

SERMON V.

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.—VER. 3.

THE Apostle, in this and the two former verses, doth set himself to give an exact description of all men unregenerate; and as he is comprehensive in the doctrine about it, so he is as comprehensive also in the application. He had shewn two of the causes, that were external, of all that sinfulness that is in unregenerate men: the world, in the 2d verse, and the devil. And now he cometh to that third, which is the flesh, or natural corruption. There were but two sort of persons in the world, that shared the world between them, and they were the Jews and the Gentiles: and the Apostle doth apply all the doctrine of man's unregenerate condition by nature to both these. And as men that read lectures of anatomy do not only give the doctrine of the parts of a man's body, but they exemplify it in having a body cut up before them; so the Apostle here doth not simply lay down the corrupt estate of man's heart by nature, but he applies it, exemplifies it, and that both unto the Jew and the Gentile, he shares this common condition between them: 'wherein in time past ye walked,' speaking of the Gentiles, ver. 2; 'among whom also we all had our conversation,' speaking of the Jews, in this 3d verse.

These words I have read unto you, which concern that third and last cause of all sin in men, namely, their natural corruption, which is called *flesh*, divide themselves generally into two parts:—

1. The *persons* that he speaks this of; 'we all.'

2. The description he gives of the *state of nature*, in respect of inbred corruption, and the fruits of it in these Ephesians.

I will begin first with the *persons*:—

Our holy Apostle had a care in the application of this doctrine to wind in the Jews as well as the Gentiles. He named the Gentiles twice in the former verses, 'you hath he quickened, that were dead,' ver. 1; 'wherein in times past ye walked,' ver. 2. And he nameth the Jews as often in this 3d verse, 'among whom we had our conversation;' 'and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' He had still carried along in this epistle what God doth both unto Jews and Gentiles: he carries the state of both along with him in everything he handles. When he had spoken in the first chapter of the great benefits of redemption, he applies it both to the Jews and also to the Gentiles. To the Jews, ver. 11, 'In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, that we should be to the praise of his glory, that first trusted in Christ.' He applies it to the Gentiles, ver. 13, 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.' Now, as in the matter of redemption, and all the benefits of it, he applies it unto both; so he takes the like and the same course in the matter of corruption, and of our natural condition.

And besides that reason which many interpreters give why he doth so,

namely, because he would not seem to upbraid the Gentiles, as the Jews were wont to do, who called them ‘sinners of the Gentiles,’ Gal. ii. 15, but that he and his countrymen were as bad as they,—I say that is not the only reason, but it was to shew the freeness of God’s grace to save the Jews as well as the Gentiles. For his scope, why he doth mention the state of nature so exactly, and apply it thus to both these sorts of persons, is to illustrate the free grace of God. Saith he, in the next verse, ‘But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great mercy wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us; by grace ye are saved.’ So that he would shew that all, both Jews and Gentiles, needed it. You shall find likewise he takes the same course in his epistle to the Romans. In the first chapter he proves that the Gentiles were all corrupted; and in the second chapter he convinceth them, and proveth, that the Jews were so also. In the third chapter he concludeth that all were sinners: there is no difference, saith he, ‘all have come short of the glory of God;’ and, ‘there is none righteous, no, not one.’ And to what end was all this? It was to glorify the grace of God, as it follows, ver. 24, ‘Being justified freely by his grace,’ &c. And then again he doth apply it to the Jews, and he speaks as hard words, and harder of them than he doth of the Gentiles, and of both in respect of their conversations. The poor Gentiles, they were led away, he saith, by the world and by the devil; he applies that part of man’s misery unto them. But when he comes to the Jews, ‘Ye were by nature the children of wrath,’ saith he; and, ‘Ye have had your conversation in the lusts of the flesh.’ He shews the internal cause of corruption when he applies it unto them. And what is the reason? You must know this, that first, for their conversations, the Jews would not so much as converse with the Gentiles; they called them ‘sinners of the Gentiles,’ Gal. ii. They would not so much as eat with them, as you read in Acts x. that Peter would not, and according to the ceremonial law he ought not. And so in John iv., when Christ conversed with the Samaritan woman, there was a wonder at it. But saith the Apostle here, you Jews that stand so much upon this privilege, and therefore think yourselves holier, look to your natural estate, and you are of the same number with the Gentiles; ‘among whom we also all had our conversation in times past.’ They stood likewise upon their privilege that they were a holy seed, and that they were the children of God, and that all of them were so by birth; you know, they said they were of the seed of Abraham, and ‘we have Abraham to our father.’ He batters down that too; ‘We were by nature,’ saith he, ‘the children of wrath, even as others.’ And therefore now he applies it thus to the persons of the Jews.

Now, all the controversy is this, and it is a thing that interpreters differ in, that seeing the word here which we translate, ‘among whom,’ may be also interpreted as well, ‘in which,’ whether of these two should be here intended? The question then is, whether ‘among whom’ refer to the persons,—that is, ‘We Jews walked *among you* Gentiles, had our conversations like to you?’—or whether the meaning be that ‘we Jews walk in the *same sins*?’ ‘In which we also had our conversation,’ as referring unto *sins* and *trespasses*, ‘wherein in times past ye walked, ver. 1, 2.

I for my part think the Holy Ghost writes the Scripture so as to take in a comprehensive meaning; and it hath been a rule that I have observed all along in interpreting this, and shall in all other Scriptures. I think he intended both. For to say both of these Jews, that as for their persons they are to be reckoned among the Gentiles, among the same number, ‘among whom we also;’ and to say they walked in the same sins and in the same lusts;

it makes the scope and the sense more full, it makes up the likeness of their condition the more and the greater. His scope was to humble the Jews in both respects, that though they stood upon it that they were a privileged people, yet, saith he, you are to be reckoned among the Gentiles, 'among whom we also walked.' And he would prove that they were to be reckoned among them, because they walked in the same sins; 'in which we also walked as well as they.'

