of their false gods. He approves of it in no part, but hates it all. He declares himself to be an holy God, and a jealous God ; a God that is very jealous of his own honor ; and that greatly abhors the giving that honor to another.

2. He utterly forbids their cleaving to those idols, and all the service that they do to them. He not only shows that he dislikes it, but he utterly forbids it ; and demands that they should worship him, and serve him only, and give their hearts wholly to him, without tolerating any competitor. He allows them to serve their idols in no degree ; but requires them to cast them away utterly, and pay no more worship to them at any time. He requires a final parting with their idols. Not only that they should refrain from them for a while, but cast them away forever, and never gratify their idolatrous respect to them any more. This is so exceeding contrary to them, and what they are so averse to, and so obstinate in their refusal of, that they are enemies to God for it. They cannot endure God's commands, because they forbid all that which their hearts are so engaged in. And as they hate God's command's, so they hate him whose commands they are.

3. He threatens them with everlasting damnation for their service of their idols. He threatens them for their past idolatry. He threatens them with his eternal wrath, for their having departed from him, and their having chosen to themselves other gods. He threatens them for that disposition they have in their hearts to cleave to other gods : He threatens the least degrees of that respect which they have in their hearts to their idols. He manifests that he will not tolerate any regard to them, but has fixed eternal death, as the wages of every degree of it. And he will not release them from their guilt ; he holds them to their obligations ; he will not acquit

them at all ; and he will accept of no atonement that they can make. He will not forgive them, whatever they do in religion ; whatever pains they take ; whatever tears they shed. He will accept of no money or price that they have to offer.

And he threatens every future act of their idolatry. He not only forbids them ever to be guilty of the least act, but forbids them on pain of eternal damnation. So strictly does God prohibit them from the service of their idols, that are so dear to them, that are their all, and which they would on no account part with. He threatens them with everlasting wrath for all exercises of inordinate love of worldly profit ; for all manifestations of inordinate regard to worldly pleasures, or worldly honors. He threatens them with everlasting torments for their selfexaltation. He requires them to deny themselves, and renounce themselves, and to abase themselves at his feet, on pain of bearing his wrath to all eternity.

The strictness of God's law is a principal cause of man's enmity against God. If God were a God that did not so much hate sin ; if he were one who would allow them in the gratification of their lusts, in some degree : And his threatenings were not so awful against all indulgence of their lust ; if his threatenings were not so absolute ; if his displeasure could be appeased by a few tears, and a little reformation, or the like ; they would not be so great enemies, nor hate him so much as they do now. But God shows himself to be an implacable enemy to their idols, to every degree of their service of them ; and has threatened everlasting wrath, infinite calamity for all that they do in the service of their lusts ; and holds them bound under his wrath therefor. And this makes them irreconcilable enemies to him.

For this reason the Scribes and Pharisees were such bitter enemies to Christ, because he showed himself to be such an enemy to their pride, and conceit of their own wisdom, and their selfrighteousness, and inordinate affection of their own honor, which was their God. Natural men are enemies to God, because he is so opposite to them in that in which they place their all. If you go to take away that which is very dear to a man, nothing will provoke him more. God is infi-

nitely opposite to that in which natural men place all their delight, and all their happiness, viz. their gods. He is an enemy to that which natural men value as their greatest honor and highest dignity; and which they trust wholly to, that which is all their dependence, viz. their own righteousness.

Hence natural men are greater enemies to God than they are to any other being. Some of their fellow creatures may stand very much in their way with regard to some things they set their hearts upon; but God opposes them with respect to all their idols, and those gods which are their all. And then God's opposition to their idols, which are above all things dear to them, is infinitely great. None of our fellow creatures ever oppose us in any of our interests so much as God opposes wicked men in their idolatry; for God has an infinite opposition against it. His infinite opposition is manifested by his threatening an infinite punishment, viz. his dreadful wrath to all eternity, misery without end. Hence we need not wonder that natural men are enemies to God.

Having thus shown, in some measure, why natural men are God's enemies, I proceed to the last thing proposed.

IV. To consider and make answer to some objections, that some may be ready to make against this.

Natural men do not generally conceive themselves to be so bad: They have not this notion of themselves, that they are enemies to God. And therefore when they hear such doctrine as this taught them, they stand ready to make objections.

Object. 1. Some natural men may be ready to say, I do not know that I feel any such enmity in my heart against God as is spoken of. I am not sensible that I am such a dreadful enemy, so as to hate God, and to have a mortal enmity against him; and to have a disposition, if I could, to kill him. I feel no such thing in myself, and why should I think that I have such a thing in me? If I have such enmity, why do not I feel it? If I am a mortal enemy, why should I not know it better than any body else? How can others see what is in my heart better than I myself? If I hate one of my fellow creatures, and have a spirit against him, I can feel it inwardly working. To such an objection I would,

Ans. 1. If you do but observe yourself, and search your own heart, unless you are strangely blinded, you may be sensible of these things wherein enmity does fundamentally consist. As particularly, you may be sensible that you have at least had a low and contemptible esteem of God ; and that you in your esteem set the trifles and vanities of this world far above him ; so as to esteem the enjoyment of these things far before the enjoyment of God, and to value these things better than his love. And you may be sensible that you despise the authority of God, and value his commands and his honor but very little. Or if by some means you have blinded yourself now, so as to think you do regard them now, doubtless you can look back and see that you have not regarded them. You may be sensible that you have had a disrelish and aversion towards God ; an opposition to thinking of God, or to have any thing to do with him ; so that it would have been a very uncomfortable task to have been confined to it for any time ; and that when the vanities of the world, at the same time, have been very pleasing to you ; and you have been all swallowed up in them, while you have been averse to the things of religion.

If you look into your heart, it is there plain to be seen, that there in an enmity in your will, that your will is contrary to God's will ; for you have been opposing the will of God all your life long. These things are plain in natural men ; it is nothing but some great delusion that can hide them from you. And these things are the foundation of all enmity ; if these things be in you, all the rest that we have spoken of will follow of course.

2. One reason why you have not more sensibly felt the exercises of malice against God is, that your enmity is now exercised partly in your unbelief of God's being ; and this prevents its appearing in other ways, that otherwise it would. Man has naturally a principle of Atheism in him ; an indisposition to realize God's being, and a disposition to doubt of it. The being of God does not ordinarily seem real to natural men. All the discoveries that there are of God's being, in his works, will not overcome the principle of Atheism that is

in the heart. And though they seem in some measure to be rationally convinced, yet it does not appear real ; the conviction is faint, there is no strong conviction impressed on the mind, that there is a God : And oftentimes they are ready to think that there is none. Now this will prevent the exercise of this enmity that otherwise would be felt ; particularly, it may be an occasion of there not being those sensible exercises of hatred, that otherwise there would be.

