

Secondly, Be humble under this advancement and dignity. If your hearts once begin to swell look out for humbling dispensations quickly, 2 Cor. xii. 7. This treasure is always kept in the vessel of a contrite and humble heart.

Thirdly, Keep close to duty; yea, tack one duty to another by intermediate ejaculations. If care of duty be once remitted, you are not far from a sad change of your condition.

Fourthly, Improve all ordinances, especially this great sealing ordinance, for your farther confirmation and establishment. Act your faith to the utmost of its ability, upon Christ crucified; and comfort will flow in: The more the direct acts of faith are exercised, the more powerful and sweet its reflex acts are like to be.

THE FIFTH
MEDITATION,

UPON JOHN i. 29.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

THE scope of this chapter, is to prove the divinity and eternal Godhead of Jesus Christ. One of those arguments by which this great article of faith is confirmed and proved is the testimony of John. This testimony of John is the more remarkable, because it was before prophesied of him, that when the Messiah should come, this messenger should go before his face, to prepare the way for him, Mal. iii. 1.

Now, among all the testimonies that ever John gave of Christ, none ever was, or could be more full and clear than this in the text: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!"

In which words are remarkable, 1. The *preface* to his testimony. 2. The testimony itself.

First, The preface or introduction to John's testimony; Behold! there is a double use in scripture of this word: sometimes it is used by way of indication, and sometimes by way of excitation. In the first, it points out the person; in the last, it raises our affections to him. In this place it hath both these uses.

Behold the Lamb of God! q. d. 'This is the great expectation and hope of all ages. This person whom you behold, is the *desire of all*

nations. Lo, this is *God manifest in the flesh*. This is the great sacrifice, *the Lamb of God*: Never did human eyes behold such an object before.

Secondly, The testimony itself: Which must be considered two ways; as it respects, 1. The truth and reality; 2. The virtue and dignity of Christ its object.

First, John's testimony respects the truth and reality of the object: *This is ο αμνος, the Lamb of God*; the very *antitype* to which all legal sacrifices had respect, and from which they derived all their value and virtue; *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, as he had said before, ver. 17. The paschal lamb and the lamb for daily sacrifice, were but the types and shadows of this *Lamb of God*.

Secondly, His testimony respects the virtue and dignity of Christ and his blood. *He taketh away the sin of the world*. The Greek αἰσεν (as *De Dieu*, a learned critic observes) answers both the Hebrew words, מבל et נשא Isa. liii. 4. which signify not only to *bear*, but to *bear away*; *Potando expiat, expiando aufert, efficitque ut remittatur*. By bearing sin, he expiates it; by expiating, takes it away, or procures the remission of it. The expression seems to allude to the *scape-goat*, mentioned, Lev. xvi. 22. Thus Christ really and wholly takes away the sin of the world; i. e. the sin of all believers in the world, for whom he was sacrificed, as Drusius well expounds it, concurring with the stream of sound expositors.

So that this is a very full testimony which John gives to Christ, and it is given with great affection and admiration of him: *Behold! yea, admire in beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!* Behold him with affections suitable to such an object; *Ecce persona a Deo ordinata, in victimam ad expiandum peccata*, Grotius. Behold the person appointed by God, for a sacrifice to expiate sin! Now, though this scripture be very fruitful in practical observations, yet it is not my purpose, at this time, to note or prosecute any of them except this one, which rises from the prefatory particle, or that note of admiration, with which John's testimony of Christ is ushered in: *Behold the Lamb of God!* And the note thence will be this:

Doct. *That Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is to be beheld with admiration and affection suitable to such an object.*

Christ is beheld by men three ways:

First, Carnally with an eye of flesh: so men saw him in the days of his flesh, and despised him, Isa. liii. 2. Carnal eyes saw no beauty in him, that he should be desired.

Secondly, Fiducially, by the eye of faith: believing, is seeing Christ, John vi. 40. Faith is to the saints instead of eyes: By it they make Christ present, though the heavens have received him out of our carnal sight.

Thirdly, Beatifically, by the glorified eye: so *the spirits of just men made perfect* do, by their mental eye, see him in glory; and all

the saints, after the resurrection, shall with these corporeal eyes, see their Redeemer, according to Job xix. 26, 27.

