

CERTAIN SELECT CASES RESOLVED:

SPECIALLY TENDING TO

THE COMFORT OF BELIEVERS IN THEIR CHIEF AND USUAL TEMPTATIONS.

1. THE CASE OF DESERTION; OR, WALKING IN DARKNESS: THE CAUSE AND REMEDIES.
2. HOW TO DISCERN ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS.
3. THE CASE RESOLVED, WHETHER AFTER SOUND REPENTANCE A CHILD OF GOD MAY FALL INTO THE SAME SIN?
4. HOW IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD THAT EVERY BELIEVER BRINGETH FORTH ALL HIS FRUIT IN CHRIST.
5. HOW TO DISCERN OUR GROWTH IN GRACE.

HERETOFORE ALL PUBLISHED IN THREE TREATISES—

1. A CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS.
2. RETURN OF PRAYERS.
3. TRIAL OF GROWTH.

AND NOW REPRINTED, AND NEWLY PUT TOGETHER,
WITH OTHER DIVINE TRACTATES.

A CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS;

OR,

A TREATISE

SHEWING

THE CAUSES BY WHICH, THE CASES WHEREIN,
AND THE ENDS FOR WHICH, GOD LEAVES HIS CHILDREN TO
DISTRESS OF CONSCIENCE.

TOGETHER WITH

DIRECTIONS HOW TO WALK SO AS TO COME FORTH OF
SUCH A CONDITION.

WITH OTHER OBSERVATIONS UPON ISAIAH L. 10, 11.

‘WHEN HE HIDETH HIS FACE, WHO CAN BEHOLD HIM?’ —JOB xxxiv. 29.

HONORATISSIMO DOMINO,

R O B E R T O,

DOMINO BROOKE, BARONI BROOKE DE BEAUCHAMP COURT,

HEROI

EXIMII ACUMINIS, SUMMI CANDORIS, PIETATIS AC LITERARUM CULTORI,

FAUTORIQUE, OPELLAM HANC,

LABORANTIS CONSCIENTIÆ CONSOLATORIAM, IN PERPETUÆ

OBSERVANTIÆ TESTIMONIUM :

DO. DICO. CONSECRO.

THOMAS GOODWIN.

TO MY MOST HONOURED LORD,

ROBERT,

LORD BROOKE, BARON BROOKE OF BEAUCHAMP COURT,

A HERO,

OF RARE INTELLIGENCE, OF EXTREME CANDOUR,

A CULTIVATOR OF PIETY AND LEARNING HIMSELF, AND A FAVOURER

OF THEM IN OTHERS,

I GIVE, DEDICATE, DEVOTE THIS LITTLE WORK,

DESIGNED TO COMFORT DISTRESSED CONSCIENCES, IN TOKEN OF

UNENDING RESPECT.

THOMAS GOODWIN.

TO THE READER.

THAT which drew these sermons from me, next to thy good, was to right myself. They were first preached eight years since, and some notes thereof were, to say no more, dispersed into the hands of many, to my prejudice. They are here presented as they were preached, with little alteration or addition in method, style, and matter ; only, to make up the treatise more complete, I entirely added, against the publishing thereof, that whole discourse about Satan's part and hand in these desertions, beginning at Chap. VI. In handling which, I trust I have not at all incurred that severe increpation of the Apostle against curious speculations about angels, of 'intruding into those things which I have not seen' ground and warrant for in the word. Sure I am, I have endeavoured to follow the school, in their labyrinths herein, no further than I found a clue of Scripture and right reason clearly guiding and warranting my way ; without which I account the ways of this old and winding serpent, in his communications to us, to be, as Solomon speaks, 'like the way of a serpent upon a stone,' hidden, and past tracing or finding out. And lest any of the weaker readers, especially those in distress, to whom more speculative and doctrinal discourses, though about things practical, prove usually tedious and unpleasing, should, in reading that piece, be discouraged at the first, my advertisement is, that, if they find that part of the way craggy or tiresome, which I hope they will not, they would divert out of it, and come in again at Chap. XI. ; from whence to the end they shall find what is more accommodate to their understanding and conditions, and more practically speaking to their distress. The blessing of Heaven go with it !

THO. GOODWIN.

A CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS.

PART I.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This ye shall have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.—ISA. L. 10, 11.

The words paraphrased.

WE have in these words a true believer in his *worst*, and natural men in their *best* condition, set forth together unto our view; and withal the power of true faith, as it alone upholdeth him in the saddest hour of darkness that can befall him, opposed unto and compared with the falseness of their presumptuous confidence, in their greatest security; together with the differing supports of either; the one in ver. 10, the other in ver. 11.

First, take a true believer, who hath had the least beam of the 'light of the glory of God, which shines in the face of Christ,' 2 Cor. iv. 6, let in upon his soul, and his heart so taken with that sight as it became eternally divorced from all things here below, and resolved to adventure all his future hopes of comfort and happiness in the enjoyment of that light of God's countenance alone: which that he may enjoy, he feareth to offend the Lord more than hell, and endeavoureth as truly 'to obey the voice of his servants,' as ever he desires to attain unto that happiness. Think with yourselves, what is the worst thing, next to the eternal loss of God, really and indeed, that can be supposed to befall this man. What worse than to have that cranny, through which he first espied that beam, to be as it were clean shut up, the 'light of God's countenance' withdrawn; yea, all light and appearance to him of his own graces withheld and overclouded; the face of heaven so overcast with darkness that neither sunlight nor starlight appeareth to him, so as he hath no light; yea, further, finds his soul beset and besieged round with all the powers of hell and darkness, and the terrors of the Almighty shot into his soul? And he, thus quite left, walking in this darkness, is filled with strong fears and jealousies that God is not his God; nay, questioning whether he ever will be; yea, apprehending, by the wrath he

feels, God to be become his enemy, Psalm lxxvii. 7. All this is set forth to us here as the very estate of one who 'feareth the Lord and obeys him;' and is comprehended in these words, 'that walketh in darkness, and hath no light.' You see him at his worst.

In which forlorn condition, what is there to be found to relieve and support this man? But only one thing, which is here held forth to him, 'the name of the Lord,' for him to trust and stay himself upon; both that name of God, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 'The Lord God, gracious and merciful,' &c., and that name of Christ which is called, Jer. xxiii. 6, 'Jehovah our righteousness.' Both or either of which, he, by the naked hand of faith laying hold upon, may now make use of as of a staff, (as David compares it, Psalm xxiii. 4,) whilst he thus 'walks in darkness,' and 'through the valley of the shadow of death,' safely to trust and stay himself upon, so as in the end to come forth 'to see light in God's light for evermore,' Psalm xxxvi. 9. You see likewise the prop of his soul in this condition.

On the contrary, let us behold, as all are here called to do, the best and most secure of unregenerate men, encompassed about with all means and supports of confidence and comfort, whether of legal righteousness of their own, which these Jews made boast of, together with the addition of all worldly and outward comforts, both which the prophet here compares to fire and sparks, as preserving light and comfort in them. As, (1.) Let their lives and natural dispositions abound with never so many sparks of legal righteousness, which themselves have kindled: for so he compares all those several acts and performances of natural and acquired righteousness, struck out and educed from the powers of natural principles improved, which make a great blaze in a man's own opinion and esteem; which yet, not proceeding from the Holy Ghost baptizing them as with fire and renewing them, nor from internal principles of regeneration, which Christ compares to fire, Mark ix. 49, are all in God's account but as a sacrifice offered up with strange fire, which was forbidden, and are here said to be of their own kindling. And such were the sparks in the light of which these Jews walked, who 'went about to establish their own righteousness,' Rom. x. 3, and with confidence trusted therein, and not on the name of the Lord. And further, (2.) Let those men be surrounded and encompassed about with the greatest splendour of worldly glory, and abound in all those good things this world can afford them,—the comforts whereof, Solomon, Eccles. vii. 6, in like manner compares to a fire of thorns, and the pleasures of it to the crackling of thorns, as here to sparks,—and let them keep never so good fires to warm and cheer themselves withal, lay on as much every day as shall even encompass them about with sparks; and in the light and confidence of both these let them walk for many years, despising that other poor believer that feareth to be found in his own righteousness, and refuseth to be comforted by any of these: yet, let them know, says Christ, who is brought in as the speaker here, that when they have thus walked presumptuously and securely, and even walked themselves weary, as it is Isa. xl. 31, weary of all their own ways and pleasures, as they will be one day; and then at their deathbeds think to lie down and rest them; they shall lie down indeed, says Christ, and their bed shall be of my making and providing,—'This you shall have of my hand; you shall lie down,'—but 'in a bed of sorrow' and despair, in which they shall lie down never to rise again.

CHAPTER I.

The main proposition and subject of this discourse thence deduced : That a child of God may walk in darkness.—That thereby distress of conscience, and desertion in the want of assurance of justification, is meant, proved.

THIS to be the meaning of the words will more fully appear in opening the several propositions to be delivered out of them, whereof the first and principally intended is this : That one who truly fears God, and is obedient to him, may be in a condition of darkness, and have no light ; and he may walk many days and years in that condition.

And herein, further to explain the text, and bottom this great point well upon it, and more particularly to discover what the condition of a child of God, thus in darkness, is, we will first inquire what is meant by walking in darkness here in this place.

First, Walking in darkness is taken in 1 John i. 6, for living in sin and ungodliness—in the commission of known sins or omission of known duties, going on in the works of darkness. But so it is not to be taken here; for Christ would not have encouraged such to trust in God, who is light, and there can be no fellowship between him and such darkness, as the Apostle tells us. Nay, the Holy Ghost reproves such as do ‘lean on the Lord’ and yet transgress, Mic. iii. 11. And besides, the text speaks of such who for their present condition fear God and are obedient to him, which if they thus walked in darkness they could not be said to do. Neither—

Secondly, Is it to be meant of walking in ignorance, as, John xii. 35, it is taken. For one that hath no light, in that sense, can never truly fear God nor obey him : the ‘heart that wanteth knowledge is not good,’ says Solomon, Prov. xix. 2 ; and so to walk in darkness is accompanied with walking ‘in vanity of mind,’ Eph. iv. 17. But—

Thirdly, He means it of discomfiture and sorrow, as often we find in Scripture darkness to be taken, as Eccles. v. 17 ; as, on the contrary, light, because it is so ‘pleasant a thing to behold,’ is put for comfort, Eccles. xi. 7. And that so it is taken here is evident by that which is opposed in the next verse, ‘Walk ye in your light, yet ye shall lie down in sorrow.’ But—

Fourthly, Of what kind of sorrow, and for what ? Whether from outward afflictions, or inward distress of mind and conscience ; or, to use Solomon’s distinction, whether by reason of man’s ordinary infirmities, or of a wounded spirit ? That is yet in question. And—

First, It is not to be restrained to outward afflictions only, which are called man’s infirmities, as being common to man ; which arise from things of this world, or from the men of the world ; though to walk in darkness is so taken, Isa. lix. 9, and I will not exclude it here. For, in them also, a man’s best support is to trust in God ; and it is the safest way to interpret Scriptures in the largest sense which the words and coherence will bear. But yet that cannot be the only or principal meaning of it ; for besides what is further to

be said to the contrary, he adds withal, 'and hath no light,' that is, no comfort. Now, as philosophers say, *non dantur puræ tenebræ*, there is no pure darkness without some mixture of light; so we may say, there is not mere or utter darkness caused by outward afflictions: no outward affliction can so universally environ the mind, as to shut up all the crannies of it, so that a man should have no light. And besides, God's people, when they walk in the greatest outward darkness, may have, yea, often use to have, most light in their spirits. But here is such an estate spoken of, such a darkness as hath no light in it. Therefore—

Secondly, It is principally to be understood of the want of inward comfort in their spirits, from something that is between God and them; and so meant of that darkness and terrors which accompany the want of the sense of God's favour. And so darkness is elsewhere taken for inward affliction of spirit and mind, and want of light, in point of assurance, that God is a man's God, and of the pardon of a man's sins; so, Ps. lxxxviii. 6, Heman useth this word to express his distress. And the reasons why it is thus to be understood here are—

First, Because the remedy here prescribed is *faith*; to stay himself upon God, and that as upon *his* God; he puts in *his* God, emphatically, because that is the point he is troubled about, and concerning which he is in darkness, and of which he would have such a one to be persuaded. And that is it which faith, which is propounded here as the remedy, doth in the first place and principally look unto, as its primary aim and object.