So that now these words that are translated 'among whom,' note out two things:—

1. The manner of their conversation, that they walked *ad eundem modum*; or, as the Vulgar translation hath it, *ad quem modum*, in the same sins. *Quemadmodum vos, ita et nos*. Look, as they Gentiles walked, so did ye Jews.

2. It imports also that their persons are to be reckoned in the same number; *ex eodem numero*, they are in the same number; and are to be put *in eodem albo*, in the same rank and catalogue with the Gentiles.

Now, there is an objection or two against either interpretation; for I take in both, therefore I must remove the objections against both.

The first objection, that by *ἐν αἵματι* should not be meant, 'in which sins,' is this. For, say they that are of another mind, then it should have been in the feminine gender, *ἐν αἵματι*, since *ταῦς ἀμαρτίας* was the last word mentioned in the first verse; therefore if it referred to sins, it should have been in the feminine gender.

But that receiveth an easy answer; for as there is *ἀμαρτίας*, so there is *παρὰπράμασι*, namely, 'trespasses,' in the neuter gender. But the answer that Estius gives is this, that it refers to both, though the one be the neuter and the other the feminine gender; yet when he makes the participle, he saith it refers unto both; therefore that interpretation, 'in which,' will stand.

Then again, as for that other, 'among whom,' as our translation renders it, that that is more especially meant is clear, because the nearest connexion doth carry it, the other is a more remote connexion. For if it be, 'in which sins,' it must refer to the first verse, and there comes in between the whole second verse; but if it refer to the persons, 'among whom,' then it referreth in the next coherence: 'among whom'—namely, which children of disobedience—'we all had our conversation,' which are the words just before.

But there is this objection against that, say they that are of another mind. All the Jews were not children of disobedience; for 'children of disobedience' doth imply persons eminently wicked in a more special manner, as 'children of Belial' did. Now, the apostle saith, 'among whom all we had our conversation;' now, say they, all the Jews had not their conversation among children of disobedience; there were some more eminently children of disobedience amongst the Jews, as well as amongst the Gentiles. This is the objection against that interpretation.

But the answer is easy; for, in the first place, 'children of disobedience' doth not only note out men eminently wicked, but it is the common expression given unto unregenerate men. In chap. v. 6, 'For which things,' saith he, 'the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.'

Neither, secondly, will it follow in the connexion that all the Jews should have been children of disobedience; but indeed this will follow, that they are to be reckoned of the same rank with them; all unregenerate men shall belong, and do belong, unto the same kingdom with the highest and eminentest sinners that are. Therefore, saith he, never boast yourselves; if you be children of disobedience, if you walked among them, you were of that company, of that drove.

And indeed and in truth, thirdly, the Jews were in a more peculiar manner the children of disobedience than the Gentiles were. What is the reason? Because they had the law—they are still called a stiff-necked people, which is not applied to the Gentiles. Disobedience is in a more special manner attributed unto them, because they had the means, especially when the gospel came upon them.

So now, the interpretation being fully cleared, that 'among whom' referreth to both, and the reason also why it referreth to 'in which,'—for I must give you a reason of it, that 'in which sins ye walked' is also meant,—the reason of it is this, because that in Col. iii. 7, which is a parallel epistle to this, there it is, 'in which ye walked, whilst ye lived in them,' referring unto sins. And so the Syriac also renders it; 'in which,' viz., 'in which sins ye also walked.' And it makes the likeness between the Jews and Gentiles to be more full; for then his meaning is plainly this: we that are Jews had a like condition with the Gentiles, first, in respect of conversation; we all walked in the same sins, we had a like condition in respect of the lusts of the flesh: 'in which also we all had our conversation, in the lusts of the flesh.' And we had a likeness of condition in respect of natural corruption, which is the ground of all; 'and were by nature the children of wrath, as well as others.' And so now, having cleared this interpretation, that it refers to both, yet especially to the latter, I come to the observations out of it.

There is one great observation which I will not now insist on, but refer it till we come to those words, 'were by nature children of wrath, even as others,' namely this, that original corruption is universal to all mankind, both Jew and Gentile. That observation is proper to those words, therefore I omit it here.

But here he speaks of the likeness of the Jew to the Gentile, and that they are to be reckoned among them, the Jews all one with the Gentiles, in respect of their conversation; that is the thing that these first words hold forth, 'among whom we also had our conversation.'

First, then, if the interpretation be that they are to be reckoned of the same number with the Gentiles, then I make these two observations upon it:—

Obs. 1.—First, Though there be several sizes of unregenerate men, several sorts of them, yet they that are the best of them are to be reckoned, and they are to reckon themselves, and Jesus Christ at the latter day will reckon them, *even among the worst.* He had spoken of the highest children of disobedience in the verses before, that were more eminently such,—for I take that interpretation also in,—and it followeth, 'among whom we all had our conversation.' There may, I say, be several sizes of unregenerate men, yet all shall be reckoned of one sort. It is a consideration may mightily strike us. Let men be never so civil, let men be temporary believers and profess religion with never so much strictness, if they be unregenerate they will be reckoned among the children of disobedience. 'Among whom we,' saith Paul, putting in himself, who had his 'conversation according to the law, blameless.' No man could say black was his eye. He professed that he walked according to his conscience all his days; yet I am to be reckoned, saith he, and had my conversation among, and shall be accounted of that number, with the highest children of disobedience. It is an excellent observation that a late critic hath made: that in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Proverbs, where hell is mentioned or spoken of, as it is often, the word in the Hebrew signifies the *Place of the Giants*. 'They shall go down into hell,' that is, to the place of the giants. That was the term that the Jews did anciently give to hell. What is the meaning of that? You know

