

SERMON XI.

Containing the Second Motive to enforce the general Exhortation, from a second Title of CHRIST.

LUKE i. 72.

To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and remember his holy covenant.

THIS scripture is part of Zechariah's prophecy, at the rising of that bright star, John, the harbinger and fore-runner of Christ: They are some of the first words he spake after God had loosed his tongue, which, for a time, was struck dumb for his unbelief. His tongue is now unbound, and at liberty to proclaim to all the world, the unspeakable riches of mercy through Jesus Christ, in a song of praise. Wherein note,

The mercy celebrated, viz. redemption by Christ, ver. 68.

The description of Christ by place and property, ver. 69.

The faithfulness of God in our redemption this way, ver. 70.

The benefit of being so redeemed by Christ, ver. 71.

The exact accomplishment of all the promises made to the *fathers* in sending Christ, the mercy promised, into the world, ver. 72. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers," &c. In these words we find two parts, viz.

1. A mercy freely promised.

2. The promised mercy faithfully performed.

First, You have a mercy freely promised, viz. by God the Father, from the beginning of the world, and often repeated and confirmed in several succeeding ages, to the fathers, in his covenant-transactions.

This mercy is Jesus Christ, of whom he speaks in this prophecy; the same which he stiles "An horn of salvation in the house of David," ver. 69.

The mercy of God in scripture, is put either for,

1. His free favour to the creature. Or,

2. The effects and fruits of that favour.

It is put for the free and undeserved favour of God to the creature, and this favour of God may respect the creature two ways, either as *undeserving*, or as *ill-deserving*.

It respected innocent man, as *undeserving*, for Adam could put no obligation upon his benefactor. It respecteth fallen man, as *ill-deserving*. Innocent man could not merit favour, and fallen man did merit wrath: the favour or mercy of God to both is every way free; and that is the first acceptation of the word *mercy*:

but then it is also taken for the effects and fruits of God's favour, and they are either,

1. Principal and primary : or,
2. Subordinate and secondary.

Of secondary and subordinate mercies, there are multitudes, both temporal, respecting the body, and spiritual, respecting the soul; but the principal and primary mercy is but one, and that is Christ, the first-born of mercy; the capital mercy, the comprehensive root-mercy, from whom are all other mercies; and therefore called by a singular emphasis in my text, *The mercy*; i. e. the mercy of all mercies; without whom no drop of saving mercy can flow to any of the sons of men; and in whom are all the tender bowels of divine mercy yearning upon poor sinners. *The mercy, and the mercy promised.* The first promise of Christ was made to Adam, Gen. iii. 15. and was frequently renewed afterwards to Abraham, to David, and as the text speaks, *unto the fathers*, in their respective generations.

Secondly, We find here also the promised mercy faithfully performed; "To perform the mercy promised." What mercy soever the love of God engaged him to promise, the faithfulness of God stands engaged for the performance thereof. Christ, the promised mercy, is not only performed *truly*, but he is also performed according to the promise in all the circumstances thereof, *exactly*. So he was promised to the fathers, and just so performed to us their children: Hence the note is,

Doct. That Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies, was graciously promised and faithfully performed by God to his people.

Three things are here to be opened.

First, Why Christ is stiled *the mercy*.

Secondly, What kind of mercy Christ is to his people.

Thirdly, How this mercy was performed.

First, Christ is the mercy, *emphatically* so called: the peerless, invaluable, and matchless mercy: Because he is the prime fruit of the mercy of God to sinners. The mercies of God are infinite; mercy gave the world and us our being; all our protection, provision, and comforts in this world are the fruits of mercy, the free gifts of divine favour: but Christ is the first and chief; all other mercies, compared with him, are but fruits from that root, and streams from that fountain of mercy; the very bowels of divine mercy are in Christ, as in ver. 78. according to the tender mercies, or as the Greek, the yearning bowels of the mercy of God.

Secondly, Christ is the *mercy*, because all the mercy of God to

sinner is dispensed and conveyed through Christ to them, John i. 16. Col. ii. 3. Eph. iv. 7. Christ is the *medium* of all divine communications, the *channel* of grace, through him are both the *decursus et recursus gratiarum*; the flows of mercy from God to us, and the returns of praise from us to God. Fond and vain therefore are all the expectations of mercy out of Christ; no drop of saving mercy runs beside this channel.