Secondly, In the foregoing verses he had spoken of justification, whereby God pardons our sins and accepts our persons; the prophet, or Christ in the person of his elect, (as some,) having expressed his assurance of this: 'God is near that justifies me, who shall condemn?' Which words the Apostle, Rom. viii. 32, 33, doth allege in the point of justification, and to express the triumphing assurance of it; and applies them in the name and person of true believers too. But because there might be some poor souls, who, though truly fearing God, yet might want this assurance; and upon the hearing of this might be the more troubled, because not able to express that confidence which he did; therefore he adds, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and walketh in darkness?' &c.: as if he should have said to such, Though you want the comfortable sense and assurance of this, yet be not discouraged; but do you exercise faith, go out of yourselves, rely upon Christ and that mercy which is to be found in God: you may fear God and want it, and you are to trust in God in the want of it.

Thirdly, These words have a relation also to the 4th verse, where he says, as that God had given him this assurance of his own justification, for his own particular comfort, in those immediately foregoing verses to the text, so there, that God had also given him the 'tongue of the learned, to minister a word of comfort in season to him that is weary and heavy laden:' and thereupon, in this verse, he accordingly shews the blessed condition of such persons as are most weary through long walking in darkness; and withal he discovereth to them the way of getting out of this darkness, and recovering comfort again. And in all the word of God there is not a more comfortable and seasonable word to one in such a condition to be found. All which argues it is spoken of inward darkness and trouble of spirit, and that in point of applying justification, and God to be a man's God.

CHAPTER II.

The particulars of the distress contained in these two phrases : walking in darkness ; having no light.

THE second thing to be inquired into is, What is the condition of such a one who is thus in darkness, and who hath no light? Which I will so far discover, as the phrases used here will give light into, by the help of other Scriptures.

1. *First*, he is said to have no light. 'Light,' saith the Apostle, Eph. v. 13, 'is that whereby things are made manifest,' that is, to the sense of sight, to which light properly belongs; and as light and faith are here severed, as you see, so sight also is, in 2 Cor. v. 7, distinguished from faith, which is the evidence of things absent and not seen, Heb. xi. 1. When, therefore, here he says he hath no light, the meaning is, he wants all present sensible testimonies of God's favour to him; he sees nothing that may give sensible present witness of it to him. God's favour, and his own graces, and all the sensible tokens and evidences thereof, which are apprehended by spiritual sight, are become all as absent things, as if they were not, or never had been; that light which ordinarily discovers these as present, he is clean deprived of.

To understand this, we must know that God, to help our *faith*, which, as I said before, is distinguished from *sight*, as we now speak of it, vouchsafeth a threefold light to his people, to add assurance and joy to their faith; which is to faith as a back of steel to a bow, to strengthen it, and made to be taken off or put on to it at God's good pleasure.

(1.) First, the *immediate light of his countenance*, which is a clear, evident beam and revelation of God's favour, immediately testifying that we are his, which is called the sealing of the Spirit, received after believing, Eph. i. 13; which David desired, and rejoiced in more than in all worldly things, Ps. iv. 6, 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance;' in which, more or less, in some glimpses of it, some of God's people have the privilege to walk with joy from day to day: Ps. lxxxix. 15, 'They shall walk in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all day.' And this is here utterly withdrawn; and it may thus come to pass, that the soul, in regard of any sense or sight of this, may be left in that case that Saul really was left in, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15, 'God is departed from me, and answers me not, neither by prophets nor by dreams;' though with this difference, that God was really departed from Saul, but to these but in their own apprehensions: yet so as, for aught they can see of him, God is departed clean from them; answers them neither by prayer, nor by word, nor by conference; they cannot get one good look from him. Such was Jonah's case, chap. ii. 4, 'I am cast out of thy sight;' that is, he could not get a sight of him,—not one smile, not one glance or cast of his countenance, not a beam of comfort,—and so thought himself cast out. And so he dealt with David often, and sometimes a long time together: Ps. xiii. 1, 'How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?' and,

Ps. lxxxix. 46, 'How long,' &c. ; even so long as David puts God in remembrance, and pleads how short a time in all he had to live, and complains how in much of that time his face had been hid from him, ver. 47. And the like was Heman's case, and this also long, even from his youth up, Ps. lxxxviii. 14, 15. So from Job, chap. xiii. 24. Yea, and from Christ himself, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

But concerning this you will ask, How can this dealing of his stand with his everlasting love, continued notwithstanding to the soul, that he should deal so with one he loves ; but especially how it may stand with the real influence of his grace, powerfully enabling the soul all that while to go on to fear and obey him ?

For the first ; it may stand with his everlasting love, and God may be his God still, as the text tells us ; so, Isa. liv. 8, 'For a moment I have hid my face, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.' It is but 'hiding his face,' and concealing his love, as David concealed his love from Absalom, when his bowels yearned towards him. And God takes the liberty that other fathers have, to shut his children out of his presence when he is angry. And it is but 'for a moment,'—that is, in comparison of eternity,—though haply it should be thus with him during a man's whole life ; and he therefore takes liberty to do it, because he hath such an eternity of time to reveal his kindness in ; time enough for kisses and embraces, and to pour forth his love in.

And for the second ; the real gracious influences and effects of his favour may be continued, upholding, strengthening, and carrying on the soul still to obey and fear him, whilst he yet conceals his favour. For, when Christ complained, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' when as great an eclipse in regard of the light of God's countenance was upon his spirit as was upon the earth, yet he never more obeyed God, was never stronger supported, than at that time, for then he was obeying to the death. Like as we see that when the sun is eclipsed, though the earth wants the light of it, yet not the influence thereof ; for the metals which are engendered in the bottom of the earth are concocted by the sun ; so as though the light of the sun comes not to them, yet the influence and virtue of it doth, and altereth and changeth them. So doth God's favour visit men's hearts in the power, heat, and vigorous influence of his grace, when the light and comfort of it doth not, but is intercluded. *Deus se communicat, vel quâ beatus, vel quâ sanctus ; quâ beatus, gaudium et gloriam ; quâ sanctus, gratiam : utrumque voluntariè, ideoque non utrumque simul necessario.*

(2.) The second light which God vouchsafeth his people ordinarily to help and eke out their faith, is the *sight and comfort of their own graces*, unto which so many promises belong ; as, of their love to his people, fear of his name, desire to obey him. So that often when the sun is set, yet starlight appears ; that is, though that other, the immediate presence and evidence of his favour, shines not on the soul, yet his graces therein appear, as tokens of that his love : so as the soul knows that there is a sun still, that gives light to these stars, though it sees it not ; as in the night we know that there is a sun in another horizon, because the stars, we see, have their light from it, and we are sure that it will arise again to us.

Now a soul that hath true grace in it, and goes on to obey God, may also want light to see these his graces, and look upon his own heart as empty of all. And as they in the storm, Acts xxvii. 20, so he in temptation may come to have 'neither sunlight nor starlight ;' no light, as in the text. Thus, Isa. lxiii. 17, the church there complains that God had hardened them

from his fear : they were afraid, feeling their hearts so hard, that the fear of God was wanting ; which yet was there, for they complain of the want of it.

(3.) But yet, thirdly, though he want the present light of God's countenance, and the sight of present grace, yet he may have a *comfortable remembrance of what once before he had* still left, and so long is not utterly left in darkness. Therefore further know, that the state of one that fears God and obeys him may be such as he may have no comfortable light or remembrance of what grace, &c., formerly he had, 2 Pet. i. 9. One that hath true grace in him only lacks the exercise of it,—for I take it that place is to be understood of a regenerate man, because he was 'purged from sin,'—and is now said to lack grace because he doth not use it ; for *idem est non habere, et non uti*, a man is said not to have that which he doth not use when he ought to use it, especially in things whose worth lies wholly in use and employment, for it is as good as if he had it not. Now, such a man may fall into such a blindness that he 'cannot see afar off,' and so forgets his former assurance, 'that he was purged from his old sins ;' yea, it may be, calls all into question. Thus David, in Ps. xxx. 6, 7, though his heart was but even now, a little before, 'full of joy' and assurance of God's favour, yet God did but 'hide his face,' and all was gone ; 'I was troubled,' says he. He was thus blind, and could not see what was but a little past him, as it is with men in a mist.

And the reason of these two last assertions is as evident as the experience thereof. For graces in us shine but with a borrowed light, as the stars do, with a light borrowed from the sun. So that unless God will shine secretly, and give light to thy graces, and irradiate them, thy graces will not appear to comfort thee, nor be at all a witness of God's favour to assure thee. For our spirit, that is, our graces, never witness alone ; but if God's Spirit joineth not in testimony therewith, it is silent : 'The Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirits,' Rom. viii. 16. Now therefore, when God hath withdrawn his testimony, then the testimony of our hearts, and of our own graces, hath no force in it.

But you will say, Can a man have the exercise of grace and not know it ? fear God, &c., and not discern it ?

Yes ; and some graces may then be as much exercised in the heart as at any other time. He may fear God as truly and as much as ever, and yet this fear have no light in it to discover itself to him ; it may be in the heart, in *esse et operari*, when not in *cognosci*,—it may have a being and a working there, when not in thy apprehension.

The reason is, because, as the influence of God's favour may be really in the heart, when the sense, sight, and light of it is withdrawn, as was said before ; so the power of grace may in like manner be in the heart when the light and comfort thereof is wanting. And although it is true that every man having the power of reflecting upon his own actions, can discern what thoughts are in him and what affections, and can tell, for the matter of them, what he thinks on, that he puts his trust, and that he is grieved, &c. : but yet so as he may still question whether those thoughts be acts of true and unfeigned faith, and whether those affections of sorrow for sin, &c., be sanctified affections, holy, and genuine, and spiritual affections ; and the reason of the difference is, because though the natural 'spirit which is in a man knows the things of a man,' as the apostle hath it, 1 Cor. ii. 11 (that is. his own thoughts, &c., understanding them physically, as they are acts of a man), yet what is the true goodness of them morally, in discerning this,

the 'spirit of a man is deceitful, and cannot know it,' Jer. xvii. 9, without the supernatural light of the Spirit of God, who as he is the giver and actor of that grace in us, so 'is given of God that we might know the things which are given us of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 12. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright,' says the Psalmist. Grace, and the exercise of it, is the seed which they continually scatter; but light and joy is the crop that is to be reaped. The seed often lies hid long, though it will come up in the end. Thus light or joy may be severed from grace; and the comfort of it from the power of it.