that the giants of the old world were the eminent, grand wicked men. Gen. vi. 5, 'The wickedness of man was great upon earth.' And he saith there were giants that did corrupt their ways before him; and the earth was filled with violence. Now, the flood came and swept all these giants away, and carried them all to hell. And because such a cluster of them went there all at once, hell had its name from thence; and whoever went to hell, though he were a Jew, though he were never so strict, if unregenerate he went to the place of the giants, he went among wicked men; and so they are to be reckoned here. Nay, the gospel speaks higher words of hell, as in relation to whom wicked men shall be gathered, Matt. xxv. 41. He speaks to all unregenerate men, that shall be found so at the latter day, that died in that estate, though there be never so many sizes of them, Go into the fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. They are not only gathered to the giants, but they are gathered to their great prince, Satan. They walked according to the prince of the air, and they shall go to hell, where the prince of the fire is, when he is there—a poor prince, when he is there. And God will bring forth men so, though they walk among the drove of his children in profession now, yet if they walk in by-lanes, God will rank them at the latter day, yea, often in this world, with the workers of iniquity. In Ps. cxxv. 5, 'As to such as turn aside to their crooked ways,' that walk in by-lanes of sin, 'the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.' They do walk after them here before God, and God will manifest so much before he hath done. The Lord, saith he, shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.

And the reason, my brethren, why they are to be reckoned among them, and as walkers among them, though they sever themselves from them in respect of external conversation, is, because they agree in the same internal principle of sin. They walk in lusts, every unregenerate man doth; refine him how you will, it is certain he doth. Now, the fellowship that men have with other wicked men, lies not so much in keeping company personally with them, as it lies in walking in the same lusts and in the same sins, smaller or greater. 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' Fellowship lies in the works more than in the persons; it lies in the consent, as Ps. l. 18.

And then, again, there is this observation, but you need not make a distinct one of it, that those, even among Christians,—for there is the same reason,—that live in the same lusts that the Gentiles do, they shall all be reckoned as Gentiles before God. 'Among whom,' saith he, 'we all had our conversation in the lusts of the flesh.' If they live in lusts, they are said to live as Gentiles; for lusts are called in a more peculiar manner the 'lusts of the Gentiles.' My brethren, in Rev. xi. 2 you find that the holy city is to be given up to the Gentiles, to tread down for a certain time. Whom doth he mean there by Gentiles? Why, he meaneth indeed and in truth the Popish Christians; for it is a preparatiom to the killing of the witnesses, which is in that chapter, which is clear shall be done by the beast; and you know who the beast is. He saith, ver. 7, that 'the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.' Now he calleth them, though they profess Christianity, Gentiles; and the prophets of old used the same language, Jer. ix. 26. There is but this difference, saith he, between you Jews that are wicked and the Gentiles: they are uncircumcised in the flesh, and ye are uncircumcised in the heart. And let me add this further, for I fear it is a thing to be fulfilled, and I have feared it many years, that when once the temple

of God is measured,—and the reed is in men's hands, doing it now, and hath been a good while,—and the altar of worship, and the worshippers, them that worship therein, as it is Rev. xi. 1; that then this temple will be given up to these Gentiles to be trodden down; and why? Because there is so great an outward court laid to this temple. The temple should consist of those that are priests and saints; but the reformed churches have laid too great an outward court, which are as bad as Gentiles: therefore, saith he, seeing they stand upon Gentile ground, the Gentiles shall re-enter again. He saith that the court that was without the temple was not to be measured; for they are not fit to be worshippers, though they be Christians; for it is given to the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot. And therefore now, as Musculus well observeth, for us to boast against the Papists, We are the reformed churches; yet, for the multitude and shoal of Christians to walk in the same lusts, they are, saith he, to be accounted to live even Popishly; as these Jews are reckoned to live heathenishly, whilst they walk in the same lusts the Gentiles did. And though men are not idolaters, as the Papists are; yet, notwithstanding, whilst they walk in their lusts, they are idolaters still. For you shall find, in Col. iii. 5, the Apostle, speaking there of covetousness, and uncleanness, and the like, saith he, 'which are idolatry.' Some indeed read it, 'which is idolatry,' and so refer it only to covetousness; 'and covetousness, which is idolatry.' But other copies are, 'which are idolatry,' referring to 'fornication, and uncleanness, and evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which are idolatry;' because indeed they do set up idols in their hearts which they worship; for every lust setteth up another thing beside God; and it is as truly Gentilism, as truly idolatry, as Popish or heathenish idolatry is; only this devil of idolatry takes a shape, and appears visibly to them and in them, but it is invisibly in the hearts of others.—And so much now for that first observation from those words, 'among whom we also walked.'

Obs. 2.—I will give you a second, and that is this: That there is *no light or means will do corrupt nature good.* Are the Jews born under the light of the law? Had they the light of the gospel come upon them also by John Baptist, and by Christ, and by the apostles, and do they remain still and walk in their lusts? I say, no means will do corrupt nature good. And in Rom. viii. you have a place for it. 'The law,' saith he, 'was weak through the flesh,' ver. 3. Go and inform men never so much with the law, and though it seem to be a strong thing to work upon a man, to tell him of hell, &c., yet, saith he, it is 'weak through the flesh.' That natural corruption that is in a man will never be wrought upon by it, it will hinder the working of the physic, be it never so strong; flesh will, corruption will. Isa. xxvi. 10, let them live in a land of uprightness, they will deal unrightly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. The Jews here had all these means, yet they remained still in the same unregenerate condition. Men may restrain indeed, the gospel may do so, and the law may do so, restrain corruption in men, yet they will please the lusts of the flesh still, they will walk in them; and if not in the grosser lusts of the flesh, yet they will walk in the lusts of the mind. There are other spiritual lusts in the understanding, that, let corrupt nature be cooped up never so much, let the gospel, let the law, all grapple with it, it will be corrupt nature still. 'Among whom also we'—we Jews, that had all those means—'had our conversation in the lusts of the flesh.'