Thirdly, Christ is the *mercy*, because all inferior mercies derive both their *nature*, *value*, *sweetness*, and *duration* from Christ, the fountain-mercy of all other-mercies.

First, They derive their *nature* from Christ; for out of him, those things which men call mercies, are rather traps and snares, than mercies to them, Prov. i. 32. The time will come when the *rich* that are christless, will wish, O that we had been poor! And *nobles*, that are now ennobled by the new birth, O that we had been among the low rank of men! All these things that pass for valuable mercies, like *cyphers*, signify much when such an important figure as Christ stands before them, else they signify nothing to any man's comfort or benefit.

Secondly, They derive their *value* as well as nature from Christ: For how little, I pray you, doth it signify to any man to be rich, honourable, politic, and successful in all his designs in this world, if after all he must lie down in hell?

Thirdly, All other mercies derive their *sweetness* from Christ, and are but insipid things without him. There is a twofold sweetness in things; one *natural*, another *spiritual*: Those that are out of Christ can relish the first, believers only relish both. They have the natural sweetness that is in mercy itself, and a sweetness supernatural from Christ and the covenant, the way in which they receive them. Hence it is, that some men taste more spiritual sweetness in their *daily bread*, than others do in the *Lord's supper*; and the same mercy, by this means, becomes a feast to soul and body at once.

Fourthly, All mercies have their *duration* and perpetuity from Christ; all christless persons hold their mercies upon the greatest contingencies and terms of uncertainty; if they be continued during this life, that is all: there is not one drop of mercy after death. But the mercies of the saints are continued to eternity; the end of their mercies on earth, is the beginning of their better mercies in heaven. There is a twofold end of mercies, one *perfective*, another *destructive*; the death of the saints perfects and completes their mercies; the death of the wicked destroys and cuts off their mercies. For these reasons, Christ is called the mercy.

Secondly, In the next place, let us enquire what kind of mercy

Christ is; and we shall find many lovely and transcendent properties to commend him to our souls.

First, He is *free* and undeserved mercy, called upon that account, *The gift of God*, John iv. 10. And to shew how free this gift was, God gave him to us when we were enemies, Rom. v. 8. Needs must that mercy be free, which is given, not only to the undeserving, but to the ill-deserving; the benevolence of God was the sole, impulsive cause of this gift, John iii. 16.

Secondly, Christ is a *full* mercy, replenished with all that answers to the *wishes*, or *wants* of sinners; in him alone is found whatever the justice of an angry God requires for satisfaction, or the necessities of souls require for their supply. Christ is full of mercy, both *extensively*, and *intensively*; in him are all kinds and sorts of mercies; and in him are the highest and most perfect degrees of mercy; "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19.

Thirdly, Christ is the *seasonable* mercy, given by the Father to us in due time, Rom. v. 6. In the fulness of time, Gal. iv. 4. a seasonable mercy in his *exhibition* to the world in *general*, and a seasonable mercy in his *application* to the soul in *particular*; the wisdom of God pitched upon the best time for his incarnation, and it takes the very properest for its application. When a poor soul is distressed, lost, at its wits end, and ready to perish, then comes Christ. All God's works are done in season, but none more seasonable than this great work of salvation by Christ.

Fourthly, Christ is the *necessary* mercy, there is an absolute necessity of Jesus Christ; hence in scripture he is called the "bread of life," John vi. 41. he is bread to the hungry; he is the "water of life," John vii. 37. as cold water to the thirsty soul. He is a ransom for captives, Mat. xx. 28. a garment to the naked, Rom. xiii. ult. Bread is not so necessary to the hungry, nor water to the thirsty, nor a ransom to the captive, nor a garment to the naked, as Christ is to the soul of a sinner: The breath of our nostrils, the life of our souls is in Jesus Christ.

Fifthly, Christ is a *fountain-mercy*, and all other mercies flow from him: A believer may say with Christ, "All my springs are in thee;" from his merit, and from his spirit, flow our redemption, justification, sanctification, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, and blessedness in the world to come: "In that day shall there be a fountain opened," Zech. xiii. 1.