It may in some measure be illustrated by this : If you had a rooted malice against another man, a principle that had been long established there ; if you should hear that he was dead, and so should conceive that he had no being, the sensible workings of your malice would not be felt, as when you realized it that he was alive, or that there was such a person ; and that although there be the same thing in the foundation, which would appear, if you should afterwards hear the news contradicted, and perceive that your enemy was still alive ; you would feel the same workings of hatred that you did before. And when you thought he was dead, you might feel the exercise of your enmity, in being glad of it. And thus your not realizing it, that God has a being, may prevent those sensible workings of hatred, that otherwise you would have. If wicked men in this world were sensible of the reality of God's being, as the wicked are in another, they would feel more of that hatred, that men in another world do. The exercise of corruption in one way, may, and often does prevent it working in other ways. As covetousness may prevent the exercise of pride, so atheism may prevent malice ; and yet it may be no argument of there being any the less of a principle of enmity in the heart ; for it is the same enmity working in another way. The same enmity that in this world works by atheism, will in another world where there will be no room for Atheism, work by malice and blasphemy. The same mortal enmity that, if you saw there was a God, might make you to wish him dead, and to desire, if it were possible, to kill him, may now dispose and incline to think there is none. Men are very often apt to think things are so as they would have them to be. The same principle disposes you to

think God has no life, which, if you knew he had, would dispose you, if it were possible, to take it away.

3. If you think that there is a God, yet you do not realize it, that he is such a God as he is. You do not realize it, that he is so holy a God as he is : You do not realize it, that he has such an hatred of sin as indeed he has. You do not realize it, that he is so just a God as he is, that will by no means clear the guilty. But that in the Psalms is applicable to you : “ These things hast thou done, and I kept silence : Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.” *Psalm*, 1. 21. So that if you think there is a God, you do not think there is such a God as there is. And your atheism appears in this, as well as in thinking there is no God. For that God that you think there is, is not that God that indeed is, but another, one of your own feigning, the fruit of your own vain, deluded imagination. So that your objection arises from this, that you do not find such a sensible hatred against that God which you have formed, to suit yourself ; a god that you like better than the true God. But this is no argument that you have not bitter enmity against the true God ; for it was your enmity against the true God, and your not liking him, that has put you upon forming up another in your imagination, that you like better. It is your enmity against those attributes of God’s holiness and justice, and the like, that has put you upon conceiving another, who is not so holy as he is, and does not hate sin so much, and will not be so strictly just in punishing it ; and whose wrath against sin is not so terrible.

But if you was sensible of the vanity of your own conceits, and that God was not such an one as you have imagined ; but that he is, as he is indeed, an infinitely holy, just, sin hating, and sin revenging God, who will not tolerate nor endure the worship of idols, you would be much more liable to feel the sensible exercises of enmity against him, than you are now. And this experience confirms. For we see that when men come to be under convictions, and to be made sensible that God is not as they have heretofore imagined ; but that he is such a jealous, sin hating God, and whose wrath against sin is so dreadful, they are much more apt to have sensible exercises of enmity against God than before.

4. Your having always been taught that God is infinitely above you, and out of your reach, has prevented your enmity's being exercised in those ways that otherwise it would have been. You have always from your infancy been taught, that God is so high, that you cannot hurt him ; that notion has grown up with you. And hence you be not sensible, that you have any disposition to hurt him ; because it has been conceived so impossible, that it has not come into your mind. And hence your enmity has not been exercised in revengeful thoughts ; because revenge has never found any room here ; it has never found any handle to take hold of ; there has been no conception of any such thing, and hence it has lain still. A serpent will not bite, or spit poison at that which it sees at a great distance ; which if it saw near, would do it immediately. Opportunity shows what men be often times, whether friends or enemies. Opportunity to do, puts men in mind of doing ; wakens up such principles as lay dormant before. Opportunity stirs up desire to do, where there was before a disposition that without opportunity would have lain still. If a man has had an old grudge against another, and has a fair opportunity to be revenged, this will revive his malice, and waken up a desire of revenge.

If a great and sovereign prince injures a poor man, and though what he does is looked upon very cruel, that will not ordinarily stir up that passionate revenge, as if he sustained no bigger an injury from one of his equals, because he is so much above him, and out of his reach. Many a man that has appeared calm and meek when he has had no power in his hands, and has not appeared, either to himself or others, to have any disposition to these and those cruel acts ; that yet afterwards, when he came to have opportunity by unexpected advancement or otherwise, has appeared like a ravenous wolf, or devouring lion. So it was with Hazeel. " And Hazeel said, why weepeth my lord ? And he answered, because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel : Their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazeel said, but what

thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing ! And Elisha answered, the Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." 2 Kings viii. 12, 13. Hazael was then a servant ; he had no power in his hands to do as he pleased ; and so that cruel disposition that was in him had lain hid, and he did not himself imagine that it was there : But afterwards, when he became king of Syria and was absolute, and had none to control him ; then it broke out and appeared, and he did as the prophet had foretold. He committed those very acts of cruelty, that he thought it was not in his heart to do. And it was want of opportunity that was the thing that made the difference. It was all in his heart before : He was such a dog then as to do this thing, but only had not had opportunity. And therefore when he seems surpris'd that the prophet should say so of him, all the reason the prophet gives is, "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

And some natural men are such dogs as to do things, if they had opportunity, which they do not imagine it is in their hearts to do. You object against your having a mortal hatred against God ; that you never felt any desire to kill him. But one reason has been, that it has always been conceived so impossible by you, and you have been so sensible how much desires would be in vain, that it has kept down such a desire. But if the life of God were within your reach, and you knew it, it would not be safe one hour. Who knows what thoughts would presently arise in your heart by such an opportunity, and what disposition would be raised up in your heart ! Who would trust your heart, that there would not presently be such thoughts as these, though they are enough to make one tremble to mention them ? "Now I have opportunity to set myself at liberty,....that I need not be kept in continual slavery by the strict law of God. Then I may take my liberty to walk in that way I like best and need not be continually in such slavish fear of God's displeasure. And God has not done well by me in many instances. He has done most unjustly by me, in holding me bound to destruction for unbelief, and other things which I cannot help.....He has shown mercy to others, and re-

fused it to me. I have now an opportunity to deliver myself, and there can be no danger of my being hurt for it : God will not be alive to revenge it. And then there will be no God for us to be terrified about, and so keep us in slavery."

Who would trust your heart, that such thoughts would not arise ? And others much more horrid ! Too dreadful to be mentioned ! And therefore I forbear. Those natural men are foolishly insensible of what is in their own hearts, who think there would be no danger of any such workings of heart, if they knew they had opportunity.

5. You little consider how much your having no more of the sensible exercises of hatred to God, is owing to a being restrained by fear. You have always been taught what a dreadful thing it is to hate God. And you have been taught what a dreadful being God is, and how terrible God's displeasure is ; that God sees the heart, and knows all the thoughts ; and that you are in his hands, and he can make you as miserable as he pleases, and as soon as he pleases. And these things have restrained you : And the fear that has risen from these things, has kept you from appearing what you are ; it has kept down your enmity, and made that serpent afraid to show its head, as otherwise it would do. If a man were wholly under the power of an enemy, though he were never so much of an enemy to him, he would be afraid to exercise his hatred in outward acts, unless it were with great disguise.... And if it be supposed that such an enemy, in whose power he was, could see his heart, and know all his thoughts, and apprehended that he would put him to a terrible death, if he saw the workings of malice there, how greatly would this restrain ! He would be afraid so much as to believe himself, that he hated his enemy ; but there would be all manner of smothering, disguise, and hypocrisy, and feigning even of thoughts and affections.