The sight of Christ by faith (which is all the sight of him that any man now hath, or can have in this world) as it is much more excellent than the first; for "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe," John xx. 29. so it is much inferior to the last; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "For now we see darkly through a glass, but then face to face" But though it be an inferior vision in respect of that which is immediate and perfect; yet the eye of faith is a precious eye, and the visions of Christ by faith, are ravishing visions: and he that beholds Christ, the *Lamb of God*, by a steady fixed eye of faith, cannot but admire, and be deeply affected with such a sight of him. The views of Christ by faith, are ravishing and transporting views, 1 Pet. i. 8. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

It is a disparagement to so glorious an object as Christ, to behold him, and not wonder; to see, and not love him. Certainly the admiration, love, delight, and joy of our hearts, are all at the command of faith: for let us but consider what ravishing excellencies are in Christ, for the eye of the believer to behold and admire.

First, God is in Christ, 2 Cor. v. 19. He is *God manifested in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. A God incarnate is the world's wonder! Here is finite and infinite joined in one; eternity matched with time; the Creator and creature making but one person! "The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth; A woman shall compass a man," Jer. xxxi. 22. It is an argument of weakness to admire little things; and of stupidity, not to admire great things. 'Many miracles (saith one) were wrought by Christ in the flesh; but the greatest of all miracles was his assumption of flesh.'

Secondly, The wisdom of God is in Christ; yea, *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. Never did the divine wisdom display its glorious beams in the eyes of men and angels, in any work of God since the beginning of time, as it hath done in the designation of Christ to be the Lamb of God, a sacrifice for sin. *Behold the Lamb of God!* and in him behold the unsearchable wisdom of God, in recovering the elect perfectly from all the danger of sin, and yet making sin more dreadful to them, by way of their recovery from it, than ever it could be made by any other consideration.

Infinite wisdom, in suiting the sinner's remedy to the cause of his disease! The disease was the pride of man; the remedy was the humiliation of the Son of God. Man affected to be as God; that ruined him: God comes down, assumes flesh, and will be found in fashion as a man; that saved him.

O profound wisdom! which from the loss and ruin of our primitive glory (which was the undoing of us, soul and body) takes the

occasion of raising us to a far better state, and settles us in it with a much better security than the former.

Who but Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, as he is called, 1 Cor. i. 24. could ever have ordered and over-ruled the worst of evils, so as by occasion of the breach of the law, to raise more glory to God, than ever could have been given to him by the most punctual observation of its commands, or by the most rigorous execution of its penalties? O the astonishing depth of wisdom!

Thirdly, The love of God is in Christ. *Behold the Lamb of God!* and in him behold the love of God, in the highest and most triumphant discovery that ever was, or can be made of it in this world! 1 John iv. 10. 'Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' O here, here is the love of God to sinners! he manifests love to us, in our daily provisions, protections, deliverances, and comforts. That we have health when others groan under pains: therein is love: that we have bread to eat, when others are ready to perish; therein is love. O! but to have Christ to be a propitiation for us, when the angels that fell were left desperate; therein was love indeed! All the love that breaks out in the variety of providences for us in this world, in our healths and estates, in our relations and comforts, is nothing compared with this love: Herein is love indeed!

Fourthly, The tender mercies of God over poor sinners are in Christ. As Christ is the mercy promised, Luke i. 72. the capital mercy; so he is the channel, through which all the streams of God's mercy flow freely to the sons of men, Jude 21. The mercy of God to eternal life, or his saving mercies, are only dispensed to us through Jesus Christ. *Behold the Lamb of God!* a Lamb prepared by the astonishing mercy of God, a sacrifice for us, when no sacrifice was laid out for fallen angels. Mercy alone hath made this difference: mercy opened its tender eye, and looked through Christ upon us, in the depth of our misery: in Christ it is that the milder attribute of mercy is exercised upon us, whilst severe justice punishes them.

Fifthly, All the hopes of poor sinners are in Christ, Col. i. 27. Take away Christ, and where is the hope of our souls? Tim. i. 1. it is by the *blood of the Lamb* that we have hope towards God: in his oblation, and no where else, our hope of salvation finds footing: on him it is the anchor of hope is fixed, and the soul stayed, when the storms of fear and inward trouble do arise, and beat violently upon it.

Sixthly, The salvation of our souls to eternity, is in Christ; Acts i. 12. 'Neither is there any other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.' He is the ark, in whom we are preserved, Jude ver. 1. Look, as the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb upon the door-posts of the Israelites, was that which preserved them from the destroying angel; so the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, typified by that blood, saves believers from the wrath to come.

But who can open the unsearchable riches, or recount the ravishing excellencies found in Christ? Angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, behold, and admire for evermore, the incomparable excellencies of Christ! Heaven would be no heaven to them, if they could not behold Christ there, Psal. lxxiii. 25.