Sixthly, Christ is a *satisfying* mercy; he that is full of Christ, can feel the want of nothing. "I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. Christ bounds and terminates the vast desires of the soul: He is the very sabbath of the soul. How hungry, empty, and straitened on every side is the

soul of man in the abundance and fulness of all outward things, till it come to Christ? the weary motions of a restless soul, like those of a river, cannot be at rest till they pour themselves into Christ, the ocean of blessedness.

Seventhly, Christ is a *peculiar mercy*, intended for, and applied to a remnant among men; some would extend redemption as large as the world, but the gospel limits it to those only that believe; and those believers are upon that account called a *peculiar people*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The offers of Christ indeed are large and general, but the application of Christ is but to few, Isa. liii. 1. The greater cause have they to whom Christ comes, to lie with their mouths in the dust, astonished and overwhelmed with the sense of so peculiar and distinguished a mercy.

Eighthly, Jesus Christ is a *suitable mercy*, suited in every respect to all our needs and wants, 1 Cor. i. 20. wherein the admirable wisdom of God is illustriously displayed; "Ye are complete in him," (saith the apostle) Col. ii. 20. Are we enemies? He is *reconciliation*: Are we sold to sin and Satan? He is *redemption*: Are we condemned by the law? He is the Lord our righteousness: Hath sin polluted us? He is a *fountain opened* for sin, and for uncleanness: Are we lost by departing from God? He is the *way* to the Father. Rest is not so suitable to the weary, nor bread to the hungry, as Christ is to the sensible sinner.

Ninthly, Christ is an *astonishing and wonderful mercy*; his Name is called *wonderful*, Isa. ix. 6. and as his name is, so is he; a wonderful Christ: His Person is a wonder, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh."

His abasement is wonderful, Phil. ii. 6. His love is a wonderful love; his redemption full of wonders; angels desire to look into it. He is, and will be admired by *angels and saints* to all eternity.

Tenthly, Jesus Christ is an *incomparable and matchless mercy*; "as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons," (saith the enamoured spouse) Cant. ii. 3. Draw the comparison how you will betwixt Christ and all other enjoyments, you will find none in heaven nor on earth to equal him: He is more than all *externals*, as the light of the *sun* is more than that of a *candle*: Nay, even the worst of Christ is better than the best of the world; his reproaches are better than the world's pleasures, Heb. xi. 25. He is more than all *spirituals*, as the *fountain* is more than the *stream*. He is more than justification, as the *cause* is more than the *effect*; more than sanctification, as the *person* himself is more than the image or *picture*. He is more than all peace, all comfort, all joy, as the *tree* is more than the *fruit*. Nay, draw the comparison betwixt Christ and things eternal, and you will

find him better than they ; for what is in heaven without Christ, Psal. lxxiii. 25. " Whom have I in heaven but thee ?" If Christ should say to the saints, take heaven among you, but as for me I will withdraw myself from you ; the saints would weep, even in heaven itself, and say, Lord, heaven will be no more heaven to us, except thou be there, who art by far the better half of heaven.

Eleventhly, Christ is an *unsearchable mercy* ; who can fully express his wonderful name ? Prov. xxx. 4. Who can tell over his *unsearchable riches* ? Eph. iii. 8. Hence it is that souls never tire in the study or love of Christ, because new wonders are eternally rising out of him. He is a deep which no line of any created understanding, angelical or human, can fathom.

Twelfthly, and *lastly*, Christ is an *everlasting mercy* ; " the same " yesterday, to day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. All other enjoyments are perishable, time-eaten things ; time, like a moth, will fret them out ; but the riches of Christ are durable riches, Prov. viii. 18. The graces of Christ are durable graces, John iv. 14. All the creatures are flowers, that appear and fade in their month ; but this Rose of Sharon, this Lily of the Valley never withers. Thus you see the mercy performed with its desirable properties.

Thirdly, The last thing to be opened is the manner of God's performing his mercy to his people ; which the Lord did,

1. Really and truly, as he had promised him.

2. Exactly agreeable to the promises and predictions of him.

First, Really and truly ; as he had promised, so he made good the promise. Acts ii. 36. " Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, " both Lord and Christ."