Obs. 3.—I will add a third observation, and that is this: That *no privileges whatsoever men can have will save them from an unregenerate condition.*

The law, and having the privileges thereof, will not do it ; neither will the gospel, and all the privileges thereof, do it. The privileges of the law would not do it, you see by this text, and you may have it more clear in Rom. ii. 25, and so to the end. ‘Circumcision,’ saith he, ‘verily profiteth, if thou keep the law : but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is of God, and not of men.’ The law, you see, will not do it. And the gospel will not do it, though the gospel uncaseth men much more. There was a kind of ceremonial typical holiness under the law, whereby all the seed of Abraham were holy unto God ; but when the gospel came, it uncased them. What saith John Baptist, when he began first to preach the gospel ? ‘Think not,’ saith he, ‘to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.’ And it was prophesied of Christ, when his day should come to preach the gospel, that he should do it much more : Mal. iii. 1, ‘I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me,’—that is, John Baptist, for so it is applied, Matt. xi. 10,—‘even the messenger of my covenant, whom ye delight in ; behold, he shall come. But who may abide the day of his coming ? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap ;’ and he shall sit in his shop, saith he, in his church, ‘as a refiner and purifier of silver ; and he shall purify the sons of Levi.’ He came and purified the church more and more ; tells them, except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, they shall not enter into the kingdom of God. And, my brethren, this you shall find, that still the higher and purer the gospel riseth in the light of it, the more unregenerate men will be discovered, and their privileges which they possess in the church of God be taken from them. Not only ignorance and profaneness, but civility ; yea, in the end it will rise so high that all temporary believers shall be discovered in that glorious new Jerusalem. There shall not be a man there that maketh a lie ; not only not a man that telleth a lie, but not a man that maketh a lie ; that is, not a man whose heart is not changed, not a man that is in the least degree a Gentile ; and all unbelievers shall be without. Still as the gospel goes higher, it uncases men the more, and discovers the vanity of such outward privileges as these are, and will thrust them out.—So much now for the first thing in the text, ‘Among whom we.’

Among whom we all.—I must speak a little to that word ‘all,’ and it shall be but a little ; that is, all we Jews, or more especially, all we that are believers, converted of the Jews ; saith he, ‘we all,’ all we apostles, we were once unregenerate men, and we lived in that state and condition, and in the same lusts that ye Gentiles did ; and all the converts among the Jews they did so too.

Now you will say unto me, Were there none of these that were holy even from their infancy ?

Yes, my brethren, it may be there were some, but there were but a very few. You know John Baptist was ; but all, that is, the generality, for the most part even all the believers that lived among us, they were for some time in a natural and unregenerate condition.

But there is a special reason why it was spoken of the Jews in the Apostle’s time, ‘we all ;’ for the truth is this, in the Old Testament you shall find very few conversions ; you do not read when Isaac was converted : you read, indeed, that Abraham had a call, for the text saith he was an idolater : but take Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and you shall

read nowhere of their conversion ; whereas ye have abundance of stories of conversions in the New Testament : but in the Old Testament, the truth is, God wrought much even from their infancy ; although that speaks of conversion too ; for the prophet saith that Levi turned many from their iniquity whilst he kept the covenant, Mal. ii. 6 ; and in Ps. li., David saith, ‘ sinners shall be converted unto thee.’ But yet before the times of the gospel, before the time of John Baptist’s preaching, the truth is, there was then such a corruption generally among the Jews, that they were in a manner, as it were, all left in their natural condition, there were very few godly among them, that so the fruit of the gospel might the more appear. I will give you but one text for it, Luke i. 17. It is said there of John that when he should come to preach, he should ‘ turn the hearts of the children to their fathers ;’ that is, whereas Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and æll those holy and godly fathers, had been for justification by grace, they had rested upon the Messiah, the promise of God, and had turned to God, and served him truly ; these Jews were so generally corrupted, that the whole nation needed a new conversion, to be of the old fathers’ religion ; therefore it is said he should ‘ turn the hearts of the children to their fathers.’

But then, again, there is a third answer. ‘ We all ;’ he shews not so much, *de facto*, what all were, or in a strict word, or in strict terms that all the Jews had been unregenerate for a long while before they were turned ; but his scope is to shew what the generality of them were, and what all would have been ; the same nature would have wrought the same effect, had not the grace of God come and put the difference.

I should likewise speak a little to these words, *in times past* ; but I shall meet with it so often, as in ver. 11, ‘ Remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ;’ and in the next words likewise, ‘ and were the children of wrath :’ and the observation I have upon it I will not now insist upon, but rather come to what followeth. And so now I come to these other words—

We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Here is an exceeding exact description of the corruption of man’s heart and conversation by nature. And the Apostle hath a double scope in it. His scope is—

First, to shew the pedigree of causes of all that corruption that is in men while they are unregenerate ; as he had shewn the world to be a cause, and the devil to be a cause, so here the flesh, the cause of causes, he putting this difference between the causes, that Satan and the world are but external causes. ‘ We walk *according* to the course of the world, and *according* to the prince of the power of the air ;’ but when he speaks of the lusts of the flesh, he speaks of that as the internal cause : ‘ We walk *in* the lusts of the flesh,’ &c. You have here, my brethren, all the causes of sin in men’s lives. You have sin in the heraldry of the causes of it. We have it emblazoned here as fully as can be desired. For—

1. Here is *flesh*, corrupt nature, which sticks in us, which is as the root and fountain.

2. Here are lusts, which are the first-born of that flesh, of that corruption, that are the immediate ebullitions, the boilings, the springings up from that fountain.