Thus your enmity has been kept under restraint ; and thus it has been from your infancy. You have grown up in it, so that it has become an habitual restraint. You dare not so much as think you hate God. If you do exercise hatred, you have a disguise for it, whereby you endeavor even to hide it

from your own conscience ; and so have all along **deceived** yourself. And your deceit is very old and habitual ; and hence you are so difficultly convinced. But this has been only restraint : It has been no mortification. But there has been an enmity against God in its full strength. It has been only restrained like an enemy that durst not rise up and show himself.

6. One reason why you have not felt more sensible hatred to God, may be because you have not had much trial of what is in your heart. It may be God has hitherto in a great measure, let you alone. The enmity that is in men's hearts against God, is like a serpent, which, if he be let alone, lies still ; but if any body disturbs it, will soon hiss, and be enraged, and show its serpentine spiteful nature.

Notwithstanding the good opinion you have of yourself, yet a little trial would show you to be a viper, and your heart would be set all on rage against God. One thing that restrains you now is your hope. You hope to receive many things from God. Your own interest is concerned ; you hope to make great gains of God. So that both hope and fear operate together, to restrain your enmity from such sensible exercises as otherwise would be. But if once hope were gone, you would soon show what you were : You would soon feel your enmity against God in a rage.

7. If you pretend that you do not feel enmity against God, and yet act as an enemy, you may certainly conclude, that it is not because you are no enemy, but because you do not know your own heart. Actions are the best interpreters of the disposition : They show, better than any thing else, what the heart is. It must be because you do not observe your own behavior, that you question whether you are an enemy to God.

What other account can you give of your own carriage, but only your being God's enemy ? What other can be given of your so opposing God in your ways ; walking so exceeding contrary to him, contrary to his counsels, contrary to his commands, and contrary to his glory ? What other account can be given of your casting so much contempt upon God ; your setting him so low ; your acting so much against his authority, and against his kingdom and interest in the world ?

What other account can be given of your so setting your will in opposition to God's will, and that so obstinately, for so long a time, against so many warnings as you have had ? What other account can be given of your joining so much with Satan, in the opposition he is making to the kingdom of God in the world ? And that you will join with him against God, though it be so much against your own interest, and though you expose yourself by it to everlasting misery ?

Such like behavior in one man towards another, would be looked on as sufficient evidence of a man's being an enemy to another. If he should be seen to behave thus from time to time, and that it was his constant manner, none would want any better evidence, that he was an enemy to his neighbor. If you yourself had a servant that carried it towards you, as you do towards God, you would not think there was need of any greater evidence of his being your enemy. If your servant should manifest so much contempt of you ; should disregard your commands as much as you do the commands of God ; and should go so directly contrary ; should in so many ways act the very reverse of your commands ; and should seem to set himself in ways that were contrary to your will so obstinately and incorrigibly, without any amendment from your repeated calls and warnings, and threatenings ; and should act so cross to you day and night, as you do to God ; when you sought one thing, he would seek the contrary ; when you did any work, he would, as much as in him lay, undo and destroy your work ; and should continually drive at such ends, as tended to overthrow the ends you aimed at ; when you sought to bring to pass any design, he would endeavor to overthrow your design ; and should set himself as much against your interest, as you do yourself against God's honor. And you should moreover see him, from time to time, with others that were your declared mortal enemies ; and making them his counsellors so much as you do the devils, God's declared mortal enemies : And hearkening to their counsels, as much as you do to Satan's temptations : Should you not think you had sufficient evidence that he was your enemy indeed ?

Therefore consider seriously your own ways, and weigh your own behavior. "How canst thou say, I am not polluted? See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done, Jer. iii, 23.

Object. II. Natural men may be ready to object, the respect they show to God, from time to time. This makes many to think that they are far from being such enemies to God. They carry it respectfully towards God: They pray to him in secret, and do it in as humble a manner as they are able. They attend on public worship, and take a great deal of pains to do it in a decent manner. It seems to them that they show God a great deal of respect; they use many very respectful terms in their prayer; they give him all the honor they can; they are respectful in their manner of speaking, and in their voice, and their gestures, and the like.

But to this, I

Answer, That all this is done in mere hypocrisy. All this seeming respect is feigned, there is no sincerity in it; there is external respect but no respect in the heart; there is a show, and nothing else. You only cover your enmity with a painted vail. You put on the disguise of a friend, but in your heart you are a mortal enemy for all that. There is external honor, but inward contempt; there is a show of friendship and regard, but inward hatred. You do but deceive yourself with your show of respect, and endeavor to deceive God; not considering God looks not on the outward appearance, but he looks on the heart.

Here consider particularly.

1. That much of that seeming respect which natural men show to God, is owing to their education. They have been taught from their infancy that they ought to show great respect to God. They have been taught to use respectful language, when speaking about God, and to behave with solemnity, when attending on these exercises of religion, wherein they have to do with God. They, from their childhood, have seen that this is the manner of others, when they pray to God, to use reverential expressions, and a reverential behavior before him. And their show of respect, which they make to God, is owing, in a great measure, to this.

Those who are brought up in places where they have commonly, from their infancy, heard men take the name of God in vain, and swear, and curse, and blaspheme ; they learn to do the same, and it becomes habitual to them so to do. And it is the same way, and no other that you have learned to behave respectfully towards God ; not that you have any more respect to God than they ; but they have been brought up one way, and you another. In some parts of the world, men are brought up in the worship of idols of silver, and gold, and wood, and stone, made in the shape of men and beasts. " They say of them, Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves," Hos. xiii. 2. In some parts of the world they are brought up to worship serpents, and are taught from their infancy to carry it with great respect to them. And in some places they are brought up in worshipping the devil, who appears to them in a bodily shape ; and to behave with a show of great reverence and honor towards him. And what respect you show to God has no better foundation ; it comes the same way, and is worth no more.

2. That show of respect which you make is forced. You come to God, and make a great show of respect to him, and use very respectful terms, with a respectful, reverential tone and manner of speaking ; and your countenance is grave and solemn ; and you put on an humble aspect ; and you kneel, and use humble, respectful postures, out of fear. You are afraid that God will execute his wrath upon you ; and so you feign a great deal of respect, that he may not be angry with you. " Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee," Psal. lxvi. 3. In the original it is, " shall thine enemies lie to thee." It is rendered therefore in the margin, " shall yield feigned obedience unto thee." All that you do in religion is forced and feigned. Through the greatness of God's power, you yield feigned obedience. You are in God's power, and he is able to destroy you ; and so you feign a great deal of respect to him, that he might not destroy you. As one might do towards an enemy that had taken him captive, though he at the same time would

gladly make his escape, if he could, by taking away the life of him who had taken him captive.