The manifestation of Christ in the flesh was no phantasm or delusion, but a most evident and palpable truth. 1 John i. 1. " That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, " which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." A truth so certain, that the assertors of it appealed to the very enemies of Christ for the certainty thereof, Acts ii. 22. Yea, not only the sacred, but profane writers, witness to it ; not only the *evangelists* and *apostles*, but even the *heathen* writers of those times, both *Roman* and *Jewish*, as Suetonius, Tacitus, Plinius the younger, and Josephus the *Jewish antiquary*, do all acknowledge it.

Secondly, As God did really and truly perform Christ the promised mercy, so he performed this promised mercy *exactly* agreeable to the promises, types, and predictions made of him to the fathers, even the most minute circumstances thereof. This is a great truth for our faith to be established in : let us, therefore,

cast our eyes both upon the *promises* and *performances* of God, with respect to Christ, the mercy of mercies. See how he was represented to the fathers long before his manifestation in the flesh; and what an one he appeared to be when he was really exhibited in the flesh.

First, As to his person and qualifications, as it was *foretold*, so it was *fulfilled*. His original was said to be unsearchable and eternal, Micah v. 2. and so he affirmed himself to be, Rev. i. 11. "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." John vi. 31, 32. "Before Abraham was, I am." His two natures, united into one person, were plainly foretold, Zech. xiii. 7. *The man my Fellow*; and such a one God performed, Rom. ix. 5. His immaculate purity and holiness were foretold, Dan. ix. 24. "To anoint the most Holy;" some render it, *the great Saint*, the Prince of Saints; and such an one he was indeed, when he lived in this world. John viii. 46. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" His Offices were foretold, the prophetic Office predicted, Deut. xviii. 15. and fulfilled in him, John i. 18. His priestly Office foretold, Psal. cx. 4. fulfilled, Heb. ix. 14. his kingly Office foretold, Micah v. 2. and in him fulfilled; his very enemies being judges, Matth. xxvii. 37.

Secondly, As to his birth, the time, place, and manner thereof were foretold to the fathers, and exactly performed to a tittle.

First, The time prefixed, more generally in *Jacob's prophecy*, Gen. xlv. 10. When the sceptre should depart from Judah, as, indeed, it did in Herod the Idumean: More particularly in Daniel's seventy weeks, from the decree of Darius, Dan. ix. 24. answering exactly to the time of his birth; so cogent and full of proof, that Porphyry, the great enemy of Christians, had no other evasion, but that this prophecy was devised after the event: Which yet the Jews (as bitter enemies to Christ as himself) will by no means allow to be true. And, lastly, the time of his birth was exactly pointed at in Haggai's prophecy, Hag. ii. 7, 9. compared with Mal. iii. 1. He must come while the second temple stood; at that time was a general expectation of him, John i. 19. and at that very time he came, Luke ii. 38.

Secondly, The place of his birth was foretold to be Bethlehem Ephrata, Micah v. 2. and so it was, Matth. ii. 5, 6. to be brought up in Nazareth, Zech. vi. 12. "Behold the man whose name is the Branch." The word is *Netzer*, whence is the word Nazarete. And there indeed was our Lord brought up, Mat. ii. 23.

Thirdly, His parent was to be a *virgin*, Isa. vii. 14. punctually fulfilled, Matth. i. 20, 21, 22, 23.

Fourthly, His stock, or tribe, was foretold to be Judah, Gen.

xlix. 10. and it is evident, saith the apostle, "that our Lord sprang out of Judah," Heb. vii. 14.

Fifthly, His *harbinger*, or forerunner was foretold, Mal. iv. 5, 6. fulfilled in John the Baptist, Luke i. 16, 17.

Sixthly, The obscurity and meanness of his birth were predicted, Isa. liii. 2. Zech. ix. 9. to which the event answered, Luke ii. 12.

Thirdly, His doctrine and miracles were foretold, Isa. xvi. 1, 2. xxxv. 4, 5. the accomplishment whereof in Christ is evident in the history of all the *evangelists*.

Fourthly, His death for us was foretold by the prophets, Dan. ix. 26. "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself:" Isa. liii. 5. "He was wounded for our transgressions." And so he was, John xi. 50. The very kind and manner of his death was prefigured in the brazen serpent, his type; and answered in his death upon the cross, John iii. 14.