3. Here is a division of the several sorts of lusts ; he doth not only call them lusts, in the plural, because they are many, but he gives us their several

sorts. There are lusts of the flesh, or the body, the sensual part, wherein the soul partaketh with the body; and there are the lusts of the mind, the superior part, whose actings are abstracted from the body. Then there is the outward conversation. The flesh begets lusts, and the lusts bring forth a corrupt conversation; 'we had our conversation in the lusts of the flesh;' they are as the streams, or the springings that lusts from the fountain make. And the conversation, the badness of that, he setteth forth two ways. (1.) By the constancy of it; that all an unregenerate man's courses are nothing else but sin—they walked in it, had their whole conversation in it. (2.) That it is nothing else but a fulfilling of some lust or other; 'fulfilling,' saith he, 'the desires of the flesh and of the mind.'

4. Because it will be said, man is a reasonable creature, and hath an understanding and a will, and is not led to an action as beasts are, by brutish and unreasonable passions,—can lusts carry a reasonable man on alone in a brutish way, as beasts are led?—therefore he tells you that the truth is, that these lusts have all of them, before they come to act, the consent of the will; and therefore what he calleth lusts in the first part of the discourse,—'had our conversation in the *lusts* of the flesh,'—he varies the phrase in the next, 'doing the *wills* of the flesh,' so it is in the Greek, τὰ θελήματα τῆς σαρκός. But doth the will move without the understanding? No, there is the will of the mind too, τῶν διανοιών, it is in the plural too. Take all the intellectual powers in a man, they are all corrupt, they have all their lusts, and they all concur through their corruption to dictate to the will to yield to all these lusts. But then—

5. The question will be, how do we come to be thus corrupt? What is the cause of all this 'flesh,' which is the cause of lusts, and which is seated thus in the will and understanding, and which causeth all men's sins in their lives? If you ask me how you come by it, I will tell you, saith the Apostle; you had it by nature. We were all the children of wrath by nature, therefore we were sinful by nature; for the object of God's wrath and anger is only sin. That is one scope.

But a second scope the Apostle hath is, as to shew the causality of sin in this its pedigree, that flesh is the original of lusts, those lusts are the original of all the wicked conversation in us, to which the will consents, and the understanding also; so likewise his scope is to afford matter of humiliation to those Ephesian Gentiles and the Jews also, and so to all mankind, and to magnify the free grace of God the more; and therefore he doth set forth corrupt nature in the full and most exact manner that we find in all the book of God; as, when I open the particulars, will appear. I thought to have done it now by way of analysis, but I shall not be able then to come to the particular exposition of these words, 'had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh,' which I would make an end of; therefore I will reserve it till the last of all, where it will come in as well. I am to open three things:—

1. What is meant by *flesh*.

2. What is meant by *lusts of the flesh*.

3. What this importeth, to have *our conversation in the lusts of the flesh*.

First, what is meant by *flesh*? I must do two things in that:—

1. What the thing itself is that is meant by flesh, namely, that corruption of nature original.

2. The reason of the phrase, why this original corruption is termed *the flesh*.

I shall do both these, as briefly as possibly I can. And—

First, *For the thing itself*, I will give you but this brief description or definition of it, and give you Scripture for every word of it, or for the chief

branches of it. It is a sinful disposition in man's nature, that is become his nature, whereby it is empty of all good, yea, opposite to it, to all good that is towards God, and containeth in it the seeds and principles of all sins whatsoever. This in a word is meant by 'flesh.' Now to make this out—

1. I say it is a *corrupt disposition*, or bias, as I may so call it, in the nature of man, in the whole nature of man. It is not the substance of man's nature; for then, when it was said, 'The Word was made flesh,' the meaning were, that the Word was made sin, if that flesh and corruption had been the substance of man's nature, and Jesus Christ and we had not been of the same nature as he was man. In John iii. 6, saith Christ, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' He evidently meant here by 'flesh' a distinct thing from the nature of man; for he saith that 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' even as he saith that 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' By 'spirit' in the last words, he meaneth a differing thing from Spirit in the first words; so when he saith, 'is flesh,' he meaneth a differing thing from that which is born of flesh. The one notes out the substance; the other, the adjunct disposition of it.

Which disposition is yet now become man's nature,—that is, as natural dispositions are,—and all this emptiness of good, and seeds of all evil: therefore the next words tell us, that he is by nature, as I shall open it afterwards in part, the child of wrath. And as there is a divine nature, that hath the seeds of all good in it, all things belonging to life and godliness, 2 Peter i. 3, 4,—compare but the verses together; it is called the divine nature, and it is said to have all things belonging to life and godliness,—so this corrupt nature of ours, on the contrary, is a disposition to all evil. I say, a disposition. And therefore, although this corrupt nature of man is sometimes called 'flesh;' yet you shall find in other scriptures it is said to be 'fleshly,' and said to be 'carnal.' Though it be called flesh in the abstract, for some reasons, yet to shew it is but a disposition in man's nature, not the substance of his nature, therefore he is said to be fleshly; as in Rom. vii. 14, 'I am carnal,'—it is the same word, but only there is an adjective; he saith not, I am flesh, but, I am carnal,—'sold under sin.' As that spirit which is born of the Spirit is called the spiritual man in Scripture; so that which is born of the flesh, and called flesh, is called the carnal man in Scripture. 1 Cor. iii. 3, 'Are ye not carnal?' And, 1 Peter ii. 11, they are called 'fleshly lusts;' because this flesh is but an adjunct, it is but a corrupt quality, or corrupt disposition, that clingeth to man's nature.—And so much now for the first part of the definition.