2. Secondly, let us further consider the other phrase, and what is intimated thereby to be his condition, when, as it is said, he walks in darkness:—

(1.) First, to walk in darkness implies to be in doubt whither to go; so John xii. 35, 'He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes.' And thus the soul of one that fears God may be filled with doubts whether God will ever be merciful to him, yea or no, and not know what God means to do with him, whether he shall go to heaven or hell. Ps. lxxvii. 7–9, 'Will the Lord be merciful?' which speeches are spoken doubtingly; for, ver. 10, he says, 'this was his infirmity,' to call this into question. So Heman, Ps. lxxxviii. 5, 6, 11, 12: he thought himself as one that was in hell, 'free among the dead,' that is, as one admitted free into the company of them there, ver. 5; free of that company, as you use to say, and of the number of those 'whom God no more remembered:' in such darkness was he, ver. 6. And to raise him out of that condition was a thing he doubted whether God would ever do, ver. 10–12: 'Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall thy wonders be declared in the grave?' that is, Did God ever shew mercy to one that was in the same state that they in hell are in? which is my state now; yea, so as to be out of hope. So Lam. iii. 18, 'My hope is perished from the Lord.'

(2.) Secondly, those in darkness are apt to stumble at everything. So Isa. lix. 10; one effect of darkness, mentioned there, is to 'stumble at noon-day.' So take a soul that is left in darkness, and it will stumble at all it hears out of the word, either in conference or at sermons; all it reads, all promises it meets with, it is more discouraged by them. Oh, think they, that there should be such glorious promises, and not belong to us! Such a one misapplies and misinterprets all God's dealings and the Scriptures against himself, and 'refuseth comfort,' as Ps. lxxvii. 2; yea, and, as at the 3d verse, when he 'remembers God, he is troubled.'

(3.) Thirdly, darkness is exceeding terrible and full of horror. When children are in the dark, they think they see fearful sights; it is therefore called the 'horror of darkness,' Gen. xv. 12. So his soul here may be filled with fears and terrors from God's wrath, and of God's being an enemy to him. Heman was almost distracted and out of his wits with terrors, Ps. lxxxviii. 15. So the church thought, Lam. iii.; yea, and concluded it for certain that God was her enemy: 'Surely he is turned against me,' ver. 3.

CHAPTER III.

The efficient causes of this distress.—First, the Spirit; whether he hath any hand therein, and how far.

HAVING thus explicated and proved this, that this doth and may befall one who truly fears the Lord, for the more full clearing of it I will further shew—

I. The efficient causes ;

II. The cases wherein ;

III. The ends for which, God leaves his children in such distresses.

I. For the efficient causes of this so woeful, desperate, dark condition of God's child ; they are three which have a hand in it :—

1. God's Spirit.

2. A man's own guilty and fearful heart.

3. Satan.

1. For God's Spirit. Although he hath a hand in some part of this quietness, yet we must take heed how we put upon him any of those doubts and desperate fears and conclusions whereby the child of God calls his state into question. For the Spirit is not the direct efficient, or positive cause of them.

And to this end we may consider that known place, Rom. viii. 15, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear again, but the spirit of adoption;' the right understanding of which will also prevent an objection. For some have alleged this place, as if the child of God, after he had once the Spirit, sealing adoption to him, could never after fall into apprehension of bondage—that is, into fears of eternal damnation—any more, or of being bound over for hell; and that this can befall him but once, and that at his first conversion.

But if we mark the words well, the Apostle affirmeth not that fears of bondage can never befall God's child again, but his scope is to shew that the Spirit which we have received, having been once become the spirit of adoption, that Spirit is never after again the spirit of bondage to us, nor the cause of such fears. Indeed, at first conversion, and before he did witness adoption, he then revealed our estate to us to be an estate of bondage; which he then doth in love, to drive us out of it; and then indeed he was a 'spirit of bondage:' to which he hath reference when he says, 'to fear again,' because he was once such to them, and such the Holy Ghost then might be, and then witness to them that their estates were damnable; for then it was a truth, in that they had lived in an estate of bondage, whereunto damnation was immediately due; and had they died in it, had certainly fallen upon them. But when once, by making a man a son, he hath become the spirit of adoption to him, then if ever he should put him into such apprehensions and fears again, he should witness an untruth. Therefore, for the comfort of them and all believers, he tells them that he never crosseth nor reverseth his testimony of adoption, but his office is to be ready as a witness to seal

to it. But yet, though the judge doth not condemn any more, yet the jailor may trouble and affright us, and our own hearts may condemn us, 1 John iii. 21. God may give Satan leave to cast us into prison, to clap bolts upon us again, and to become a lying spirit of bondage to us, as he became a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets; and he may give up our hearts to be fettered with 'the cords of our own sins,' Prov. v. 22, and to be ensnared with its own inventions, and fears, and jealousies.

For a more distinct understanding of this, to manifest how it comes to pass that all this befalls God's child, I will shew how far the Holy Ghost proceedeth in it, and puts forth his hand towards it; and what Satan's work is, where he strikes in, and our own hearts, to work further and deeper distress than the Holy Ghost by himself alone intended. For unto these three several hands is the whole to be ascribed, and the works of God's Spirit, and his concurrence therein, carefully to be severed from Satan's, as light from darkness at the first.

Thus far, then, the Spirit of God may concur in this darkness that befalls his child :—

(1.) *Privatively.* He may suspend his testimony, and the execution of his office of witnessing adoption; he may withdraw his comfortable presence, and hide himself for a moment, and conceal his love, as other fathers will sometimes do; as David did, when yet his heart was towards Absalom. He may not admit him to see his face, he may shut a son out of doors, when yet he doth not cast him off. He may 'retain their sins,' as Christ's expression is, John xx. 23,—that is, call in the patent of his pardon which he had passed under his hand and seal, 'in earth,' that is, in their own consciences; take it out of their hands and custody, and call for it home again into the pardon-office 'in heaven,' Matt. xviii. 18, and there keep it. And also when Satan comes and gives in a false witness and evidence, and our own hearts thereupon likewise condemn us, the Holy Ghost may stand by, as it were, silent, and say nothing to the contrary, but forbear to contradict Satan by any loud testimony or secret rebuking him, as he doth at other times; as Zech. iii. 1, 2.

(2.) *Positively.* He may further proceed :—

[1.] To reveal and represent God as angry with his child for such and such sins formerly committed, and make him sensible thereof; not barely by concealing his love, but by making impressions of his wrath upon his conscience immediately, and not by outward crosses only. Thus, Isa. lvii. 17, 18, God not only 'hid himself and was wroth,'—that is, expressed his wrath by hiding himself,—but 'I smote him and was wroth;' and ver. 16, he contended and was wroth,'—that is, fought against him as an enemy, as Isa. lxiii. 10, and this with his wrath upon his spirit. For it follows that the spirit was ready to fail, and the soul which he had made. So as it was the spirit which was the white God shot at and wounded, and that so deep that it was ready to fail and come to nothing: which Solomon calls by way of distinction 'a wounded spirit,' which who can bear? and differenceth it from all other afflictions upon the outward man, which strike the spirit but through the clothes of the body mediately; for, says he, 'the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity'—that is, all such outward afflictions wherein it suffers but by way of sympathy and compassion. But when the spirit itself is laid bare and naked, and wounded immediately by God's wrath, which only can reach it and wound it, who can bear this? Thus towards Heman, God did not only hide his face from him, Ps. lxxxviii. 14, but 'his fierce wrath went over him,' and 'thy terrors,' says he, 'cut me off,' ver. 16; not wounded him only,

but even cut him off. And such impressions of immediate wrath, as expressions and effects of God's anger, the Holy Ghost may make upon the spirit of his child. For it is a truth that God is angry and wroth with them when they sin; which anger he may make known, not only by dumb signs in outward crosses and effects, but by an immediate witnessing, and plain and express speaking so much to their consciences, and making them to feel so much, by scalding drops of his hot displeasure let fall thereon. And as other fathers shew their anger by whipping the bodies of their children, upon this ground, as says the apostle, because they are the 'fathers of our flesh,' Heb. xii. 9; so, for the like reason, may God shew his anger and chastise his children by lashing their spirits: for he is the 'Father of our spirits,' as he speaks in the same place. And likewise our spirits, and the very 'bones and marrow' of them, do lie 'open and naked to him with whom we have to do;' and his word and Spirit being 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,' are able 'to divide,' and cut even to the 'bones and marrow,' as the same author speaks, Heb. iv. 12, 13. Yet withal, so as when he expreseth his wrath thus upon their consciences, he doth not witness that this is an eternal wrath which he hath conceived against them; for it is but a temporary displeasure, 'it is but for a moment,' as Isaiah speaks, the indignation of a father; nor is it a wrath which revenging justice hath stirred in him, but fatherly affection, Heb. xii. 6. And though the Spirit tells them that God is displeased, yet never that they are accursed; that is a false collection made out of it. Yet—

[2.] The Holy Ghost may proceed yet further herein; so far as to bring forth, and shew him, and shake over him the rod of his eternal wrath, especially when he hath provoked Christ by presumptuous sins already, and to prevent his going on frowardly in the way of his heart. And this, both by presenting to them and setting on all those threatenings, which do hypothetically and conditionally threaten, even to believers, eternal damnation: such as that which we find, Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye,' even you believers, 'shall die;' for there is a truth in all such threatenings, so conditionally propounded, which reacheth God's dearest children, under a condition, and with relation to going on in sin. To stop him and prevent him in which, when he is going on frowardly in the way of his heart, the Holy Spirit may bring home such threatenings to him, with respect to such a course as he is entering into, and accordingly stir up the fear of that damnation thus threatened, if he should go on in those sins he hath begun to commit. But to apply threatenings of eternal damnation simply to his person, as that thou shalt die eternally, this the Holy Ghost doth not speak to the heart of a believer, when he is a believer. And again also, the Holy Ghost may represent to him and mind him of all those examples of men in whom, for their going on in sin, 'his soul hath had no pleasure,' Heb. x. 39; and of God's dealings with them,—as how he sware against many of the Israelites, for their provocations of him, 'that they should never enter into his rest;' and how he rejected Esau for the despisal of his birthright,—and all this with this end, to startle and awaken him; and with this intimation, that for such and such sins God might in like manner deal with him. For these and the like examples doth the Spirit of God set before the believing Hebrews, Heb. iii., xii.; and the believing Corinthians, 1 Cor. x. 5–13, to keep them in fearfulness to offend. But to apply any such examples absolutely unto them, so as to say, Thus God intends to do with thee for such and such sins, and that God will never be merciful, this the Holy Ghost doth not speak to a believer's heart.

CHAPTER IV.

How Satan and our hearts increase this darkness by false conclusions from the Spirit's work, illustrated by the like in the illumination of temporaries.—The Spirit's work in both compared.