Fifthly, His burial in the *tomb* of a rich man was foretold, Isa. liii. 9. and accomplished most exactly, Matth. xxvii. 59, 60.

Sixthly, His resurrection from the dead was typed out in Jonah, and fulfilled in Christ's abode three days and nights in the grave, Matth. xii. 49.

Seventhly, The wonderful spreading of the gospel in the world, even to the Isles of the Gentiles, was prophesied of, Isa. xlix. 6. to the truth whereof we are not only the witnesses, but the happy instances and examples of it. Thus the promised mercy was performed.

Inference 1. *If Christ be the mercy of mercies, the medium of conveying all other mercies from God to men; then in vain do men expect and hope for mercy of God out of Jesus Christ.*

I know many poor sinners comfort themselves with this, when they come upon a bed of sickness; I am sinful, but God is merciful: and it is very true God is merciful; plenteous in mercy; his mercy is great above the heavens; mercy pleaseth him; and all this they that are in Christ shall find experimentally, to their comfort and salvation. But what is all this to thee, if thou art Christless? There is not one drop of saving mercy that comes in any other channel than Christ to the soul of any man.

But must I then expect no mercy out of Christ? This is a hard case, very uncomfortable doctrine. Yes, thou mayest be a Christless, and covenantless soul, and yet have variety of temporal mercies, as Ishmael had, Gen. xvii. 20, 21. God may give thee the fatness of the earth, riches, honours, pleasures, a numerous and prosperous posterity; will that content thee? Yes, yes, if I may have heaven too: No, neither heaven, nor pardon, nor any other spiritual or eternal mercy may be expected out of Christ, Jude,

ver. 21. O deceive not yourselves in this point; there are two bars betwixt you and all spiritual mercies, viz. the guilt of sin, and the filth of sin; and nothing but your own union with Christ can remove these, and so open the passage for spiritual mercies to your souls.

Why, but I will repent of sin, strive to obey the commands of God, make restitution for the wrongs I have done, cry to God for mercy, bind my soul with vows and strong resolutions against sin for time to come: will not all this lay a ground-work for hope of mercy to my soul? No, this will not, this cannot do.

First, All your *sorrows*, tears and mournings for sin cannot obtain mercy; could you shed as many tears for any sin that ever you committed, as all the children of Adam have shed upon any account whatsoever, since the creation of the world; they will not purchase the pardon of that one sin; for the law accepts no short payment; it requires plenary satisfaction, and will not discharge any soul without it; nor can it acknowledge or own your souls to be such. The repentance of a soul finds, through Christ, acceptance with God, but out of him it is nothing.

Secondly, All your *strivings* to obey the commands of God, and live more strictly for time to come, will not obtain mercy. Matth. v. 20. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Thirdly, Your *restitution*, and reparation of wrongs you have done, cannot obtain mercy. Judas restored, and yet was damned. Man is repaired, but God is not. Remission is the act of God, it is he must loose your consciences from the bond of guilt, or they can never be loosed.

Fourthly, All your *cries* to God for mercy will not prevail for mercy, if you be out of Christ, Matth. vii. 22. Job xxvii. 29. A righteous judge will not reverse the just sentence of the law, though the prisoner at the bar fall upon his knees, and cry, Mercy, mercy.

Fifthly, Your *vows* and engagements to God for time to come cannot obtain mercy; for they being made in your own strength, it is impossible you should keep them; and if you could, yet it is impossible they should obtain remission and mercy: should you never sin more for time to come, yet how shall God be satisfied for sins past? Justice must have satisfaction, or you can never have remission, Rom. iii. 25, 26. and no work wrought by man can satisfy divine justice; nor is the satisfaction of Christ made over to any for their discharge, but to such only as are in him: therefore never expect mercy out of Christ.

Inf. 2. Is Christ, the mercy of mercies, greater, better, and more necessary than all other mercies: then let no inferior mercy satisfy you for your portion.