But my business rather lies in improving this point, than endeavouring farther to unfold it: for new wonders will appear in Christ, if we behold him to eternity.

Use. And all the improvement I shall make of it, shall be in one use of exhortation; beseeching every one of you, whatever your present condition and estate may be, 'to behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world:' And,

First, If there be found among you any that are sensible of a stony hard heart, which cannot relent and mourn for all the wrong done to Jesus Christ, by sin, whose affections are benumbed and stupified by sin, so that no considerations they can urge upon their own hearts, are able to thaw them, and cause a relenting pang for sin; to such I would direct the words of this text, as the most effectual means to melt such hearts. Look hither, hard heart; 'Behold the Lamb of God!' Consider, believe, and apply what is here sensibly represented; and thy heart is hard indeed, if it relent not upon such a view of Christ. It is said, Zech. xii. 10. 'They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and mourn.' Behold the Son of God, brought 'as a Lamb to the slaughter' for thee, a vile, polluted sinner! Behold the invaluable blood of this sacrifice, shed for thee! Bring thy thoughts close to this subject; think who it is that was made *a Lamb for sacrifice*; for whom he endured all his unspeakable sufferings; how meekly and willingly he endured all the wrath of God and men, standing in his perfect innocency, to be slain for thee. Behold! he was 'made sin for thee, who had no sin; that thou, who hadst no righteousness, mightest be made the righteousness of God in him.' Oh! whoever loved thee at that rate Christ hath done? Who would endure that misery that Christ did endure for thy sake? Would thy father, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, that is as thy own soul, be content to feel that for thee, (though but one hour) which Christ felt, when 'his sweat was as it had been great drops of blood falling down to the ground?' Nay, thou wouldst never taste such a cup for the saving of thine own child, as Christ drank off, when he cried, 'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?' Behold how he loved thee!

Surely, if the rocks rent asunder at his passion, thy heart is harder than a rock, if it thaw not at such a sight as this. Fix thine eyes a while here, and thine eye will affect thine heart.

Secondly, Is there any among us that make too light of sin, and are easily overcome by every temptation to the commission of it? O come hither, and 'behold the Lamb of God!' and you cannot possibly have slight thoughts of sin after such a sight of Christ. See here the

price of sin! behold what it cost the Lord Jesus Christ to expiate it. Did he come into the world as a Lamb, bound with the bands of an irreversible decree, to die for sin? Did he come from the bosom of the Father, to be our ransom, and that at the price of his own life? Did the hand of severe justice shed the heart-blood of this immaculate Lamb, to satisfy for the wrongs thy sins have done to God? And yet, canst thou look upon sin as a light matter! God forbid!

I remember, when the worthies of Israel brake through the host of the Philistines, and brought unto David the waters of the well of Bethlehem, it is said, 2 Sam. xxiii. 17. 'He would not drink thereof, but poured it out before the Lord, and said, Be it far from me, that I should do this: Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?'

He longed for it, and yet would not taste it, how pleasant soever it would have been to him, considering what hazard was run to obtain it.

Ah Christian! it was but the hazard of their blood that gave check to David's appetite to the water: And if the water had cost an equal quantity of their blood, yet it had been but a low argument to dissuade him from drinking it, to this consideration that now lies before thee. Thy sin actually cost the blood of Christ; one drop whereof is more valuable than all human blood; and yet wilt thou not deny thy lusts, nor resist a temptation for his sake? 'Behold the Lamb of God, slain for thy sin!' and thou canst never have slight thoughts of it any more.

Thirdly, Is there any among you that droop, and are discouraged in their spirits, because of their manifold aggravated iniquities; who being overweighed with the burthensome sense of sin, despond and sink in their minds? To such I would apply the words of my text, as a sovereign cordial, to revive their hearts and hopes: 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!'

If the blood of the Lamb can take away the sin of the world, it can take away thy sin, though there be a world of sin in thee. For do but consider Christ, as designed from eternity to be our propitiation; John vii. 27. 'Him hath God the Father sealed;' as sacrificed in our room, 'in the fulness of time.' 1 Cor. v. 7. 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:' As accepted by the Father with the greatest content and pleasure, even 'as a sweet smelling savour;' Eph. v. 2. As publicly justified and discharged by God, the Creditor, at his resurrection, 1 Tim. iii. 16. and John xvi. 9. And lastly, Consider him as now in heaven, where he 'appears before God for us, as a Lamb that had been slain,' Rev. v. 6. bearing the very marks of his death, and presenting them before God, as the most effectual and moving plea, to procure pardon, and mercy for his people. Let these things, I say, be duly pondered, and nothing will be found more effectual to relieve the despondent minds of poor believers against the sinking sense of their sin.