3. It is not real respect that moves you to behave so towards God ; you do it because you hope you shall get by it. It is respect to yourself, and not respect to God, that moves you. You hope to move God to bestow the rewards of his children by it. You are like the Jews who followed Christ, and called him Rabbi, and would make him a king. Not that they honored him so much in their hearts, as to think him worthy of the honor of a king, or that they had the respect of sincere subjects ; but they did it for the sake of the loaves. " Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither ? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. " John vi. 15.....25, 26.

These things do not argue but that you are implacable enemies to God notwithstanding. If you examine your prayers and other duties, your own consciences will tell you that the seeming respect which you have shown to God in them, has been only in hypocrisy. That oftentimes you have set forth in your prayers, that God was a great God, and glorious God, an infinitely holy God, as if you greatly honored him on the account of these attributes ; and you, at the same time, had no sense in your heart of the greatness and gloriousness of God, or of any excellency in his holiness. And so your own consciences will tell you, that you have often pretended to be thankful ; you have told God, that you thanked him that you was alive, and thanked him for these and those mercies, when you have not found the least jot of thankfulness in your heart. And so you have told God of your own unworthiness, and set forth what a vile creature you was, when you have had no humble sense of your own unworthiness.

And if these forementioned restraints were thrown off, you would soon throw off all your show of respect. Take away fear, and take away a regard to your own interest, and

there would soon be an end to all those appearances of love, honor and reverence, which now you make. All these things are not at all inconsistent with the most implacable enmity.

The devil himself made a show of respect to Christ, when he was afraid that he was going to torment him ; and when he hoped to persuade Christ to spare him longer. "When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of God most high ? I beseech thee torment me not." Luke viii. 28.

Object III. Some may perhaps object against this doctrine of their being God's enemies, the religious affections they have sometimes experienced. They may be ready to say, That when they have come before God in prayer, they have not only used respectful terms and gestures, but they have prayed with affection ; their prayers have been attended with tears, which they are ready to think showed something in the heart.

Answer. These affections have risen from other causes, and not from any true respect to God.

As particularly.

1. They have risen from self-love, and not love to God. If you have wept before God, from the consideration of your own pitiful case, that has been because you loved yourself, and not because you had any respect to God. And if your tears have been from sorrow for your sins, you have mourned for your sins, because you have sinned against yourself, and not because you have sinned against God. "When you fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto Me ?" Zech. vii. 5.

2. Pride and a good thought of themselves, very commonly has a great hand in the affections of natural men. They have a good opinion of what they are doing when they are praying ; and the reflection on that affects them ; they are affected with their own goodness. Man's selfrighteousness often occasions tears. An high opinion of themselves before God, and an imagination of their being persons of great account with him, has affected them in their transactions with God.

There is commonly abundance of pride in the midst of tears, and pride is, in a great measure, the source of them.

And then they are so far from being an argument that you be not an enemy to God, that on the contrary, they are an argument that you be. In your very tears, you are in a vain conceit of yourself, exalting yourself against God.

3. The affections of natural men do often arise from wrong conceits that they have of God. They conceive of God, after the manner they do of men, as though he were a being liable to be wrought upon in his affections. They conceive of him as one whose heart could be drawn, whose affections can be overcome by what he sees in them. They conceive of him as being taken with them and their performances; and this works on their affections; and thus one tear draws another, and their affections increase by reflection. And oftentimes they conceive of God as one that loves them, and is a friend to them; and such a mistake may work much on their affections. But such affections that arise towards God, as they conceit him to be, is no argument that they have not the same implacable hatred towards God, considered as he really is. There is no concluding that men are not enemies, because they are affected and shed tears in their prayers, and the like. Saul was very much affected when David expostulated with him about pursuing after him and seeking to kill him. David's words wrought exceedingly upon Saul's affections. "And it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my Son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept," 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, and chap. xxvi. 1. &c. He was so affected that he wept aloud, and called David his Son, though he was just before seeking his life. But this affection of Saul's was no argument that he did not still continue in his enmity against David. He was David's mortal enemy before, and sought his life, and so he did afterwards. It was but a pang; his enmity was not mortified or done away. The next news we hear of Saul is, that he was pursuing David, and seeking his life again.

APPLICATION.

This shall be of instruction, in several inferences,

Inf. 1. If it be so that natural men are God's enemies, then hence we may learn, how much we are indebted to God

for his restraining grace. If all natural men are God's enemies, what would they not do if they were not restrained ! For what has one that is an enemy within himself, or in his disposition to restrain him from acting against him that he is an enemy to ? Hatred will not restrain a man from acting any thing whatsoever against him that is hated. Nothing is too bad for hatred, if it be mere hatred, and no love ; nothing is too bad for that to do towards the object of it. Hatred shows no kindness either in doing or forbearing. Only hatred will never make a man forbear to act any thing whatsoever against God ; for the very nature of hatred is to seek evil. But wicked men as has been shown, are mere enemies to God. They have hatred, without any love at all. And hence natural men have nothing within them, in their own nature to restrain them from any thing that is bad, be it never so bad ; and therefore their restraint must not be owing to nature, but to restraining grace. And therefore whatever wickedness we have been kept from, it is not because we have not been bad enough to commit it ; but it is God has restrained us, and kept us back from sin. There can be no worse principle than a principle of hatred to God. The devils in hell do not do any thing from any worse principle than this. And there can be no principle that will go further in wickedness than this, if it be neither mortified nor restrained. But it is not mortified in natural men ; and therefore all that keeps them from any degree of wickedness is restrained. If we have seen others do things that we never did ; and if they have done worse than we, this is owing to restraining grace. If we have not done as bad as Pharaoh, it is owing to divine restraints. If we have not done as bad as Judas, or as the Scribes and Pharisees, or as bad as Herod, or Simon Magus, it is because God has restrained our corruption. If we have ever heard or read of any that have done worse than we ; if we have not gone the length in sinning that the most wicked pirates or carnal persecutors have gone, this is owing to restraining grace. For we are all naturally the enemies of God as much as they. If we have not committed the unpardonable sin, it is owing to restraining grace. There is no worse principle

in exercise in that sin, than enmity against God. There ~~is~~ the entire fountain, and all the foundation of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in that enmity against God that we all have in us, and naturally reigns in us.

It is not we ourselves that restrain ourselves from the commission of the greatest imaginable wickedness ; for enmity against God reigns in us and over us ; we are under the power and dominion of it, and are sold under it. We do not restrain that which reigns over us. A slave, as long as he continues a mere slave, cannot control his master. "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin." Job viii. 34. So that the restraint of this our cruel tyrant is owing to God and not to us. What does a poor impotent subject do to restrain the absolute lord that has him wholly under his power ?