God hath mercies of all sorts to give, but Christ is the chief, the prime mercy of all mercies; O be not satisfied without that mercy. When * Luther had a rich present sent him, "he protested God should not put him off so:" and David was of the same mind, Psal. xvii. 14. If the Lord should give any of you the desires of your hearts in the good things of this life, let not that satisfy you, whilst you are Christless. For,

First, What is there in these earthly enjoyments, whereof the vilest men have not a greater fulness than you? Job xxi. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Psal. xvii. 10. and lxxiii. 3, 12.

Secondly, What comfort can all these things give to a soul already condemned as thou art; John iii. 18.

Thirdly, What sweetness can be in them, whilst they are all un-sanctified things to you? enjoyments and sanctification are two distinct things, Psal. xxxvii. 16. Prov. x. 22. Thousands of un-sanctified enjoyments will not yield your souls one drop of solid spiritual comfort.

Fourthly, What pleasure can you take in these things, of which death must shortly strip you naked? You must die, you must die; and whose then shall all those things be, for which you have laboured? Be not so fond, to think of leaving a great name behind you: it is but a poor felicity (as Chrysostom well observes) to be tormented where thou art, and praised where thou art not †: the sweeter your portion hath been on earth, the more intolerable will your condition be in hell; yea, these earthly delights do not only increase the torments of the damned, but also prepare (as they are instruments of sin) the souls of men for damnation, Prov. i. 32. "Surely the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Be restless, therefore, till Christ, the mercy of mercies, be the root and fountain, yielding and sanctifying all other mercies to you.

Inf. 3. Is Christ, the mercy of mercies, infinitely better than all other mercies? then let all that be in Christ be content, and well satisfied, whatever other inferior mercies the wisdom of God sees fit to deny them. You have a Benjamin's portion, a plentiful inheritance in Christ; will you yet complain? Others have houses, splendid and magnificent upon earth; but you have "an house made without hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1. Others are clothed with rich and costly apparel, your souls are clothed with the white, pure robes of Christ's righteousness. Isa. lxi. 10. "I will greatly re-

* *Valde protestatus sum, me nolle sic ab eo satiari.* Luth.

† For then the devouring flame burns up those whom carnal pleasure pollutes.

“joice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garment of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.” Let those that have full tables, heavy purses, rich lands, but no Christ, be rather objects of your pity, than envy: it is better, like store-cattle, to be kept lean and hungry, than with the fatted ox, to tumble in flowry meadows, thence to be lead away to the shambles. God hath not a better mercy to give than Christ, thy portion; in him all necessary mercies are secured to thee, and thy wants and straits sanctified to thy good. O! therefore, never open thy mouth to complain against the bountiful God.

Inf. 4. Is Christ *the mercy*, i. e. he in whom all the tender mercies of God towards poor sinners are; *then let none be discouraged in going to Christ, by reason of the sin and unworthiness that are in them*: his very name is *mercy*, and as his name is, so is he. Poor drooping sinner, encourage thyself in the way of faith; the Christ to whom thou art going, is mercy itself to broken hearted sinners moving towards him in the way of faith; doubt not that mercy will repulse thee; it is against both its name and nature so to do. Jesus Christ is so merciful to poor souls that come to him, that he hath received and pardoned the chiefest of sinners; men that stood as remote from mercy as any in the world, 1 Tim. i. 15. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Those that shed the blood of Christ, have yet been washed in that blood from their sin, Acts ii. 36, 37. Mercy receives sinners, without exception of great and heinous ones. John vii. 37. “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.” Gospel invitations run, in general terms, to all sinners that are heavy laden, Mat. xi. 28. When Mr. Bilney the martyr heard a minister preaching at this rate, O thou old sinner, who hast been serving the devil these fifty or sixty years; dost thou think that Christ will receive thee now? O! said he, what a preaching of Christ is here? Had Christ been thus preached to me in the day of my trouble for sin, what had become of me? But, blessed be God there is a sufficiency both of merit and mercy in Jesus Christ for all sinners, for the vilest among sinners, whose hearts shall be made willing to come unto him. So merciful is the Lord Jesus Christ, that he moves first, Isa. lxii. 1, 2. so merciful, that he upbraids none, Ezek. xviii. 22. so merciful, that he will not despise the weakest, if sincere, desires of souls, Isa. xlii. 3. so merciful, that nothing more grieves him than our unwillingness to come unto him for mercy, John v. 40. so merciful, that he waiteth to the last upon sinners to shew them mercy, Rom. x. 21. Mat. xxiii. 37. in a word, so merciful, that it is his greatest joy when sinners come unto him, that he may shew them mercy, Luke xv. 5, 22.