2. It makes man's nature *empty of all good dispositions whatsoever*; it importeth an emptiness, a vacuity of all good. What saith the Apostle, Rom. vii. ? 'In my flesh dwelleth no good thing.' And yet if ever in any man's flesh, in his unregenerate part, there had reason to have been some good thing, there was as much reason it should have been in Paul's unregenerate part as ever in any one's. Why? Because there was so much grace mingled with it. Yet all that grace could never kill it, never work good in it, so long as it remained; it might destroy it, but it could never teach the unregenerate part good, or work the least good in it. Nay, it is not only an emptiness of all good, but it is an enmity to all good; as you have it, Rom. viii. 7. He saith that the fleshly mind, or *φρόνημα*,—the least stirrings of the flesh in any act,—is enmity against God. And—

3. It containeth in it the mass, it is the seed, *the seminary of all sort of sin whatsoever*. For that I will give you that place in Col. ii. 11, 'The body of the sins of the flesh.' It is a whole body of sin. What is the mean-

ing of that? In a word thus: go take a child's body, and it hath all the parts; though they are not so big as a man's that is grown up, yet it hath all the parts of a man. So go, take that corruption that lies in the heart of every child, it is a whole body of sin, it is perfect for parts, indeed the limbs may grow greater and greater, as men grow wickeder; for this original corruption, I mean, this vicious disposition, is increased in men; but yet, notwithstanding, it is not increased by adding new parts of corruption to it, but the seeds of all were at the first, and it still groweth greater and greater. So you see here, as briefly as I can, what *flesh* is.

That which hath exercised my thoughts most is why it is called *flesh*. I find that the Old Testament did use it from the very first, Gen. vi. 3. When God gives the reason there why he would destroy man, and indeed the very sons of God, they that professed themselves to be the sons of God, but were all generally unregenerate, but Noah, and one or two more that belonged to his family, he gives this reason for it, expresseth it thus: 'The Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.' By 'flesh' here he doth not mean that man is a frail creature; but he speaks of him as he is sinful, as he is corrupt, and his meaning is this: I see, saith he, that man is nothing but flesh, that his whole nature is nothing but a resisting and an opposing of my Spirit; and therefore my Spirit shall not always strive with him for that he is flesh. Yet, 'his days shall be a hundred and twenty years,' notwithstanding they were so generally corrupt. And that he meaneth by 'flesh' the corrupt nature of man, I have much to make plain, but I shall in a word manifest it. It is not only because it is alleged as a cause of the flood, and because it is brought in as opposite to the Spirit; but in the 5th verse he sheweth the fruits of this 'flesh.' 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' And then compare with it chap. viii. 21. He had given a reason here in this 6th chapter why he would bring the flood; and, mark it, the reason must be general, for the flood destroyed infants as well as those of riper years, and therefore he gives a reason that shall reach infants, and all: and he saith, they were flesh. Now in the 8th chapter, ver. 21, he giveth a reason why he would not any more bring the flood; and what is it? 'The Lord said in his heart, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,' or infancy. There are some interpreters that read it thus: I will not destroy it, although the imagination of man's heart is evil; before, indeed, I destroyed the world because man is flesh, and because the imagination of his heart is continually evil from his youth; yet, although I did it once, I will not do it again. It comes all to one, the meaning is this: I have now received a sacrifice, I smell the savour of the blood of Christ in Noah's sacrifice; therefore for his sacrifice' sake I will be patient with man; for he is corrupt, and I must bring I know not how many floods to wash away his corruption, therefore I will be patient. I only bring it for this, to shew that the word 'flesh' is used for original sin. I might be large in this.

Only, by the way, let me observe this one thing upon it: that the old world, you see, was well instructed in the doctrine of original corruption. God reveals it plainly to Noah, gives it for a reason of the flood. And there was good reason why it should be then well known, because that the world had fallen not many hundred years before in Adam, and Adam lived nine hundred of them to tell the story of it. So that indeed the doctrine of man's corruption was perhaps more rife and quick in those times, than in

after-times it was unto the very Jews themselves. Now then, the Old Testament having used the word 'flesh,' our Saviour Christ continues it; and in John iii. 6, giving the reason why that every man must be born again, or he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, he tells them, because every man by his first birth is nothing but flesh,—that is, nothing but corruption, nothing but sin, 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,'—therefore of necessity men must be born again. And the apostles after Christ did use it, and the New Testament in the epistles commonly useth it, and putteth it for corruption.