How much will it appear that the world is indebted to the restraining grace of God, if we consider that the world is full of enemies to God ! The world is full of inhabitants ; and almost all are God's enemies, his implacable and mortal enemies. What therefore would they not do ; what work would they not make if God did not restrain them ?

God's work in the restraint that he exercises over a wicked world, is a glorious work. God's holding the reins upon the corruptions of a wicked world and setting bounds to their wickedness, is a more glorious work than his ruling the raging of the sea, and setting bounds to its proud waves, and saying, *hitherto shalt thou come and no further*. In hell God lets the wickedness of wicked spirits have the reins to rage without restraint ; and it would be in a great measure upon earth as it is in hell, did not God restrain the wickedness of the world.

But in order to the better understanding how it is owing to the restraining grace of God, that we are kept and withheld from the highest acts of sin, I would here observe several things.

1. Whenever men are withheld from sinning by the common influence of God's Spirit, they are withheld by restraining grace. If sinners are awakened sinners, and are made sensible of the great guilt that sin brings, and that it exposes to a dreadful punishment ; they, under such circumstances,

dare not allow themselves in wilful sin : God restrains them by the convictions of his Spirit ; and therein their being kept from sin is owing to restraining grace. And sinners that live under the gospel, that are not awakened sinners, but in a great measure secure, yet commonly have some degrees of the influence of God's Spirit, with his ordinances influencing natural conscience. And though they be not sufficient thoroughly to rouse them out of security, or make them reform, yet they keep them from going such lengths in sin, as otherwise they might do. And when it is thus, this is restraining grace. They are very stupid and sottish, yet they would be a great deal more so, if God should let them wholly alone.

2. All the restraints that men are under from the word and ordinances, is from restraining grace. The word and ordinances of God might have some degree of influence on men's natural principles of selflove, to restrain them from sin, without any degree of the influence of God's Spirit ; but this would be the restraining grace of God ; for God's goodness to a sinful world, appears in his giving his word to be a restraint on the wickedness of the world. When men are restrained by fear of those punishments that the word of God threatens ; or by the warnings of the word, or by the offers and promises of it ; when the word of God works upon hope, or upon fear, or natural conscience, to restrain men from sin, this is the restraining grace of God. When we are restrained thus, it is owing to the mercy of God that we are restrained. It is an instance of God's mercy, that he has revealed hell to restrain men's wickedness ; and that he has revealed a way of salvation and a possibility of eternal life. This is a thing that has great influence on men to restrain them from sin ; and this is the restraining grace of God.

3. When men are restrained from sin by the light of nature, this also is restraining grace. If men are destitute of the light of God's word, yet the light of natural conscience teaches, that sin brings guilt, and exposes to punishment. The light of nature teaches, that there is a God who governs the world, and will reward the good and punish the evil. When men are restrained by this, they are to attribute their

restraints to the restraining grace of God ; for it is God who is the author of the light of nature, as well as the light of revelation. He in mercy to mankind, makes known many things by natural light to work upon men's fear and self-love to restrain their corruptions.

4. When God restrains men's corruptions by his providence, this is restraining grace. And that whether it be his general providence, or his providence in ordering the state of mankind ; or his particular providence, or providential disposals towards them in particular.

(1.) God doth greatly restrain the corruption of the world by ordering the state of mankind. He has set mankind here in a mortal state, and that is a great restraint on their corruption. He hath set mankind in a state of probation for eternity, and that is a great restraint to corruption. God hath so ordered the state of mankind, that ordinarily many kinds of sin and wickedness are disgraceful, and what tend to the hurt of a man's character and reputation amongst his fellow men ; and that is a great restraint. He hath so disposed the world that many kinds of wickedness are many ways very contrary to men's temporal interest ; and that is a great restraint. God has so disposed the state of mankind, that they are led to prohibit many kinds of wickedness by human laws ; and that is a great restraint. God hath set up a church in the world, made of those, who, if they are answerable to their profession, have the fear and love of God in their hearts ; and they, by holding forth light and the word of God, and keeping up the ordinances of God in the world, and by warning others, are a great restraint to the wickedness of the world.

But in all these things the restraining grace of God appears. It is God's mercy to mankind, that he has so ordered their state, that they should have so many things, by fear and a regard to their own interest, to restrain their corruptions. It is God's mercy to the world, that the state of mankind here does so differ in that respect from the state of the damned in hell ; where men will have none of these things to restrain them : They will not be in such circumstances that will so influence their hope and fear to restrain them from sin.

The wisdom of God, as well as the attributes of God's grace, greatly appears in thus disposing things for the restraining the wickedness of men.

(2.) God doth greatly restrain the corruptions of men by his particular providence, or providence towards particular persons, by placing men in such circumstances as to lay them under restraints. And to this it is often owing that some natural men never go such lengths in sinning, or are never guilty of such atrocious wickedness as some others, that providence has placed in different circumstances. If it were not for this, many thousands of natural men, who now live sober and orderly lives, would do as Pharaoh did. The reason why they do not, is, that providence has placed them in different circumstances. If they were in the same circumstances as Pharaoh was in, they would do as he did. And so, if in the same circumstances as Manasseh, as Judas, as Nero. But providence restrains their corruptions, by putting them in such circumstances as not to open such a door or outlet for their corruptions as he did to them. So some do not do such horrid things as others; they do not live such horribly vicious lives as some others, because providence has restrained them, by ordering that they should have a better education than others. Providence has ordered that they should be the children of pious parents, it may be, or should live where they should enjoy many means of grace; and so providence has laid them under restraints. Now this is restraining grace. The attribute of God's grace is exercised in thus restraining persons in providence.

And oftentimes God restrains men's corruptions by particular events of providence. By particular afflictions they are brought under, or by particular occurrences, whereby God does, as it were, block up men's way in their course of sin, or in some wickedness that they had devised, and that otherwise they would perpetrate. Or something happens unexpected, to hold men back from that which they were about to commit. When men are restrained thus, it is God that restrains them. Thus God restrained David by his providence from shedding blood as he intended to do. "Now therefore, my Lord, as

the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand,....” 1 Sam. xxv. 26. God withheld it from him no otherwise than by ordering it so in his providence, that Abigail should come, and by her wisdom should cool and pacify him, and persuade him to alter his purpose. See verses 32, 33, 34.

5. Godly persons are greatly indebted to restraining grace, in keeping them from dreadful acts of sin. So it was in that instance of David, that has been just mentioned. Godly persons, when God has left, and has not restrained them, have fallen into dreadful acts of sin. So did David in the case of Uriah, Lot, Peter. And when other Godly persons are kept from falling into such sins, or much worse sins than these, it is owing to the restraining grace of God. Merely having a principle of grace in their hearts, or merely their being godly persons, without God’s presence to restrain them, will not keep them from great acts of sin. That the godly do not fall into the most horrid sins that can be conceived of, is owing, not so much to any inconsistency between their falling into such sins, and the having the principle of grace in the heart, as it is owing to the covenant mercy of God, whereby he has promised never to leave nor forsake his people ; and that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able ; but with the temptation will make a way for them to escape. If saving grace restrains men from great acts of sin, this is owing to God, who gives such exercises of grace at that time when the temptation comes, that they are restrained.