He that represents himself in the sacrament as wounded for you, shews at the same time, to the Father in heaven, the real body that was wounded; than which nothing more effectually moves mercy, or stays the sliding feet of a poor believer's hope: And that whether we consider,

First, The dignity of that body which was wounded; the most hallowed and deeply sanctified thing that ever was created; Luke i. 35. 'That holy thing.'

Secondly, Or his vicegerency in suffering; 'He was wounded for our transgressions,' Isa. liii. 5. It was for that hard, proud, vain, dead heart, that thou complainest of. Or,

Thirdly, The end and design of those wounds; which was to repair the honour of God, and the violated law: the language of that blood (which is said to 'speak better things than the blood of Abel,' Heb. xii. 24.) is this:

'Father, have these poor souls wounded thy name, thine honour, thy law? Behold the wounds thy justice hath inflicted on me, for reparation of all that wrong they have done thee!' O how sweetly doth the blood of the Lamb settle the conscience of a poor drooping believer!

Fourthly, Is there any among you that are faint-hearted, and ready to shrink away from any sufferings for Christ, as unable to bear and endure any thing for his sake? To such I would say in the words of this text, *Behold the Lamb of God!* Did Christ suffer such grievous things for you! and cannot you suffer small matters for him? Alas! what is the wrath of man to the *wrath of the great and terrible God?* Besides, he was an innocent Lamb, and deserved not to suffer the least degree of penal evil upon his own account; but thou hast deserved hell, and yet shrinkest under the sufferings of a moment. Did he suffer so much for you; and can you suffer nothing for him? Surely he, in suffering for you, hath 'left you an example, that you should follow his steps,' 1 Pet. ii. 21. What! is our blood compared in dignity to the blood of Christ? What! are our sufferings compared in kind, or degree, to the sufferings of Christ! Nothing is found to fortify a man's spirit for sufferings, as the meditation of Christ's suffering for us doth.

Fifthly, Is there any among you that are impatient under your own personal trials and troubles, apt to howl under common afflictions from the hand of God, or swell with revenge under injuries from the hands of men! To such I would say, *Behold the Lamb of God!* Was Christ a Lamb for meekness, and art thou a lion for fierceness? Was he silent, not once opening his mouth, when he suffered most vile things from the hands of sinners, and can you bear nothing? He suffered patiently, and deserved it not; you suffer impatiently, and have deserved infinitely more.

O that you would learn to be more Christ-like in all your trials and afflictions! let it not be said, that Christ carried it as a Lamb when

he was tried, and we like swine, grumbling or howling when we are tried. O get a Christ-like temper!

Sixthly, Is there any among you that stagger at the promises, through unbelief, that cannot rely upon a word of promise, because their own unbelieving hearts fill them with unworthy suspicions of the power, faithfulness, or willingness of God to perform them to them? O that such would *behold the Lamb of God*, as represented in this ordinance! Are not all the promises of God sealed to believers in the blood of the Lamb? Heb. ix. 17, 18, 19, 20. Are not all the promises of God, in Christ, 'Yea, and Amen, to all that are in him?' 2 Cor. i. 20. Or is there any thing put into any promise of greater value than the blood of the Lamb, that was shed to purchase it? Or is not the giving of Christ to die for us the accomplishment of the greatest promise that ever God made to us? And after the fulfilling thereof, what ground remains for any to doubt the fulfilling of lesser promises?

Lastly, Is there any among you that desire to get up your affections at this table, to have your hearts in a melting temper, to awaken and rouse up all the powers of your souls in so great an occasion for it as this? *Behold the Lamb of God!* and this will do it.

Christ calls off your eyes and thoughts from all other objects to himself; Isa. lxx. 11. 'I said, Behold me! behold me!' Fix the eye of faith here, and you will feel a pang quickly coming upon your hearts like that, Cant. ii. 5. "Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples; I am sick with love." Your eyes will affect your hearts; whilst you behold, your hearts will melt within you.



THE SIXTH

MEDITATION,

UPON ROM. viii. 32.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him freely give us all things.

THIS scripture contains a most weighty argument to encourage and confirm the faith of Christians in the expectation of all spiritual and temporal mercies. It proceeds from the greater to the less affirmatively: he that delivered his Son for us, what can he deny us after such a gift? Every word hath its weight.