But now to give you the reasons of this appellation in a word or two:—

First, it is called *flesh* in distinction from, and in opposition to *spirit*. The Jews did call things flesh that were not spirit. Hence therefore now, if it were a substantial spirit that flesh was distinguished from, look what kind of spirit that any thing was differenced from, in that sense we are to understand flesh in distinction from it. I shall give you but one instance, though I could give you a great many. You know that God is a Spirit, and that Jesus Christ had in his person both a human and a divine nature: the divine nature, that is called Spirit; and the human nature, that is called flesh. There is a multitude of instances for it: 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.' That is, it is his Godhead putteth all the influence into his humanity; if he had been man alone, it would not have done it. He was put to death in the flesh, and quickened in the Spirit. But the most express place is in Rom. i. 3, 4. He saith he came 'of the seed of David according to the flesh,' but he was raised by the 'Spirit of holiness,' that is, by his Godhead. Man himself hath a spirit in him, his soul: hence therefore his body is, in opposition to the soul, called flesh, 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution of flesh,'—that is, of bodily lusts, —'and of spirit,' that is, of the soul, which the soul exerciseth without dependence upon the body. So in Ps. lxxix. 2, the bodies of the saints are called the flesh of the saints. Yea, the very gospel itself, because it hath a spiritualness in it, is called spirit, and the law is called flesh. The gospel, in 2 Cor. iii. 8, is called 'the ministration of the Spirit.' And, Gal. iii. 3, 'Did you begin in the Spirit, and will you end in the flesh?' or, will you be 'perfected in the flesh?' That is, by adding the law to the gospel, which was the thing they endeavoured. Now then the word 'flesh' being still used in opposition to and in distinction from 'spirit,' whether taken in a substantial sense, or otherwise, hence, because that the new creature, which is begot by the Holy Ghost, is called spirit,—'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,'—hence therefore the contrary quality, that corrupt nature that lusteth against this spirit, and is opposite unto it, is called flesh. And as that spirit is the bundle of all graces, so this flesh is the bundle of folly that is bound up in the heart of man, a whole bundle of it, a mass of corruption. 'The law,' saith Paul, 'is spiritual, but I am carnal,' Rom. vii. 14. All corruption opposite to the law is called carnality or flesh, because the holy law is spiritual.

But, secondly, there is another reason why it is called flesh; and that is, because this corrupt nature of ours doth confine us to things fleshly, as to our objects; that is, that all the powers and faculties of soul and body shall only mind the things of the flesh—but I do not mean things of the body when I say so,—whereas spirit, the new creature, hath for its object all sort of spiritual things. I do found this upon Rom. viii. 5; saith he there, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit.' It is a saying in

philosophy, and it is a true one, that *facultates distinguuntur per actus et objecta*, all natural faculties are distinguished by their objects. So is flesh and spirit, grace and corruption. And because corrupt nature hath the things of the flesh for its object, hence it is called flesh; and because that there are spiritual things which are the object of grace and holiness, which are spiritual things, hence that is called a spirit.

Now, my brethren, let me tell you that by the things of the flesh is not meant only things of the body, or belonging to the body, or the object of bodily lusts, but all outward things whatsoever, all creature-comforts; yea, I may say, all creatures, take God and Christ out of them, and they are all the things of the flesh. The Apostle expresseth it there, in Col. iii. 2, when he calleth them 'earthly things,' which our earthly members are set upon; for corrupt nature confines us to things on earth, confines us to things of this world: spiritual things, that are of another world, the natural man hath no suitableness to them. And by 'things of the flesh' is not meant only gross sins, which are called 'the works of the flesh,' Gal. v. 19; but all creature-comforts whatsoever, all dignities, all excellencies, honours, riches, all the glories of the world, that do so much take up the minds of men, are called the things of the flesh; and to these doth corrupt nature suit us and carry us on. 2 Cor. v. 16, 'Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.' 'After the flesh,' referreth both unto the things known, and to the manner of knowing them. To the *things known*, which is that which is to our purpose,—that is, we value no man by his outward privileges and dignities; we value no man by honours, riches, or greatness, or by what he is in this world. So likewise, in Rom. xv. 27, when they had sent a contribution to them at Jerusalem, saith Paul, they did partake of your 'carnal things,'—that is, of your fleshly things; he calleth their riches and estates things that are fleshly. So in 1 Cor. ix. 11. And you have the like in another place, 'I will not glory in the flesh.' And there is a phrase in Gal. vi. 12, of making 'a fair show in the flesh,'—that is, in fleshly things, in anything but in God and in Christ. The Jews did call whatsoever was outward, flesh and fleshly. The very ceremonial law therefore the Apostle calls 'a carnal commandment,' a fleshly commandment, Heb. vii. 16. And so he calls the duties of it the works of the flesh, though they were the institutions of God; yet because they had an outwardness in them, in regard of the gospel, he calleth them flesh. I allege it for this, that all things that were outward were called flesh among the Jews; yea, the works of the moral law, if a man would affect to be never so holy, if he take away aiming at God as the principal, and if he will go and trust in them when they are done, they are all flesh, they are things of the flesh. What saith the apostle, Phil. iii. 4? 'If any have reason to be confident in the flesh, much more I.' I had cause to trust in the flesh. He had relation to that speech in Jer. xvii. 5, 'Cursed is the man that maketh flesh his arm;' which is, not only to make man his confidence, but anything; for Paul interpreteth it here, my own righteousness, and whatsoever I did, all the works of the law, it is all but flesh, all the privileges, if you go and sever Christ from them.

Now, my brethren, consider what I say: corrupt nature then hath for its object all the things of the flesh. Take spiritual out of the law and the duties of it, take the new creature out of it, and take Jesus Christ out of it, and it is all flesh, and corrupt nature will suit with them all; it may be wound up to the works of the law, to a seeking and an affecting of blamelessness, &c. The very works of the gospel, if you will let them be carried on for self-ends, they are all the works of the flesh, and things of the flesh; if you

will trust in what you do, they become things of the flesh. Take a man that is a temporary believer, and he may be wound up to the ways and things of the gospel, yet he turns them all to the things of the flesh, and corrupt nature remaining, flesh will suit with all these.

And then again, a third reason why it is called flesh is this : because it is propagated by natural generation ; John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh,'—the thing that is born or begotten hath the name of the begetter,—'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' That which is born of the flesh—that is, by a fleshly way of generation—is flesh, is corruption.