Let not the godly therefore be insensible of their indebtedness to the restraining grace of God. Though the godly cannot be said to be enemies to God, because a principle of enmity does not reign ; yet they have the very same principle and seed of enmity in them, though it be mortified. Though it be not in reigning power, yet it has great strength ; and is too strong for them without God’s almighty power to help them against it. Though they be not enemies to God, because they have another principle, besides a principle of enmity, viz. a principle of love, yet their old man, the body of sin

and death, that yet remains in them, is a mortal enemy to God. Corruption in the godly is not a whit better than it is in the wicked. The corruption in them is of as bad a nature every whit as that which is in a mortal enemy to God : It aims at the life of God wherever it is. And though it be not in reigning power, yet it would dreadfully rage were it not for God's restraining grace.

God gives his restraining grace to both natural men and godly men ; but only there is this difference. God gives his restraining grace to his children in the way of covenant mercy ; it is part of the mercy promised to them in his covenant. God is faithful and will not leave them to sin in like manner as wicked men do, otherwise they would do every whit as bad.

Let not therefore the godly attribute it to themselves, or merely to their own goodness, that they are not guilty of such horrid crimes as they hear of in others : Let them consider, it is not owing to them, but to God's restraints.

Thus all both godly and ungodly, may learn from this doctrine, their great indebtedness to the restraining grace of God.

I now proceed to

Inf. II. Hence we may learn the reason why natural men will not come to Christ : For they do not come because they will not come. *Ye will not come to me that ye might have life*, John v. 40. When we say that natural men are not willing to come to Christ, it is not meant that they are not willing to be delivered from hell ; for without doubt, no natural man is willing to go to hell. Nor is it meant that they are not willing that Christ should keep them from going to hell. Without doubt, natural men that are under awakenings, do often greatly desire this. But if they do desire it, this does not argue that they are willing to come to Christ ; for notwithstanding their desire to be delivered from hell, yet their hearts do not close with Christ, but are averse to him. They see nothing in Christ wherefore they should desire him ; no beauty nor comeliness to draw or incline their hearts to him. And they are not willing to take Christ as he is ; they would fain divide Christ. There are some things in him that they

like, and others that they greatly dislike ; but consider him as he is, and as he is offered to them in the gospel, and they will not have him. They are not willing to accept of Christ as he is offered ; for in doing so, they must of necessity part with all their sins ; they must sell the world, and part with their own righteousness. But they are not willing to do that ; they had rather, for the present, run the venture of going to hell than do that.

When men are truly willing to come to Christ, they are freely willing. It is not what they are forced and driven to by threatenings ; but they are willing to come, and choose to come without being driven. But natural men have no such free willingness ; but, on the contrary, have an aversion. And the ground of it is that which we have heard, viz. That they are enemies to God. Their having such a reigning enmity against God, makes them obstinately refuse to come to Christ. If a man is an enemy to God, he will necessarily be an enemy to Christ too ; for Christ is the son of God ; he is infinitely near to God, yea he is God. He has the nature of God, as well as the nature of man. He is a Saviour appointed of God. God anointed him, and sent him into the world. And in doing what he did in the work of redemption, he wrought the works of God. He always did those things that pleased God ; and all that he does as a Saviour, is to the glory of God. And one great thing that he aimed at in his redemption, was to deliver them from their idols which they had chosen, and bring them to God. The case being so, and sinners being enemies to God, they will necessarily be opposite to coming to Christ ; for Christ is of God, and as a Saviour, seeks to bring them to God only : But natural men are not of God, but are averse to him.

Inf. III. From this doctrine we may learn, how dreadful the condition of natural men is. Their state is a state of enmity with God. If we consider what God is, and what men are, it will be easy for us to conclude, that such men as are God's enemies, must be miserable. Consider, ye that are enemies to God, how great a God he is that ye are enemies to. He is the eternal God : The God that fills heaven and earth,

and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. He is the God that made you ; the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways ; the God in whom you live, and move, and have your being ; the God who has your soul and body in his hands every moment.

You would look on yourself as in very unhappy circumstances, if your neighbors were all your enemies, and none of your fellow creatures were your friends. If every body were set against you, and all despised and hated you, you would be ready to think, you had better be out of the world than in it. But if it be such a calamity to have enmity maintained between you and your fellow creatures, what is it when you and the Almighty God are enemies one to another ? What avails either the friendship or enmity of your neighbor, poor little worms of the dust, that are about you, in comparison of the friendship or enmity of the great God of heaven and earth ?

Consider,

(1.) If you continue in your enmity a little longer there will be a mutual enmity between God and you to all eternity. God will appear to be your dreadful and irreconcilable enemy. And you know not how soon it will come to this. If you should die an enemy to God, there will be no such thing as any reconciliation after death. God will then appear in hatred of you. As you are a mere enemy to God, so God will then appear a mere enemy to you ; he will appear in perfect hatred without any love, and without any pity, and without any mercy at all. As you hate God, he will hate you. And that will be verified of you : *My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me*, Zech. xi. 8. And then God will be your enemy forever. If you be not reconciled so as to become his friend in this life, God never will become your friend after death. If you continue an enemy to God till death, God will continue an enemy to you to all eternity. There will nothing avail to reconcile God to you hereafter. You will find that you cannot move the heart of God by any of your cries. You will have no mediator offered you ; there will be no day's man bewixt you. So that it becomes you to

consider what it will be to have God your enemy to all eternity, without any possibility of being reconciled.

Consider, what will it be to have this enmity to be mutual or maintained forever on both sides ? For as God will forever continue an enemy to you, so you will forever continue an enemy to God. If you continue God's enemy until death, you will always be his enemy. And after death your enmity will have no restraint, but it will break out and rage without control. When you come to be a firebrand of hell, you will be a firebrand in two respects, viz. As you will be all on fire, full of the fire of God's wrath : And also as you will be all on a blaze with spite and malice towards God. You will be as full of the fire of malice, as you will with the fire of divine vengeance ; and both will make you full of torment. Then you will appear as you are, a viper indeed. You are now a viper, but under great disguise ; a wolf in sheep's clothing ; but then your mask will be pulled off ; you shall lose your garments, and walk naked, Rev. xvi. 15. Then will you as a serpent, spit poison at God, and vent your rage and malice in fearful blasphemies. Out of that mouth, out of which, when you open it, will proceed flames, will also proceed dreadful blasphemies against God. That same tongue, to cool which you will wish for a drop of water, will be eternally employed in cursing and blaspheming God and Christ. And that not from any new corruption being put into your heart, but only from God's withdrawing his hand from restraining your old corruption. And what a miserable way will this be of spending your eternity !