AND now the Spirit of God having proceeded thus far himself in causing such darkness and terrors of conscience in them that fear him; Satan and their own hearts, unto which he may and doth often further also leave them, may take occasion from these dispensations of the Holy Ghost, which are all holy, righteous, and true, to draw forth false and fearful conclusions against themselves and their estates, and start amazing doubts and fears of their utter want of grace, and lying under the curse and threatenings of eternal wrath at the present, yea, and further, of eternal rejection for the future, and that God will never be merciful; and so lay them lower, and cast them into a further darkness and bondage than the Holy Ghost was cause of, or intended: misinterpreting and perverting all these his righteous proceedings, as interpreting that withdrawing his light and presence, and hiding himself, to be a casting them off, (thus Heman, Ps. lxxxviii. 14;) so, likewise, misconstruing that temporary wrath, chastising and wounding their spirits for the present, to be no other than the impressions and earnest of God's eternal vengeance; and arguing, from their being under wrath, themselves to be children of wrath; and misapplying the application of all those threatenings of eternal damnation made by the Spirit, but in relation and under a condition of such and such courses for the future, to be absolute against their persons, and to speak their present estate. And because such examples of men cast off are presented to them, to shew them what advantage God might take against them; they, mistaking, think they read their own destiny laid before them in them, and conclude that God will deal so with them. And thus the Apostle says of sin, Rom. vii. 11, that 'sin taking occasion by the commandment,'—he misunderstanding the scope of it when a Pharisee,—'it deceived him, and therefore slew him;' and yet 'the commandment is holy, just, and good,' ver. 12. So Satan and our hearts, by occasion of these dealings of the Spirit, which are righteous and true, as himself is, who is the Spirit of truth and leads into truth, do deceive believers, and lay them in their apprehensions 'among the slain, whom God remembereth no more,' as Heman speaks, Ps. lxxxviii. 5.

And as in these, so in other works and dispensations of God's Spirit, it is ordinary for Satan and our hearts to practise the like delusions and false conclusions upon them. To instance in those more common and inferior works of the Spirit on the hearts of men, not as yet savingly regenerated: the Spirit enlightening them, together with impressions of joy, and a taste of sweetness in the promises of the gospel, and of salvation revealed therein, which, under a condition of true repentance and conversion, the Spirit of

God doth make the offer and tender of known unto their hearts. Thus he wrought upon the stony ground, and in the Jews by John's ministry, John v. 35; which light, and taste, and revelation of this conditional proffer, tending in a way unto salvation, by alluring their hearts to seek it, they often through Satan's abuse of this good work, and the self-flattery of their own hearts, do too hastily take to be that grace which accompanies salvation, (*ἐγγόμενα τῆς σωτηρίας*), or which hath salvation annexed to it; from which the Apostle, by that very expression, Heb. vi. 9, doth difference those enlightenings mentioned ver. 4. They thus mistaking these works precursory to grace, even as the Jews mistook John, that was sent but before to prepare the way for Christ, to be that very true Christ that was to come into the world, and misunderstanding the intendment of God's most blessed Spirit in such his dealings, they make up too hasty a conclusion not meant by the Spirit in those premises.

And I instance in these the rather, because these his dispensations of desertion, which we have in hand, towards them already regenerated, and those forementioned visitations towards such as often attain not to regeneration, are in an opposite way of comparison exceeding parallel, and much alike in the dispensations themselves,—as well as in the differing false conclusions which are drawn from either,—and do therefore exceedingly illustrate the one the other; God withdrawing himself as much in their sense from those who are in covenant with him, as he draws near unto and visits their hearts from on high who are as yet strangers to him. The needle of God's favour and love varying as much, that I may so allude, towards hell in their compass who shall be saved, as it doth heavenward in the other, many of whom arrive not thither. For as they are brought nigh to the kingdom of heaven, as Christ told him, Matt. xii. 34; so of true believers it may be said, that their souls do often draw near to hell in their own sense and apprehension, and 'the pains of hell do take hold upon them.' And as the other are enlightened, as Balaam was, so they are left to walk in darkness and see no light; and do taste of that wrath which the law threatens, as those other taste the goodness of that salvation the gospel offereth. God, out of a temporary anger, chastising them for a moment, as with a temporary favour he shineth upon the other. That as they 'for a season rejoice in that light,' John v. 35, so God's dearest children 'may be for a season in much heaviness,' as the Apostle speaks, 1 Pet. i. 6, and 'walk in darkness.' And as the similitude of the dealings themselves runs thus far along in a parallel line of comparison, so it holds in the false apprehensions which Satan and our hearts do make out of both. And the cause of the mistake in each is also alike. For God's dealings with those temporary believers being so like to those dealings towards such as receive a state of adoption from him, they thence too hastily conclude their acceptance unto life. And, on the contrary, God's dealings with these temporary despairers, as I may so call them, being so like in their sense to his proceedings with those he cuts off for ever, they, in like manner, as hastily conclude ('I said in my haste,' says David) their eternal rejection. Only in the issue they prove unlike: these desertions tending but to the present discomfort of true believers through their frailty; but in the other, through their own willing neglect, their enlightenings turn to their destruction.

So as, to conclude, we must warily sever the work of God's Spirit herein from that of Satan and our own hearts, not attributing such desperate conclusions to the Spirit. Thus that depth of sorrow wherewith that humbled

Corinthian was well-nigh 'swallowed up,' 2 Cor. ii. 7, is ascribed unto Satan, when, ver. 11, it is made and termed one of his devices, which word doth in part refer to the Corinthian's sorrow. Thus David also imputes that his questioning, Ps. lxxvii., 'whether God would be merciful' to him, ver. 7, unto his own heart; 'this is my infirmity,' says he, ver. 10. So as the blame herein is to be divided between Satan and our hearts.—To speak more particularly of either.

CHAPTER V.

How our own hearts are the causes of this darkness.—The principles therein which are the causes of it.

2. THAT our own hearts should be the causes and producers of such distress and darkness, when the Holy Ghost thus deals with us, is at all no wonder; because—

(1.) As we are creatures, there is such a weakness and infirmity in us, as David speaks; by reason of which, if God doth but hide himself and withdraw his presence, which supporteth us in comfort, as in being, we are ready presently to fall into these fears of ourselves. The Psalmist saith of all the creatures, 'Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled,' Ps. civ. 29; and this by reason of their weakness and dependence upon God. And no less, but far greater, is the dependence of the new creature upon God's face and presence; that it cannot be alone and bear up itself, but it fails if God hide himself, as Isaiah speaks, chap. lvii. Especially now in this life, during the infancy thereof, whilst it is a child, as God speaks of Ephraim, Hos. xi. 1; then it cannot stand or go alone, unless God 'bear it up in his arms, and teach it to go,' as he speaks there, ver. 1-3. And then also, as children left alone in the dark are afraid of bugbears, and they know not what, and are apt to stumble and fall, which is by reason of their weakness; so is it with the new creature in its childhood here in this life. It was my infirmity, says David; and again, 'Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,' Ps. xxx. 7.

There is not only such a weakness in us as we are creatures; but—

(2.) Also an innate darkness in our spirits as we are sinful creatures. Since the fall, our hearts of themselves are nothing but darkness, and therefore no wonder if when God but draws the curtains, and shuts up the light from us, that our hearts should engender and conceive such horrid fears and doubts. Thus, in 2 Cor. iv. 6, the Apostle compareth this native darkness of our hearts unto that chaos and lump of darkness which, at the first creation, covered the face of the deep, when he says that 'God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness,'—he referreth to the first creation, Gen. i. 1, 2,—'hath shined into our hearts,' even of us apostles, 'to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' So that no longer than God continues to shine, either the light of comfort or of grace, no longer do our hearts, even of us believers, retain light in them. And if at any time he withhold that light of comfort in his face, when yet he continueth an influence of grace, then so far do our hearts presently return to their former darkness; and then doth that vast womb of darkness conceive and form all those fears and doubts within itself. Considering withal that our hearts are a great deep also, so deep in darkness and deceitfulness as no plummet can fathom them; 'deceitful above all things, who can know it?' Jer. xvii. 9. Darkness covereth not the face of this deep only, but it is darkness to the

bottom, throughout darkness. No wonder then, if when the Spirit ceaseth to move upon this deep with beams of light, it cast us into such deeps and darkness as Heman, complaining, speaks of, Ps. lxxxviii. 6, and frameth in itself such hideous apprehensions and desperate conclusions of a man's own estate.

(3.) Especially seeing there is so much strength of carnal and corrupt reason in men, ready to forge and invent strong reasons and arguments to confirm those sad fears and darkened apprehensions; and those drawn from those dealings of God's Spirit mentioned. For as it is said of the Gentiles, that when 'their foolish hearts were darkened,'—that is, when left and given over to their own natural darkness,—'they became vain in their imaginations,' or (as the original hath it) in their reasonings, λογισμοῖς, Rom. i. 21; and this even in those things which God had clearly revealed in his works to the light of nature, of which that place speaks: so may it be said even of those who have been most enlightened, that their hearts are apt to become much more vain in their reasonings about, and in the judging of their own estates before God, out of his word and dealings with them, if God once leaves them unto darkness. And this that great caveat given to professors, James i. 22, gives to understand, when they are exhorted to take heed that 'in hearing the word' they be not found 'deceiving themselves by false reasonings.' So the original, παραλογίζονται ἑαυτούς, renders it; which is as if we should say, false-reasoning themselves: as we use to say, in a like phrase of speech, befooling themselves. And this is spoken of judging of their own estates, concerning which men are more apt, through the distempers and prejudices of self-love, to make (to speak in that phrase of the Apostle) false syllogisms, and to misconclude, than about any other spiritual truth whatever. And as men that want true faith, the unsound hearers of the word, of whom the Apostle there speaks, are thus apt, through carnal reason misapplying the word they hear, to frame and draw from thence, as he insinuates, multitudes of false reasons to uphold and maintain to themselves a good opinion of their estates: so, on the contrary, in those who have true faith, all that carnal reason, which remains in a great measure unsubdued in them, is as apt to raise and forge as strong objections against the work of faith begun, and as peremptorily to conclude against their present estates by the like misapplication of the word, but especially by misinterpreting God's dealings towards them. And they being sometimes led by sense and reason, whilst they walk in darkness, they are apt to misinterpret God's mind towards them rather by his works and dispensations, which they see and feel, than by his word, which they are to believe. This we see in Gideon, Judges vi., who, because God wrought not miracles, as he had formerly for his people, but had delivered them into their enemies' hands, from thence reasoneth against the message of the angel, (Christ himself,) who had told him, 'The Lord is with thee,' ver. 12. But he objects, 'Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? Where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of? But now the Lord hath forsaken us,' &c. This we may also see in Asaph, or what other holy penman of the 73d Psalm; his heels were well-nigh tripped up in the dark: 'My feet were almost gone,' says he, ver. 2,—that is, from keeping his 'standing by faith,' as the apostle speaks, Rom. v.,—and this by an argument framed by carnal reason, from God's dispensation of outward prosperity to wicked men, but, on the contrary, 'chastening of him every morning,' with outward afflictions, as the opposition doth there import. And how peremptory is he in his conclusion thence deduced? 'Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain,' ver. 13; and what reason hath he? 'For all the

day long I have been plagued,' &c., ver. 14. He thought his reason strong and irrefragable, else he would not have been so concludent: 'Verily,' &c. But what would this man have said and thought if he had been in Heman's condition, or in Job's or David's? If in those shallows of outward troubles, which are common to man, his faith could not find footing, but he was well-nigh carried away with the common stream and error of wicked men, to have condemned himself and the 'generation of the righteous,' ver. 15; how would his faith have been overborne 'if all God's waves and billows had gone over him?' as David complains, Psalm xlii. 7. How would he have sunk in Heman's deeps, Psalm lxxxviii.? or in David's, Psalm lxix. 2, 'I sink in the deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me?' speaking of such 'waters as came in unto his soul,' ver. 1, even the floods of God's immediate wrath breaking in upon his conscience, overflowing the inward man, and not the outward only. How much more peremptorily would he have concluded against himself if this had been his condition? As indeed they, and many others of the generation of God's children have done, when they have lain under and walked in such distresses.