And let me make this observation of it. Sin, you know, is the work of Satan : 'Ye are of your father the devil,' saith he. Why? Because he is the remote cause. Original sin hath not its denomination from him, for he hath not that influence into sin which the Holy Ghost hath in working grace in us ; therefore he would not say, that which is of Satan in you is corruption ; but because that generation is the next and immediate or proximate cause, therefore it beareth the name 'flesh,' because it is born of flesh, and flesh is the immediate cause of it. And hence it was that circumcision was in the foreskin of the flesh ; and it is called flesh peculiarly in Rom. ii. 28. And I could give you other scriptures, as Lev. xv. 2, and Ezek. xxiii. 20.

Then again, in the fourth place, it is called flesh in respect of the more visible seat and subject of corrupt nature, in which it is most seen ; visibly it is in the flesh, it is in the lusts of the body of all sorts and kinds. The Scripture doth give you denominations not always from the more principal part, but it gives the denomination from what is visible, as speaking *ad vulgus*, to the people ; as, for example, the nature of man consists of body and soul. The soul is a spirit, you know, but the body is flesh. Usually in Scripture the name that is given to man is 'flesh.' 'The Word was made flesh.' 'In his sight shall no flesh be justified ;' that is, no man. Here you see the body carries away the denomination. It is not that man hath not a soul, and that that is not the more principal part, but because the flesh is the more visible part, that which we behold, in which the soul dwelleth. Hence therefore the Scripture calleth man 'flesh.' Answerably, though sin is as much, and much more in our will and understanding than it is in sensual lusts ; yet, notwithstanding, because that original sin is seen most in sensual lusts which have their seat in the flesh, hence it is called flesh ; the denomination of the whole ariseth from thence. And let me give you this observation by the way : that the devils, though they have the same corruption in their understanding and will that we have, and we the same that they have,—for, saith he, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts ye will do,'—yet they are not called *fleshly*, neither are they called *flesh* ; but they are called, in Eph. vi. 12, 'spiritual wickednesses.' Why? Because they have no bodily, no sensual lusts in them, which in a visible way should carry away the denomination. But because in man's nature there is another part in which sin is more visibly seen, which eminently is called lust, which is original corruption, therefore it is in a more peculiar manner called 'flesh.'—And so much now for the reasons of the denomination. I will give you an observation or two :—

Obs.—In the first place, my brethren, we may from hence take a *directory for the humbling of ourselves*. Here you see, in those words, 'having our conversation in the lusts of the flesh,' there are three things the Apostle holds forth to every man to consider, when he would humble himself before God. In the first place, he discovers to him his flesh ; that is, his corrupt

nature, having the seeds of all sin in him. Which corrupt nature, he tells him, in the second place, is an active principle in him, it is the cause of all the lusts in his heart, and all the evil in his conversation. It is an active principle that is never idle ; for though itself is indeed but a mere privation, yet because it is a privation in an active subject, as man's soul is, hence therefore it is never quiet. In Rom. vii. 5, he saith, that when he was in the flesh, the motions of sin wrought, they had force in his members to carry him on to evil ; and in ver. 8 he giveth the name of sin above all else to this original corruption by way of eminency. 'Sin,' saith he, 'wrought in me all concupiscence.' What doth he mean by sin? Most plainly original sin. Why? Because that which works concupiscence, which brings forth lusts, that must needs be original corruption. 'Sin wrought,' saith he. I speak it for this, it is an active principle, therefore he calleth that the great sin of all the rest ; he giveth it the name of *sin* above all the rest, not only because it hath the seeds of all sin in it, but because it is the worker, the great mother of all the abominations. As Babylon is called the mother of all the abominations in Europe, all idolatries come from thence ; so this is the great mother of all the abominations in man's heart. Therefore, in the same Rom. vii. 13, he calleth it 'sin above measure,' though he means sin in the general, and actual sin too ; but yet original sin he especially speaks of, and carrieth along in that discourse ; it is, saith he, 'above measure sinful,' for it is the mother of all abominations, and works all concupiscence ; and therefore this humbled Paul more, and so it should do us.

And, my brethren, it is a predominant principle too ; that is clear in the text also : for all our lusts, and all our sins, they are not so much called the lusts of the man, as the lusts of the flesh ; because that flesh, that corruption, is now the predominant principle in every man's nature : therefore all sins are called the 'fruits of the flesh,' so in Gal. v. They are called the 'deeds of the flesh,' so in Rom. viii. And we are said to be 'in the flesh,' Rom. vii. 5. And not only the flesh to be in us, but as a man is said to be in drink, or in love, that is, he is overcome with it. It is a predominant principle. And indeed, though Aristotle gave the definition of a man, that he was a reasonable creature, having an understanding and a will ; yet divinity tells us plainly that man is flesh, if you will speak theologically, take Christ's definition, and it is so. Why? Because look what flesh is to him, as he is man, that sin is to him now ; it is his nature, it is his form. Therefore, if I would define a man, I would define him to be a fleshly creature, as Aristotle defined him a rational creature ; therefore, in 1 Cor. iii. 3, saith the Apostle, Ye walk as men ; are ye not carnal? And to be carnal and fleshly is all one. When thou hast seen, therefore, corrupt flesh as the root of all, then go and look to thy lusts, all the corruption that is in thy life, it is from the stirring of lusts in thee ; all the corruption in the world is said to be through lusts, 2 Peter i. 4 ; therefore go and look especially to them.

And, lastly, then go to thy actions ; or, if you will, begin at your actions, and so go to your lusts, and next to the flesh : for, indeed, there is the pedigree of sin. If a man would be humbled, let him view his actions, let him look into his heart, see all his lusts and all the engines that act them ; and when he hath done, let him go down to the spawn of all, and then to that birth which was the means of conveying it.