(2.) Consider what will be the consequence of a mutual enmity between God and you, if it be continued. Now you find yourself left alone ; you find no very terrible event, but there will be great changes. Though hitherto you have met with no very great changes, yet they will come. After a little while, dying time will come ; and then what will be the consequences of this enmity ? God, whose enemy you are, has the frame of your body in his hands. Your times are in his hand ; and he it is that appoints your bounds. And when he sends death to arrest you, and change your countenance, and

dissolve your frame, and take you away from all your earthly friends, and from all that is dear and pleasant to you in the world ; what will be the issue then of God and you being enemies one to another ? Will not you then stand in need of God's help ? Would not he be the best friend in such a case, worth more than ten thousand earthly friends ? If God be your enemy, then whom will you betake yourself to for a friend ? When you launch forth into the boundless gulph of eternity, then you will need some friend to take care of you ; but if God be your enemy, where will you betake yourself ? Your soul must go naked into another world, in eternal separation from all worldly things ; and you will not be able to dispose of yourself ; your soul will not be in its own power to defend or dispose of itself. Will you not then need to have God for a friend, into whose hands you may commend your spirit ? And how dreadful will it be to have God for your enemy then ?

The time is coming when the frame of this world shall be dissolved. Christ shall descend in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father ; and you, with all the rest of mankind, must stand before the judgment seat of God. Then what will be the consequence of this mutual enmity between God and you ! If God be your enemy, who will stand your friend ? Who else will be able to help you, and what will you do ? And what will be the event of God's being your enemy then ? Now, it may be, it does not appear to be very terrible to you to have God for your enemy ; but when such changes as these are brought to pass, it will greatly alter the appearance of things. Then God's favor will appear to you of infinite worth. They, and they only will then appear happy, who have the love of God ; and then you will know that God's enemies are miserable.

But under this head, consider more particularly several things.

(1.) What God can do to his enemies. Or rather, what can he not do ? How miserable can he, who is almighty, make his enemies, and those that he is an enemy to ? Consider, you that are enemies to God, whether or no you shall be able to

make your part good with him. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" 1 Cor. x. 22. Have you such a conceit of your own strength as that you think to try it out with God? Do you intend to run the risk of an encounter with him? Do you imagine that your hands can be strong, or your heart endure? Do you think you shall be well able to defend yourself? Or will you be able to escape out of his hand? Or do you think to harden your own heart and fortify yourself with courage, and set yourself to bear? And do you think that you shall be able to uphold your spirits when God acts as an enemy towards you? If so, then gird up your loins and prepare to meet God and see what the event will be. Therefore thus will I do unto thee.... "And because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God..." Amos iv. 12. Is it not in vain to set the briars and thorns in battle against God? Is it not like setting dry briars and thorns in battle array against devouring flames; which, though they seem to be armed with natural weapons, yet the fire will pass through them, and burn them together? See Isa. xxvii. 4.

And if you endeavor to support yourself under God's wrath, cannot God lay so much upon you as to sink and crush you? Cannot he lay you under such misery as to cause your spirit quite to fail; so that you shall find no strength, to resist him, or to uphold yourself? Why should a little worm think of supporting himself against an omnipotent adversary? Has not he that made you, and gave you your strength, and your courage, got your strength and courage in his hands? Is it an hard thing for him to overcome it? Consider God has made your soul; and he that made it knows how to punish it to what degree he will. He can fill it with misery; he can bring what degree of sorrow, and anguish, and horror he will. And he that made your body can bring what torments he will upon it. He has made every vein and sinew; and has every one in his hands, and he can fill every one as full of torments as he will. God, who made you, has given you a capacity to bear torment; and he has that capacity in his hands; and he can enlarge it, and make you capable of more misery, as much more as he will. If God hates any one, and sets himself

against him as his enemy, what cannot he do with him ? How dreadful must it be to fall into the hands of such an enemy ! Surely, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb, x. 31.

2. If God be your mere enemy, you may rationally conclude that he will act as such in his dealings with you. We have already observed that you are a mere enemy to God ; that is, have enmity without any love or true respect. So, if you continue to be so, God will appear to be your mere enemy ; and will be so forever without being reconciled. But if it be so, he will doubtless act as such. If he eternally hates you, he will act in his dealings with you as one that hates you with mere hatred, without any love or pity. The proper tendency and aim of hatred, is the misery of the object hated ; misery, and nothing else. So that you may expect God will make you miserable, and that you will not be spared ; for sparing is not the effect of hatred, but of pity and mercy, which is a quite different thing from enmity.

Now God does not act as your mere enemy ; if he corrects you, it is in measure. He now exercises abundance of mercy to you. He threatens you now, but it is in a way of warning, and so in a merciful way. He now calls and invites, and strives with you, and waits to be gracious to you. But hereafter there will be an end of all these things : In another world God will cease to show you mercy.

3. If you will continue God's enemy, you may rationally conclude that God will deal with you so as to make it appear how dreadful it is to have God for an enemy. It is very dreadful to have a mighty prince for an enemy. *The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion*, Prov. xix. 12: But if the wrath of a man, a fellow worm, be so terrible, what is the wrath of God ! And God will doubtless show it to be immensely more dreadful. If you will be an enemy, God will make you know that it is not a light thing to be an enemy to him, and have him for an enemy to you. God will doubtless glorify himself as an enemy, in his dealings with those to whom he is an enemy. That is, he will act so as to glorify those attributes which he exercises as an enemy ; which are his majesty, his

power and justice. God will deal so with you as to glorify these attributes in your destruction. His great majesty, his awful justice, and mighty power, shall be showed upon you. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Rom. ix. 22.

(4.) Consider what God has said he will do to his enemies. He has declared that they shall not escape, but that he will surely punish them. "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out all those that hate thee," Psal. xxi. 8. "And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: He will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face," Deut. vii. 10. "The Lord shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses." Psal. lxxviii. 21.

Yea, God hath sworn, that he will be avenged on them; and that in a most awful and dreadful manner. "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and I will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, (and my sword shall devour flesh) and that with the blood of the slain...from the beginning of revenges on the enemy." Deut. xxxii. 40, 41, 42. The terribleness of that destruction that God will bring on his enemies, is here variously set forth. As particularly in God's "whetting his glittering sword," as one that prepares himself to do some great execution. "His hands take hold on judgment," to signify that he will surely reward them as they deserve." "He will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him." i. e. He will render their full reward; he will not fail or come short. As in the forementioned place it was said he would not be slack in this matter. "I will make mine arrows drunk with blood." This signifies the greatness of the destruction. It shall not be a little of their blood that shall satisfy; but his arrows shall be glutted with their blood. "And his sword shall devour flesh." That is, it shall make

dreadful waste of it. Hereby is very lively set forth the terrible manner in which God will one day rise up and execute vengeance on his enemies.

Again, the totality and perfection of their destruction is represented in the following words : " The wicked shall perish, the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall consume ; into smoke shall they consume away," Psal. xxxvii. 20. The fat of lambs, when it is burnt in the fire, burns all up ; there is not so much as a cinder left ; it all consumes into smoke. This is made use of here to represent the perfect destruction of God's enemies in his wrath. So God hath promised Christ, that he would make his enemies his footstool, Psal. cx. 1. i. e. He would pour the greatest contempt upon them, and as it were tread them under foot.