And the reason of all this is as evident as the experience of it:—

[1.] In general; reason is of itself a busy principle, that will be prying into, and making false glosses upon all God's matters as well as our own, and trying its skill in arguing upon all his dealings with us. Thus Jeremiah must needs be reasoning with God about his dispensations towards wicked men, chap. xii. 1, 2; and Job, of his dealings with himself, chap. xiii. 3. And reason being likewise the supreme principle in us by nature, and our highest difference as we are men, therefore no wonder if, when we are left to ourselves to 'walk in darkness,' we 'walk as men,' as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. x. 3; and, to use Solomon's words, do lean to our own wisdom, Prov. iii. 5, even because it is our own, and was brought up with us. It is our great Ahithophel, and, as David says of him, 'our guide, with whom we have taken so much sweet counsel' in all our worldly and politic affairs. In which only we should make use of its advice; but we too often take it into the sanctuary with us, and 'walk in company with it into the house of God,' (to allude to what David says there, Psalm lv. 13, 14;) that is, we suffer it to meddle in matters that pertain to the sanctuary, and to debate and conclude of our spiritual and eternal estates, as well as of our temporal. And, which is worse, we are opinionative of its judgment therein: 'I thought,' says Asaph, in that forementioned psalm, 'to know this,' ver. 16,—that is, he thought to have comprehended and reached God's mind, in those his dispensations, by the discussions of reason, and so to have concluded rightly from them; whereas, 'after he had gone into the sanctuary,' ver. 17, with faith alone, and thereby consulted with the word, he confesseth his own wisdom and best reason to have been as ignorant of God's meaning, and of those rules he proceedeth by, in those his dispensations towards his children, 'even as a beast' (ver. 22) is of those principles which men walk by, or the intentions they have in their ways. If reason then, when it is so utterly unskilful and mistaken in the premises, will yet be exercising and trying its faculty in reasoning from them, no wonder if the conclusions thence deduced be so wide and wild; and yet, with Asaph, we think we know this.

[2.] But more particularly; carnal reason is the most desperate enemy to faith of all other principles in man. For until faith be wrought, it is the most supreme principle; but then faith deposeth and subjecteth it, and afterwards doth often contradict it; yea, excludes it, as unskilful in its matters,

from being of its counsel. And so deep and desperate is this enmity against faith, that look, what is the most especial work and business of faith, which is to alter our estates before God, and put us into a state of justification and to assure us of it, therein it shews a more peculiar enmity against faith, by opposing it in that work of it more than in any other. This enmity shews itself both before and after faith is wrought, and the one illustrates the other. For as before faith was wrought, carnal reason shews its opposition, by using the utmost of its strength to persuade a man of the goodness of his estate, though without faith; thereby to prevent the entrance of faith and our seeking after it at all, as not needful to change our estates or to justify us, and thus would keep it wholly out; and therefore, in the first working of faith, the Holy Ghost brings faith in by force of open arms, as a conqueror casting down all those strongholds and reasonings—*λογισμῶς*, as the word is, 2 Cor. x. 5—which carnal reason had been long a-building and a-fortifying, and so erecteth faith a throne upon the ruins of them all: thus, in like manner, after faith is thus wrought, all that carnal reason which is left unsubdued doth, out of a further revenge of such an overthrow, and with a greater degree of enmity, oppose faith still; only it diverts the war, now mustering up new forces, and turneth all the great ordnance a clean contrary way; namely, to persuade a man, by all the objections it can raise, of the badness of his estate now, as before of the goodness of it; hereby to blaspheme the great work of faith in justifying of us. And also because that, next to justifying us, the office and errand of faith is to settle in our hearts peace with God, and a persuasion of our being in his favour, as Rom. v. 1; therefore doth carnal reason bend the utmost of its power and acumen to persuade upon all occasions, by all the most specious and seeming arguments it can start and suggest, that God is not at peace with us, nor as yet reconciled to us; merely to contradict faith in what is the principal point it would persuade us of.

So that as in men, whilst unregenerate, carnal reason endeavours by false reasonings to preserve a good opinion of their estates in them; in like manner, the very same principle of carnal reason, continuing its opposition to faith, doth as much persuade to a bad opinion of their estates when they are once regenerated.

[3.] And to conclude this; if in any condition that befalls God's child carnal reason hath the advantage and upper ground of faith, it is now when it is in 'the valley of the shadow of death,' as David speaks, when it walks in darkness, and hath no light. A condition that doth afford a most complete topic for carnal reason to frame objections out of; when, in respect of God's dealings with him, there is a seeming conjunction of all bad aspects threatening perdition and destruction; when faith is under so great an eclipse, and is left to fight it out alone in darkness, and hath no second: when, on the contrary, carnal reason and our dark hearts, which are led by sense, are possessed with the sense, the deepest and most exquisite sense, and impressions of (that which the heart is most jealous of) God's sorest wrath and displeasure, and that felt and argued, not mediately and afar off, by consequence from outward afflictions, but immediately from God's own hand. Thou always hast suspected, says carnal reason, that thou wert a child of wrath, and that thou and God were enemies, but now thou findest it put out of question, and that from God's own mouth, 'who speaketh' grievous things 'against thee,' Jer. xxxi. 20: thou hast it also under his own hand, for, lo, 'he writeth bitter things against thee,'—that is, in thy conscience,—as Job speaks, chap. xiii. 26, and 'holdeth thee for an enemy,' ver. 24; and whips

thee with the same rod of his immediate wrath and displeasure wherewith he lasheth those that are cut from his hand, and whom he remembereth no more, but are now in hell, as Heman speaks.⁶ A time also this is when this present sense of wrath so distempers, and, to use Heman's words, distracts the mind, that it cannot listen to faith, which speaks of nothing too but of what it sees not; even as the people of Israel could not attend to Moses's message of deliverance, through the anguish of their present bondage, *Exod. vi. 9*. So as no wonder if then carnal reason be most busy, and takes this advantage to frame and suggest the strongest objections to the soul whilst it is in this distemper.

(4.) Add unto all this, that as there is such strength of corrupt reason which is thus opposite to faith, so that there are many other principles of corrupt affections in the heart which join and take part with carnal reason in all this its opposition against faith, and which set it a-work and do back it as much in persuading God's children that their estates are nought, as in securing men unregenerate that their estates are good; and the hand of self-love, which bribeth and biaseth carnal reason, especially in judging of our estates, is found as deep in the one as in the other;—and this doth yet give further light to this point in hand. For look, as before faith is wrought, self-flattery, which is one branch of self-love, bribeth and setteth carnal reason a-work to plead the goodness of their estates to men unregenerate, and causeth all such false reasons to take with them which tend to persuade them to think well of themselves: so when once faith is wrought, jealousy, and suspiciousness, and incredulity,—which are other as great sprigs of pride and self-love in us as the former, which do begin to sprout and shew themselves when that other is lopped off, and which do grow up together with the work of faith,—these do edge and sharpen the wit of carnal reason to argue and wrangle against the work of faith and grace begun; and all such objections as carnal reason doth find out against it are pleasing and plausible to these corrupt principles, for they are thereby nourished and strengthened.

And the reason why such jealousies and suspicions, &c.,—which are such contrary dispositions unto self-flattery, which swayed our opinions of our estates before,—should thus arise and be started up in the heart upon the work of faith, and be apt rather to prevail now after faith, is, [1.] because that in the work of humiliation, which prepares for faith, all those strongholds of carnal reason being demolished which upheld self-flattery, and that false good opinion of a man's estate, and those mountainous thoughts of presumption as then laid low, a man is for ever put out of conceit with himself, as of himself. At which time also, [2.] he was so thoroughly and feelingly convinced of the heinousness of sin, which before he slighted, and of the greatness and multitude of his sins, that he is apt now, instead of presuming as before, to be jealous of God, lest he might have been so provoked as never to pardon him; and is accordingly apt to draw a misinterpretation of all God's dealings with him to strengthen that conceit. And, [3.] having through the same conviction, the infinite error and deceitfulness of his heart before, in flattering him and judging his estate good when it is most accursed, so clearly discovered and discerned, he thereby becomes exceeding jealous, and afraid of erring on that hand still, and so is apt to lend an ear to any doubt and scruple that is suggested. Especially, [4.] he being withal made apprehensive both of that infinite danger to his eternal salvation there may be in nourishing a false opinion of the goodness of his estate, if it should prove otherwise; because such a false conceit keeps a man from saving faith, whereas to cherish the contrary error in judging his estate bad, when it is in truth good, tends

but to his present discomfort : so as he thinks it safer to err on that hand than the other. And, [5.] being also sensible of what transcendent concernment his eternal salvation is of, which he before slighted, this rouseth suspicion, which in all matters of great consequence and moment is always doubting and inquisitive, and also keeps it waking, which before lay asleep. And all these being now startled and stirred up, do not only provoke carnal reason unsatisfiedly to pry into all things that may seem to argue God's disfavour, or the unsoundness of our hearts, but also do give entertainment to, and applaud all such objections as are found out, and makes up too hastily false conclusions from them.

(5.) Last of all, as there are these corrupt principles of carnal reason and suspiciousness in us, to raise and foment these doubts and fears from God's dealing towards us ; so there is an abundance of guilt within us, of our false dealings towards him. And we have consciences, which remain in part defiled, which may further join with all these, and increase our fears and doubtings ; and as we are dark and weak creatures, so guilty creatures also. And this guilt, like the waves of the sea, or the swellings of Jordan, does begin upon these terrible storms from God to rise, and swell, and overflow in our consciences. As in David, Ps. xxxviii., when God's wrath was sore upon him, ver. 1, 2, then also he complains, 'mine iniquities are gone over my head,' ver. 4. There is much guile and falseness of heart, which in those distempers, when our consciences do boil within us, and are stirred and heated to the bottom, doth, like the scum, come up and float aloft. Thus in David, when he was under the rod for his sin of murder, as the guilt of his sin, so the guile of his spirit came up, and he calls for 'truth in the inward parts,' Ps. li. 6. For as his sin, ver. 2, so his falseness of heart was ever before him ; and with an eye to this he spake that speech, Ps. xxxii., Oh, 'blessed is that man in whose spirit is no guile, and to whom the Lord imputeth no sin.' Thus he spake when God had charged upon him the guilt of his sin, and discovered to him the guile of his spirit, ver. 4, 5. And this guile doth oftentimes so appear, that our consciences can hardly discern anything else to be in us ; it lies uppermost, and covers our graces from our view : and like as the chaff, when the wheat is tossed in the fan, comes up to the top, so in these commotions and winnowings of spirit do our corruptions float in our consciences, whilst the graces that are in us lie covered under them out of sight ; and the dark side of our hearts, as of the cloud, is turned towards us, and the light side from us. And indeed there are in the best of us humours enough, which if they be stirred and congregated in our consciences, may alone cast us into these burning fits of trouble and distress ; so as whilst God's Spirit shall withhold from us the light of our own graces, and our own consciences represent to us the guile and corruptions that are in our best performances, our hearts may conclude ourselves hypocrites, as Mr Bradford in some of his letters doth of himself, and others of the saints have done. Yea, so as even our own consciences—which are the only principle now left in us which should take part with and encourage faith, and witness to us, as the office of it is, the goodness of our estates—in this may join with the former corruptions against us, and bring in a false evidence, and pronounce a false judgment. Even conscience itself, which is ordained, as the urine of the body, to shew the estate of the whole, and therefore is accordingly called good or evil as the man's state is, this is apt in such distempers to change and turn colour, and look to a man's own view as foul as the state of a very hypocrite.