Object. But yet it cannot enter into my thoughts that I should obtain mercy.

Sol. First, You measure God by yourselves, 1 Sam. xxiv. 19. "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" Man will not, but the merciful God will, upon the submission of the enemies to him.

Secondly, You are discouraged, because you have not tried. Go to Jesus Christ, poor distressed sinners; try him, and then report what a Christ thou findest him to be.

Object. But I have neglected the time of mercy, and now it is too late.

Sol. How know you that? Have you seen the book of life, or turned over the records of eternity? Or do you not unwarrantably intrude into the secrets of God, which belong not to you? Besides, if the treaty were at an end, how is it that thy heart is now distressed for sin, and solicitous after deliverance from it?

Object. But I have waited long, and yet see no mercy for me.

Sol. May not mercy be coming, and you not see it? Or have you not waited at the wrong door? If you wait for the mercy of God through Christ, in the way of humiliation and faith, and continue waiting, assuredly mercy shall come at last.

Inf. 5. Hath God performed the mercy promised to the Fathers, the great mercy, the capital mercy, Jesus Christ; then let no man distrust God for the performance of lesser mercies contained in any other promises of the scripture. The performance of this mercy secures the performance of all other mercies to us. For,

First, Christ is a greater mercy than any other which yet remains to be performed, Rom. viii. 32.

Secondly, This mercy virtually comprehends all other mercies, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

Thirdly, The promises that contain all other mercies, are ratified and confirmed to believers in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20.

Fourthly, It was much more improbable that God would bestow his own Son upon the world, than that he should bestow any other mercy upon it. Wait, therefore, in a comfortable expectation of the fulfilling of all the rest of the promises in their seasons. Hath he given thee Christ? He will give thee bread to eat, raiment to put on, support in troubles, and whatsoever else thy soul or body stands in need of: The blessings contained in all other promises are fully secured by the performance of this great promise; thy pardon, peace, acceptance with God now, and enjoyment of him for ever shall be fulfilled: The great mercy, Christ, makes way for all other mercies to the souls of believers.

Inf. 6. Lastly, *How mad are they that part with Christ, the best of mercies, to secure and preserve any temporal lesser mercies to*

themselves! Thus Demas and Judas gave up Christ to gain a little of the world; O soul-undoing bargain! How dear do they pay for the world, that purchase it with the loss of Christ, and their own peace for ever!

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the Mercy of mercies.

SERMON XII.

Containing a third Motive to enliven the general Exhortation from a third Title of CHRIST.

CANT. v. Part of Verse 16.

Yea, He is altogether lovely. *

AT the ninth verse of this chapter, you have a query propounded to the *spouse*, by the *daughters of Jerusalem*, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" To this question the spouse returns her answers in the following verses, wherein she asserts his excellency in general. Ver. 10. "He is the chiefest among ten thousands;" confirms that general assertion, by an enumeration of his particular excellencies, to ver. 16. where she closes up her *character* and *encomium* of her beloved, with an elegant *epiphonema*, in the words that I have read: "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

The words, you see, are an affirmative proposition, setting forth the transcendent loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and naturally resolve themselves into three parts, viz.

1. The subject.
2. The predicate.
3. The manner of predication.

First, The *subject*, *He*, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, after whom she had been seeking, for whom she was sick of love; concerning whom these daughters of Jerusalem had enquired: whom she had endeavoured so *graphically* to describe in his particular excellencies. This is the great and excellent *subject* of whom she here speaks.

Secondly, The *predicate*, or what she affirmeth or saith of him, viz. That he is a *lovely one*, *Machamaddim*, desires; according to the import of the * original, "which signifies earnestly to desire, covet, "or long after that which is most pleasant, grateful, delectable, "and admirable." The original word is both in the *abstract*, and

* *Significat appetere, expetere quod jocundum, gratum, voluptuosum, utile et amabile est.*
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