Consider that all these things will be executed on you if you continue God's enemies,

Inf. IV. If it be so, that natural men are God's enemies, hence we may learn how justly God may refuse to show you mercy. For is God obliged to show mercy to his enemies ? Is God bound to set his love on them that have no love to him ; but hate him with perfect hatred ? Is God bound to come and dwell with them that have an aversion to him, and choose to keep at a distance from him, and fly from him as one that is hateful to them ? If you earnestly desire the salvation of your soul, is God bound to comply with your desires, when you do always resist and oppose his will ? Is God bound to be persuaded and overcome by your prayers, when you are obstinate in your opposition to him, and refuse to yield obedience to him ? Is God bound to put honor upon you, and to advance you to such dignity as to be a child of the king of kings, and the heir of the kingdom of glory, while you at the same time have God in the greatest contempt, and set him too low to have the lowest place in your heart ? Is God bound to spare your life, and deliver you from eternal death, when you are a mortal enemy to God, and would, if you could, destroy the being of God ? Is God obliged to set his great and transcendent love on you, so as to give you benefits purchased by

the blood of his own Son, when your heart is all the while full of that enmity that strikes at the life of God ?

This doctrine affords a strong argument for the absolute sovereignty of God, with respect to the salvation of sinners. If God is pleased to show mercy to his haters, it is certainly fit that he should do it in a sovereign way, without acting as any way obliged. God will show mercy to his mortal enemies ; but then he will not be bound, he will have his liberty to choose the objects of his mercy ; to show mercy to what enemy he pleases, and punish and destroy which of his haters he pleases. And certainly this is a fit and reasonable thing. It is fit that God should distribute saving blessings in this way, and in no other, viz. in a sovereign and arbitrary way. And that any body ever thought of, or devised any other way for God to show mercy, than to have mercy on whom he would have mercy, must arise from ignorance of their own hearts, whereby they were insensible what enemies they naturally are to God.

But consider here the following things,

1. How causelessly you are enemies to God. You have no manner of reason for it, either from what God is, or from what he has done. You have no reason for this from what he is, for he is an infinitely lovely and glorious being ; the fountain of all excellency : All that is amiable and lovely in the universe, is originally and eminently in him. Nothing can possibly be conceived of, that could be lovely in God, that is not in him, and that in the greatest possible degree, even infinitely.

And you have no reason for this, from what God has done. For he has been a good and bountiful God to you. He has exercised abundance of kindness to you ; has carried you from the womb, preserved your life, taken care of you, and provided for you all your life long. He has exercised great patience and longsuffering towards you. If it had not been for the kindness of God to you, what would have become of you ? What would have become of your body ? And what, before this time, would have become of your soul ? And you are now, every day, and hour, maintained by the goodness and bounty of God.

Every new breath you draw, is a new gift of God to you. How causelessly then are you such dreadful enemies to God ? And how justly might God, for it, eternally deprive you of all mercy, seeing you do thus requite God for his mercy and kindness to you ?

2. Consider how you would resent it, if others were such enemies to you as you are to God. If they had their hearts so full of enmity to you ; if they treated you with such contempt, and opposed you, as you do God ; and injured you so much as you do God, how would you resent it ? Do you not find that you are apt greatly to resent it, when any oppose you, and show an ill spirit towards you ? And though you excuse your own enmity against God from your corrupt nature that you brought into the world with you, which you could not help, yet you do not excuse others for being enemies to you from their corrupt nature that they brought into the world, which they could not help ; but are ready bitterly to resent it notwithstanding.

Consider therefore, if you, a poor, unworthy, unlovely creature, do so resent it, when you be not loved, but hated, how may God justly resent it when you are enemies to him, an infinitely glorious being ; and a being from whom you have received so much kindness ?

3. How unreasonable it is for you to imagine that you can oblige God to have respect to you by any thing that you can do, continuing still to be his enemy ! If you think you have prayed and read, and done considerable for God ; yet who cares for the seeming kindness of an enemy ?

What value would you yourself set upon it, if a man should seem to cary it respectfully to you, with a fair face, talking smooth, and making a show of friendship ; when you knew, at the same time, that he was inwardly your mortal enemy ? Would you look upon yourself obliged for such respect and kindness ? Would you not rather abhor it ? Would you count such respect to be valued, as Joab's towards Amasa, who took him by the beard, and kissed him, and said, art thou in health, my brother ? And smote him at the same time under the fifth rib, and killed him ?

What if you do pray to God, is God obliged to hear the prayers of an enemy? What if you have taken a great deal of pains, is God obliged to give heaven for the prayers of an enemy? God may justly abhor your prayers, and all that you do in religion, as the flattery of a mortal enemy. No wonder God does not accept any thing from the hands of an enemy.

Inf. V. Hence we may learn how wonderful is the love that is manifested in giving Christ to die for us. For this love is love to enemies. That is taken notice of in the text, "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." How wonderful was the love of God the Father in giving such a gift to such, who not only were such as could not be profitable to him, and such as could merit nothing from him, and poor little worms of the dust; but were his enemies, and enemies to so great a degree! They had that enmity that aimed at his life; yet so did he love them, that he gave his own Son to lay down his own life to save their lives. Though they had that enmity that sought to pull God down out of his throne, yet God so loved them, that he sent down Christ from heaven, from his throne there, to be in the form of a servant; and instead of a throne of glory, gave him to be nailed to the cross, and to be laid in the grave, that so we might be brought to a throne of glory.

How wonderful was the love of Christ in thus exercising dying love to his enemies! That he should so love those that hated him, with hatred that sought to take away his life, so as voluntarily to lay down his life, that they might have life through him. "Herein is love; not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and laid down his life for us."

Inf. VI. If we are all naturally God's enemies, hence we may learn what a spirit it becomes us to be of towards our enemies. Though we are enemies to God, yet we hope that God has loved us; and we hope that Christ has died for us; and we hope that God has forgiven or will forgive us, and will do us good, and bestow infinite mercies and blessings upon us, so as to make us happy forever. All this mercy, we hope has been, or will be exercised towards us while enemies.

Certainly then, it will not become us to be bitter in our spirits against those that are enemies to us, and have injured and ill treated us, and though they have yet an ill spirit towards us. Seeing we depend so much on God's forgiving us, though enemies, we should be of a spirit of forgiveness towards our enemies. And therefore our Saviour inserted it in that prayer which he dictated as a general directory to all ; "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," to enforce the duty upon us, and to show us how reasonable it is. And we ought to love them even while enemies ; for so we hope God hath done to us. We should be the children of our Father, who is kind to the unthankful and evil. Luke vi. 35.

If we refuse thus to do, and are of another spirit, we may justly expect that God will deny us his mercy, as he has threatened ! "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matth. vi 14, 15. The same we have in the parable of the man who owed his lord ten thousand talents. Matth. xviii. 23,...,35.