And the reason of this is also as evident as is the experience of it. Even

because conscience remains in part defiled in a man that is regenerate ; and though we are 'sprinkled from an evil conscience' in part, yet not wholly : so as though our persons are fully discharged from the guilt of our sins, through the sprinkling of Christ's blood, before God ; yet the sprinkling of that blood upon our consciences, whereby we apprehend this, is imperfect. And the reason is, because this very sprinkling of conscience, whereby it testifies the sprinkling of Christ's blood, and our justification thereby, is but part of the sanctification of conscience, as it is a faculty, whose office and duty is to testify and witness our estates ; and therefore, as the sanctification of all other faculties is imperfect, so of conscience also herein. And hence it is that when God's Spirit forbearcth to witness with conscience the goodness of our estates, and ceaseth to embolden and encourage conscience by his presence, and the sprinkling of Christ's blood upon it against the remaining defilement, that then our consciences are as apt to fall into fears, and doubts, and self-condemnings, even as much as, when he withdraws the assistance of his grace, those other faculties are to fall into any other sin. And therefore, as the law of sin in the other members may be up in arms and prevail so far as to lead us captive unto sin ; so may the guilt of sin in our consciences remaining in part defiled, by the same reason prevail against us, and get the upper hand, and lead us captive to fears and doubtings, and cast us into bondage.

CHAPTER VI.

The third efficient cause, Satan.—His special malice in this temptation, commission.—Access to, and advantage over us in this temptation, by reason of the darkness in us.

THUS far our own hearts, upon the Holy Ghost's deserting, become authors unto us of this darkness.

3. But herein believers wrestle not alone with flesh and blood, and the darkness thereof; but do further conflict also with those spiritual wickednesses, the princes of darkness, Eph. vi. 12, about their interest in those heavenly privileges, as the phrase there used, *ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις*, may be well interpreted; even with Satan and his angels, whom the Apostle compares to 'a roaring lion, that seeks whom he may devour,' 1 Peter v. 8. And like as when 'God makes his natural darkness, and it is night, then the young lions creep forth, and roar after their prey,' as the Psalmist says, Ps. civ. 20, 21: so do these roaring lions, when God hath withdrawn the light of his countenance, and night comes on, and those damps and fogs of jealousies and guilt begin to arise out of a man's own heart; then come these forth, and say, as David's enemies said in his distress, 'Come let us now take him, for God hath forsaken him;' let us now devour him, and swallow him up with sorrow and despair. And as God says of those enemies of his church, Zech. i. 15, 'I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction;' so when God is angry with his child, and but a little, and doth hide his face but for a moment, yet Satan watcheth that hour of darkness, as Christ calls it, Luke xxii. 53, and joins his power of darkness to this our natural darkness, to cause, if possible, blackness of darkness, even utter despair, in us.

Now, concerning Satan's working herein, we will, as in the former, more distinctly treat thereof by way of explication of it, (1.) more generally; (2.) more particularly:—

First, in general; (1.) Satan, he hath a special inclination, and a more peculiar malicious desire, to vex and molest the saints with this sort of temptations, of doubts and disquietness that God is not their God; so as all his other temptations unto sin are but as the laying in and barrelling up the gunpowder, and making of the train, for this great plot of blowing up all. He tempteth Peter to deny his Master,—'Satan desires to winnow you,'—but he hath a further reach, a design upon his faith, which Christ foresaw, and therefore did mainly bend his prayer against it; 'but I have prayed that thy faith fail not.' Satan hoped by that gross sin to have drawn him into despair. We may likewise observe how he did place this temptation in the forefront of those three assaults which he made upon Christ; who as in his obedience, so in his temptations, is made a complete example unto us; for he was tempted in all things, that is, with all sorts of temptations, and also like us for the manner, only without sin, Heb. iv. 15. Now he tempted him not only to vain hopes, when he shewed him the glory of the whole world,

and to presumption, to throw himself down headlong from an unwarrantable ground ; but first and primarily, to jealousies and distrusts between him and his Father, and between his human nature and the divine. For when Christ had newly received that testimony from all the three Persons,—the Father proclaiming him to be his Son from heaven ; the Spirit descending on him at his baptism, it being the special grace and institution of that ordinance to seal up adoption and regeneration,—then comes Satan and tempts him to question that voice, that it might be but a delusion. And Christ's human nature never having done any outward miracle as yet, as appears John ii. 11, he would now have had him take this occasion, in the extremity of his hunger, by commanding stones to become bread, to make trial whether he was the Son of God or no, and hypostatically united to the second Person ; which if God should not do for him, then to question his sonship, and think all this to be but a delusion. This was the meaning of it, 'If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread,' &c. ; withal insinuating that God, leaving him even destitute of daily bread, which parents that are evil give unto their children, and not a stone instead of bread, might seem to occasion an *if* whether he was the Son of God or no. The reasons of this are—

[1.] Above all graces in us, he is the greatest enemy to faith ; therefore, 1 Thess. iii. 5, the apostle was jealous of Satan in nothing more than in this, lest he had been dealing and tampering with, and perverting their *faith* : 'I sent to know of your faith, lest by some means the tempter hath tempted you ;' for faith in God is the greatest enemy unto Satan, it 'quencheth all his darts,' Eph. vi. 16. By 'standing stedfast in which' we 'resist him, so that he flies from us,' 1 Pet. v. 9. As therefore faith is that *τὸ ἐγγον*, that work of God and the master-grace, John vi. 29 ; so despair and doubting is the masterpiece of Satan. And in faith he is envious especially at the joy of our faith, Rom. xv. 13. And as comfort is the most proper work of the Spirit, and most pleasing work to him, so is discomfort and distress the proper work of this evil spirit. And again—

[2.] As he is most opposite to the Holy Spirit, so he delights to blaspheme his work in our hearts to us, by persuading us that all is counterfeit.

[3.] He is called *ἐνυιδής*, that envious one, and the main object and mark of his envy is this, that God should be our God, who hath cast off him ; and therefore, when he sees he cannot separate between God and us really, he will endeavour to cast and raise up jealousies that he is not our God in our apprehensions. He endeavoured to raise jealousies between God and our first parents,—'God knows ye shall be gods,' &c.,—as if God had forbidden them that fruit out of envy towards them of a better condition. And the like he endeavoured between Christ's human nature and the divine, though hypostatically united. And likewise—

[4.] *That God hath given us eternal life, and that life is in his Son.* This being that great truth of the gospel, so as a Christian that believes it not makes God a liar, 1 John v. 10, 11 ; therefore Satan, being that great liar, opposeth this great truth and our faith therein above all other. His envy at the advancement of our nature in Christ, according to that truth, is thought by some to have been his fall and ruin, so understanding that in John viii. 44, 'He abode not in the truth.' However, he doth now delight to make God a liar to us in our apprehensions, by questioning his promises, and especially to enforce the persuasion thereof out of God's own dealing with us, 'perverting his righteous ways.'

(2.) And secondly, as Satan hath such a desire, so God may give his child up into Satan's hand for a while thus to afflict and terrify his spirit. His

last commission over Job seemeth to extend thus far, for his life only was excepted, Job ii. 6, 'He is in thy hand, only save his life : ' and therefore, after that leave given, we hear Job, although never brought to question his estate, yet crying out of terrors, and of the sins of his youth ; for Satan then, as he smote his body with boils, so buffeted his spirit. And though Satan hath will of himself, and a desire to it, and power physical enough, and abilities, to inflict this at all times, yet he must further have power moral, or leave and commission from God. And God sometimes gives to Satan power over the sons and daughters of Abraham, Luke xiii. 16, even as well as others ; and as their bodies to be vexed by him, so their spirits ; and as to provoke them unto sin, so much more to terrify for sin, there being more of punishment than of sin in that. Thus he left David to Satan, to provoke him unto sin, as well as Judas. Therefore that provocation to number the people, as it is imputed to Satan and his malice, 1 Chron. xxi. 1 ; so also to God and his anger, in giving leave first to Satan, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. And as an 'evil spirit from the Lord' troubled Saul's mind, 1 Sam. xvi. 14 ; so a 'messenger of Satan was sent to buffet' Paul's spirit, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Wherein yet God doth no way help Satan with any further power than what as an angel he furnished him with at his creation ; nor with any assistance or information of our secret sins against us, to enable him the more to assault us,—this I find not in Scripture,—but permissive power only. Which is either—

[1.] Obtained and given at Satan's motion and request first made ; so that phrase, Luke xxii. 31, 'Satan hath requested and petitioned to winnow you,' as that also, Job ii. 3, 'Thou movedst me against him,' doth imply ; and as it may seem by singling out and calling forth some one for this combat ; as he did him more especially, to whom therefore Christ addresseth that premonition, and the word ἐξήγησατο implies as much. So also Job was singled out for this duel both by God and Satan. Or else—

[2.] This is done through the ordinance of excommunication and censures of the church duly administered, *clave non errante*, for gross and scandalous sins. The proper inward effect that accompanies that ordinance which casts men out of the church, being inward affliction and distress of conscience by Satan,—which of all afflictions is the greatest punishment, ἐπιτιμία, as the Apostle calls it, 2 Cor. ii. 6,—thereby to bring a man to repentance. Even as, on the contrary, the special work of baptism, to such as were *fideles adulti* and believers already, was by joy in the Holy Ghost to seal up their adoption and regeneration unto him ; as to the eunuch, Acts viii. 39. This we may see in the excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian ; whose excommunication is therefore expressed to be 'a delivering him up unto Satan, in the name of the Lord Jesus,' 1 Cor. v. 4, 5 ; that is, he was to be cast out by a commission from Christ, which going forth in his name, when they published it on earth, he signed it in heaven. Upon which, rightly administered, doth ensue, first, that as the church doth cut them off from communion with them, so God cuts them off from communion with himself, and hides and withdraws the light of his countenance, the witness of his Spirit, and his comfortable presence. And not only so, but 'delivereth them up to Satan,' that being the consequent of it ; which therefore, because it implies the former, is put to express the whole proceeding. Which delivery of him unto Satan was not a giving him a commission to carry him on to more sin,—though that often be indeed the effect of it in hypocrites, as in Alexander, 1 Tim. i. 19,—for the end propounded by the Apostle was to 'destroy the flesh,' that is, corruption and the body of sin ; and that 'the spirit might be

saved,' ver. 5, that is, that contrary principle of grace which yet remained, but was ready to die, as it is Rev. iii. 2, might be saved and kept from death and destruction : but it was to terrify and afflict his conscience, and to stir up in him the guilt of his sin, with terrors for it, which God sanctifieth to humble and to mortify the flesh. And thus, when that Corinthian was excommunicated, did Satan accordingly deal with him ; for in the next epistle, 2 Cor. ii. 7, we find him well-nigh 'swallowed up of sorrow,' which was Satan's doing ; for, ver. 11, 'We are not ignorant,' saith the Apostle, in reference partly to this, 'of his devices.' And thus Satan continued still to handle him, even now when he began to be truly humbled, and was a fit subject to receive forgiveness and comfort, ver. 7 ; when, though he feared God and obeyed him, yet he walked in darkness till the church received him. Or else—

[3.] When this ordinance is not in the case of such sins administered, then God himself, who works without an ordinance sometimes the same effects that with it, doth excommunicate men's spirits from his presence, and gives them up to Satan, by terrors to whip them home to himself. So that God gives him leave to exercise power over both godly men and wicked men, only with this difference : wicked men God gives up unto him as unto the ruler and their head ; they are therefore called the 'rulers of the darkness of this world,' Eph. vi. 12, who therefore 'work effectually in the children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2 ; or else as captives to a prince, he taking them 'captive at his will,' 2 Tim. ii. 26, so as they are captived and 'led away,' 1 Cor. xii. 2. But his own, God gives up to him but as prisoners to a jailor, as a magistrate may do his child, to commit him ; who hath not a power over his prisoner to do anything with him, but only by appointment for a time, with a limited commission, and therefore cannot put him on the rack or into the dungeon, but when and how far God pleaseth : even as when Satan is said to have 'cast them into prison,' Rev. ii. 10, his commission was but for ten days, and then God rebukes him.

(3.) Satan having thus obtained leave, now to shew how able and powerful he is to work darkness in us, I need not much insist on. His physical and natural power to work upon our spirits, by his creation as he is an angel, is exceeding great. We are a middle sort of creatures between them and beasts ; beasts being merely corporeal, they merely spiritual, man between both. 'He made us a little inferior to the angels,' Heb. ii. ; though but a little, yet inferior ; and in respect of that inferiority, we are exposed to their working and crafty wiles. The great advantage they have hereby over us, the Apostle insinuates when he says, 'We have not to do with flesh and blood, but spiritual wickednesses,' Eph. vi. 12 ; that is, with spirits, in abilities transcending the power of the flesh and blood ; for flesh is used to express weakness when it is thus compared, as here, with spirit : so Isa. xxxi. 3. Therefore they are there also called, as *principalities* for their authority, so *powers* for their natural abilities ; and that to work upon us, for it is spoken in that relation. All which power, how great soever in him at his first creation, is now become the power of darkness ; and so called because most powerful that way ; namely, to cause and work darkness in us. And though he can for a need 'transform himself into an angel of light,' by deluding his deceived enthusiasts with false joys, yet therein he doth but act a part, it is but forced. But to shew himself an angel of darkness, by terrifying and affrighting weak consciences, this is natural now to him ; his power lies most in this. Therefore his title further is the 'ruler of darkness ;' and also he is called 'that strong man,'—strong, as to keep peace, Luke xi. 21, in those he deceives with

a false peace, so to make war and commotions in us when he is cast out. We are bidden, therefore, to stand upon our guard, and to look that 'we have on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against his wiles,' Eph. vi. 11.

(4.) Only, in the fourth place, though Satan hath never so much power, yet the advantage and exercise of this his power to work those disquietments in us is by reason of that sinful darkness which is in us. We may say, that as unless he had power from above,—that is, from God,—so nor unless he had furtherance from beneath, even from those principles of guilt and darkness in us before-mentioned, he could not disquiet us. 'Satan cometh,' saith Christ, 'but hath nothing in me.' A commission he had, and therefore came; but he had nothing of his image, or of the guilt of any of his works, to work upon in Christ; and therefore could effect nothing at all upon his spirit. That, therefore, which gives him privilege, scope, and matter to work thus upon us is something within us; there being, even in the best, something which doth belong to his jurisdiction, which maketh their spirits fit subjects for his temptations to take upon. In Eph. vi. 12, they are called the 'rulers of the darkness of this world;' and, Col. i. 12, 13, their power is called 'the power of darkness;' so as darkness is his territories, dominion, and jurisdiction: for it is his work and his image, without which he could have no power at all with us.

(5.) But by reason of this remaining darkness he hath a double advantage over us:—

[1.] An advantage of more near, intimate, and immediate access to our spirits, to close with them, to suggest unto them, and to work upon them; and to tempt not only, as one man tempts another, by the outward senses, but by the inward also, which is an exceeding great advantage. And though it is true that, as he is an angel, he hath naturally by creation ability thus to do; yet as he is now a devil and an unclean spirit, were we but perfectly holy, as in innocency, he should be debarred all such near communication to us. To this purpose it may be observed, that in that his temptation of Adam in innocency, he was not permitted, in his first assault, till he had sinned, to come within him to work upon his fancy and affections indiscernibly; but only mediately and externally, by an audible voice in the body of a serpent. And likewise, as touching the second Adam, we read not that he had access to his inward senses and spirit; but only by an external suggestion by voice, and by visible representations; as when he shewed him the glory of the world in visible landscapes of his own making, which were represented to the eye. What else was the reason why he took the advantage of a mountain? If it had been by working on his inward senses, any place would have served for that. But the devil then appeared in a visible shape, and so tempted him, for he would have had him fall down to worship him. *Ceterum malus ille extrinsecus, ac non per cogitationes, Christum adortus est, quemadmodum et Adamum. Nam ne illum quidem per immixtas cogitationes, sed per serpentem impetivit.** Another time we find him crept into one of his apostles, to assault our Saviour by him, Matt. xvi. 23, 'Master, spare thyself,' says he; when therefore Christ says to him, 'Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me.' So as still Satan was kept at a distance, and could come no nearer. And that he should yet come thus near to him, made Christ also, in that great temptation in the wilderness, with so much vehemency and indignation at last say to him, 'Avoid, Satan,' Matt. iv. 10, as loathing the nearness of so foul a spirit. For what fellowship,—that is, such thus near,—should light

* Damasc. Ortho. Fidei, lib. iii., cap. 20.

have with this angel of darkness? Nor should he have such more near and inward access to our spirits, but for that darkness in us, by reason of which he thus comes within us; and as darkness mingleth with darkness, so he with our spirits. So that as the light of grace in us begun doth fit us for God's drawing nigh to us, so this darkness, remaining in part unexpelled, exposeth us to Satan's drawing nigh so near as to mingle with our spirits, and, as it were, to become one spirit with us.

[2.] As hereby he hath this advantage of access to get within us, so this darkness in us is also as fit fuel and as tinder to his fiery temptations, that presently enkindleth and inflameth. So as all those effects of the principles of darkness mentioned he can both increase and augment, and so add blackness to that darkness in us. And darkness being his dominion, therefore so much darkness as is in us, so great a party he hath in us to work upon. Hence, therefore, all the effects that he worketh in unregenerate men, who are nothing but darkness, he may work in regenerate men, according to the proportion of the remainder of darkness in them, to a certain degree, and for a limited season; as to delude their reason, falsely accuse and terrify their consciences, &c. Only final despair and revenge against God, which is that sin unto death, this the Apostle excepteth; for having occasionally mentioned that sin, 1 John v. 16, he adds, ver. 18, that 'he that is born of God sinneth not,' that is, not that sin; and he subjoineth, 'but keeps himself that that evil one touch him not,' that is, not with the least infusion of the venom of that sin which is properly *his sin*, John viii. 44, and which he toucheth their spirits with who become the serpent's seed. And therefore all such instances as we find, that shew how he hath wrought on the spirits of carnal men by reason of their total darkness, may be alleged to shew in a proportion what he may also work on regenerate men for a season by reason of their darkness in part remaining: all things happening alike to all.—Thus in general.

CHAPTER VII.

*More particularly, how Satan works upon those three principles in us :
first, on carnal reason.*

SEEING therefore the exercise of his power lies in that darkness which is in us, let us more particularly see how able and powerful he is to work upon those several principles of *carnal reason, guilt of conscience, jealousies and fears.*

First, on *carnal reason*; on which he chiefly worketh in this sort of temptations, the strength whereof lies in false reasonings, wherein, if in anything, he hath the advantage.

1. First, his abilities to forge and invent false reasonings and arguments to overthrow our faith, are, as they must needs be conceived to be, exceeding great: who for this knowledge is called *δαίμων*; as well as Satan for his malice; and for his subtlety in outreaching us, a serpent: who when young, outwitted our first parents; 'he beguiled Eve through his subtlety,' says the Apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 3, then when their reason was not depraved; but now he is grown 'that old serpent,' Rev. xii. 9: and we are become 'children' apt to be tossed to and fro, Eph. iv. 14. He hath had time enough to improve his knowledge in; a student he is of five thousand years' standing, that hath lost no time, but as he is said to 'accuse day and night,' Rev. xii. 10, so is able to study both day and night; and he hath made it his chief, if not whole study, to enable himself to tempt, and plead against us. It is his trade. Therefore as men are called lawyers or divines from their callings, so he the tempter and the accuser from his employment. And by this his long experience and observation he hath his *νόημα*, 2 Cor. ii. 11, his set and composed machinations; his *μεθοδία*, Eph. vi. 11, his methods of temptations, which are studied and artificially moulded and ordered; even such systems and methods of them as tutors and professors of arts and sciences have, and do read over again and again to their auditors. The Apostle calls them 'darts,' ver. 16,—and he hath a whole shop and armoury of them ready made and forged,—which, for the acuteness and subtle sophistry that is in them, are called 'depths of Satan,' Rev. ii. 24; which depths, if in any point, are most to be found in this: for he is more especially versed in this great question and dispute, Whether a man be the child of God or no? more than in any other. All other controversies he hath had to deal in but in particular ages, as occasionally they were started; but this hath been the standing controversy of all ages, since God hath had any children on earth: with every one of whom, more or less, he hath at one time or another had solemn disputes about it; so as he knows all the advantages, windings, and turnings in this debate, all the objections and answers, and discussions in it.

And as other controversies, the longer they are on foot, and the further they have been carried along, the more they are enlarged, improved, and grow more subtle; so must this needs also, especially in this latter knowing

age of the world, and by reason also of that seeming near similitude which hypocrisy holds unto the truth and power of grace, which hath fazzled* and entangled this controversy. The objections and difficulties which a believer meets with in beating out a right judgment of his estate, are greater than in any controversy the world ever knew, and afford stranger knots, and require as acute distinctions to dissolve them as the school knows any; and indeed such as, did not the Holy Ghost sometimes cut, sometimes untie them for believers, by witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God, bare reason alone could never determine in it. Now Satan, through long experience and observation, hath all these at his fingers' ends, and hath reduced them all to commonplaces long since. He hath still observed and laid up what answers have relieved the spirits of believers in such and such a doubt cast in by him, and then studies a further reply against the next time, or for the next believer he shall have to do with.

2. Secondly, as he hath thus thoroughly studied this controversy, and knows all the windings and false reasonings in it; so withal, by his daily studying and considering men, he knows how best to suit and make use of those reasonings, both to persons and seasons. It is the sole business of those evil spirits to study men; for this end they 'go up and down the earth.' And he hath commonplaces of men, and their several frames and temper of spirit, as well as of temptations; he knows all the several ranks and classes of men in the state of grace; and according to their ranks, with what sort of temptations to encounter them. For men's temptations are 'various and manifold,' 1 Pet. i. 6; even as the gifts and operations of the Spirit are, 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5. Now, he having beaten out this controversy with all sorts, knows how to lay the dispute, how to order, and marshal, and apply objections, and wield his blows with most success and advantage. That as physicians, having observed the several workings of medicines of all sorts, upon several ages and constitutions, and what several issues and effects they have had, do therefore accordingly prescribe and apply several medicines according to the several and differing conditions of their patients, though sick of the same disease. Thus Satan, he by observation finding the hearts of some men 'answering' to some others, 'as face to face in water,' as Solomon says; and withal remembering what reasonings have always taken most with such a sort or strain of Christians, whose corruptions and whose graces were much alike unto those in this or that man he hath now to deal with; accordingly he makes use and application of these reasonings again. The tempers of men's spirits we know are diverse, and so are capable of diversity of suggestions. And again, the operations of grace, as of sin, are various in those several tempers. And God's dealings with and workings upon his children are as various as either. Some he humbleth much, some are led on with comfort; some he works on with a sudden and marvellous light, as if the sun should rise on the sudden at midnight, and on others insensibly and by degrees, as when the dawning steals upon the day; some have had a false and counterfeit work before, some were never enlightened until savingly; and this variety affords rise and occasion for several temptations. So as what kind of work any other Christian hath had is apt to be made an exception to another that wants it. I was never thus humbled, says one; nor I thus comforted, says another; I had a sudden violent work indeed, which came in like a spring-tide, but now the tide is fallen, and my first love abated, says a third; I had some workings and enlightenings heretofore, says another, and I was deceived then, and I may be so now also: and so he hath

* Embarrassed.—Ed.

that vast task set him, to compare a counterfeit work with a true. Thus every several way of working lies open to several exceptions; and as we say that every calling earthly hath its several and proper temptations, so the several ways and manners of effecting this calling heavenly have their several veins and currents of temptations. All which Satan knows, and hath often traced; and accordingly knows how to fit them to men, and to prosecute them the most advantageous way.

So in like manner he takes the compass of every man's knowledge, notions, and apprehensions; according unto which, as our knowledge is more or less, we are also capable of several temptations. Many reasonings and objections, which, like small hail-shot, could not reach or make any dint at all upon men of parts and knowledge, both because they by reason of their knowledge do soar high out of the gun-shot of them, and have also on the 'whole armour of God,' as the apostle speaks, Eph. vi.—that is, are in complete armour, abounding in all faith and knowledge,—yet such reasonings may be fittest to level with at such as are more ignorant, and fly low, and have but some few broken pieces of that armour to defend some parts with. But on the contrary, those other of his great-shot, which he dischargeth on men of knowledge, they would clean fly over the others' heads, and not come near such smaller vessels. All in Thyatira knew not Satan's depths, nor were capable of them, Rev. ii. 24. Thus the ignorance and the want of knowledge of the meaning of the Scriptures, and of the ways of grace chalked forth therein, how doth Satan abuse, to the disquietment of many poor and good souls that want much knowledge, by putting false glosses upon them! How many weak souls do stick in shallows, and are sometimes a long while terrified with gross mistakes, and like small birds are held long under with limed straws of frivolous objections, which great ones fly away with! That great apostle, being a man of knowledge, was not easily taken with such chaff. 'We are not ignorant of his devices,' says he, 2 Cor. ii. 11; and therefore Satan takes another course with him, and comes with downright blows, and falls a-buffeting him, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Thus doth Satan take measure of the bore, as I may so speak, of every man's understanding, and fits them with objections proportionable, in several sizes. And as the Apostle in his sermons prepared milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men, so doth Satan in his temptations apply and suit them to men's notions and apprehensions, still framing objections according to their reading.

3. Thirdly, he is able undiscernibly to communicate all his false reasonings, though never so spiritual, which he doth forge and invent, and that in such a manner as to deceive us by them, and to make them take with us.

(1.) First, he is able not only to put into the heart suggestions and solicitations unto sensual and worldly objects; such as that into Judas's heart, to betray his Master for money, John xiii. 2, and to tempt married couples severed to incontinency, 1 Cor. vii. 5; but also the most subtle and abstracted reasonings concerning things spiritual, which are utterly remote from sense, he can insinuate and impart according to the measure and capacity of men's apprehensions. Therefore we are said to wrestle with them about things heavenly, and our interest therein is often made the matter of contention and the subject of the question. So that phrase, Eph. vi. 12, *ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις*, when it is said, 'We wrestle with spiritual wickednesses in heavenly,' is rather to be understood of heavenly things than of heavenly places; the word signifying rather supercelestial, in the highest heavens, whither, if rendered of places, the devils never came since their fall. And it being used elsewhere for heavenly things, as Heb. viii. 5, and the preposition *ἐν*, or *ἐν*,

being likewise sometimes put to express the object-matter about which a thing is conversant, as Matt. xi. 6, 'Blessed is he that is not offended in me,'—that is, with or about me, and for my sake,—it may congruously be so here meant, as noting to us, that the price, the stake, about which we wrestle with Satan are not things worldly, as honours, riches, and the like, but things heavenly, which concern our souls and estates hereafter.

Now the contention being about heavenly things and spiritual blessings, it cannot be transacted but by reasonings suitable; that is, spiritual false reasonings, abstracted from sense and fancy. And in this respect they are termed spiritual wickednesses, because in such wickednesses they deal and trade in especially, or as much as in those that are sensual; as tempting to unbelief, despair, blasphemy against God, of which sort are all those temptations we have now in hand. And that he is able to convey and suggest such spiritual thoughts and reasonings of what sort soever, appeareth many ways: as by injecting blasphemous thoughts against God, such as do sometimes transcend the wit and capacity of the receiver of them; and is manifest likewise by Saul's prophesying even from the immediate dictating and suggestion of an evil spirit, as is expressly said, 1 Sam. xviii. 10; in the like manner to which haply the Sibyls also prophesied.

But more evident it is in all those damnable heresies which have been broached in all ages, as in the primitive times among the Romans, the broachers whereof are made the emissaries of Satan; therefore, Rom. xvi. 18, he having branded them, unto the Romans, that taught false doctrines among them, and having instructed them against them, he gives this encouragement about them, ver. 20, 'that God should tread down Satan under their feet shortly,' having respect to Satan's work in those errors mentioned, ver. 18, Satan being the main author of them. Thus in the church of Thyatira, those cursed heretics who applauded themselves, and were admired by their followers for the depths and profoundness of their learning, shewn in those heresies they broached: 'depths, as they speak,' Rev. ii. 24. But if they call them depths, says the Apostle, I will call them depths of Satan,— 'depths of Satan, as they speak,'—for the devil was the master and the author and suggester of them. So, in after-times, apostasy is ascribed to spirits of error,—that is, devils, which he foretelleth men should give heed unto, 1 Tim. iv. 1,—and to the working of Satan, 2 Thess. ii. 9. It was he that sharpened their wits and pens. Now then, by the same reason, there is no reasoning about our estates, though never so spiritual, but he can suggest it, as well as he did those depths of the heresies to the broachers of them. So as Satan can not only make those false reasonings, which our own hearts forge, more specious and probable, and suggest further confirmations of them, which are enough to add unto this darkness; but he is also able to put in new, which himself invents, of what kind soever they be.

(2.) Secondly, he is not simply able to suggest them, but to insinuate them in such a manner as to take with us and deceive us; yea, and often to set them on with a deep impression. Therefore, in those places forementioned, it is not simply said that there should be spirits which shall suggest errors, but so suggest them as that 'men should give heed unto them.' Thus, 1 Tim. iv. 1, and 2 Thess. ii., where the working of those very same spirits is set forth, ver. 9, it is not only said that they were sent as from God to delude, but with 'strong delusions;' such as should have a strength put into them to prevail, so as that men should believe them. So also, that lying spirit which God sent, and who persuaded Ahab by a lie in the mouths of his false prophets, commission was not simply given to him to suggest a lie,

but so as it should prevail with Ahab; so 2 Chron. xviii. 21, 'And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail.' And as he is thus able, when God gives leave, to delude wicked men's understandings with false reasonings in matters of heresy and false doctrine, by reason of that total darkness that is in them: so he is able, if God give leave, as sometimes he doth, to bring strong delusions upon the minds of God's children also, through false reasonings about their own estates, by reason of that darkness which in part remains in them; by means of which he may work the same effects for a time, and in a certain degree, in a godly man, which in another, as was before observed. Thus the believing Galatians, especially some of them, were so far 'bewitched,' as his word is, as for a time to assent to that great error in point of justification; and this by reason of that folly and darkness which remained in them, as he intimates, when he says, 'O ye foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?' Gal. iii. 1. And if in the very doctrine of justification itself believers were thus for a time deluded, which is rare, then much more may they, and ordinarily are they, misled in the application of faith, in the believing their own personal justification, which is the point in hand.

Only this is to be added here for caution's sake: that it is true that Satan cannot enforce an act of assent to any falsehood upon the understanding of any man. For how then should they 'all have been damned for believing that lie?' 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12; which should not have been unless it were their own sin; which is as true of all other temptations as that. Though Satan put the thought into Judas's heart, John xiii. 2, yet his own conscience owns it wholly as his own act, Matt. xxvii. 4, 'I have sinned,' &c.

Neither yet doth he so immediately concur to produce such an act of assent in us, as God doth when he worketh faith in us; for then God's power and assistance in working good should be no more than Satan's in working evil. *Tentationis potest esse causa efficax, at non peccati; potest necessitare homines ad sentiendum tentationem, non ad consentiendum.*

And yet the Scripture phrases go far in ascribing unto Satan herein, when it says of those that believed not the gospel, that 'the god of this world hath blinded their minds that believe not,' 2 Cor. iv. 4; which notes out a superadded working of blindness unto their own natural blindness. As also when he says that 'the prince of the air is *ἐνεργῶν*, that works effectually,' &c., Eph. ii. 2. And also that of the Corinthians whilst unregenerate, who as then are said to be 'carried and led away after dumb idols,' 1 Cor. xii. 2. All which phrases would seem to argue, not only a further power of working upon men's judgments than when one man doth endeavour to corrupt and persuade another man in a moral way, (because he suggesteth indiscernibly, and with more frequency and importunity, and holdeth the mind more to the object, and presenteth an army of confirmations at once, and is able so to marshal them as the mind can scarce resist; and puts all these upon the spirit with a violent and imperious affirmation,) but further, also, they would seem to imply some kind of physical working, though not immediately on the spring of the clock, yet upon the wheels and weights of it—I mean the passions in the body and the images in the fancy, though not upon the understanding immediately; all which, what influence they have to sway the judgment and pervert it, experience shews.

4. Fourthly, he is further able to follow and continue his reasonings as occasion is, and to keep up the dispute, and hold out arguments with us, and out-reason us, by putting in new replies to our answers, and so to maintain and manage and carry along the dispute, and to come up with fresh

supplies : which in this respect is called wrestling, Eph. vi. 12, ' We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers ; ' it being, as the bodily wrestling, transacted by reiterated assaults, and attempts to overcome and get the victory ; he, as it were, going about to strike up our heels, as wrestlers do—that is, to take away from under us those reasonings which supported us, by cavilling objections ; which kind of spiritual wrestlings how often have we experience of in spiritual agonies ! In the hour of temptation believers find conflicts and bandying of disputes, rationally carried along, and pertinent objections brought in against those answers which they secretly meditate of. In which cause, therefore, divines bid men not to dispute with that cunning sophister. Thus many, when death hath approached, have found that they have had their reasonings for their estates, and those evidences they have had recourse unto, taken away and confuted as fast as they have thought of them.

And that Satan hath this dexterity and skill thus to manage such kind of disputes with us, is further evident in the framing of heresies, wherein he assists the contrivers of them with pertinent considerations to back and confirm their notions, in their private meditations, studies, and contrivements. And indeed, if Satan were not able and skilful thus to oppose and reply, these kind of temptations which consist in disputes could not be managed ; for otherwise in them Satan disputed with us but as if one of us should reason with a dumb man that can hear, but his answers cannot be known, and so he knows no way what reply to make. Therefore surely Satan hath often some way, more or less, a guess and inkling what may be the answers of the heart again : which, were it otherwise, the glory also which God hath by the victory gotten over Satan in these temptations were much obscured, and Satan's confusion less ; for the victory of our faith in these disputes, and the resistance it makes, lies chiefly in those replies which are made, whereby it quencheth all his darts : whereof the devil, when he is once sensible and perceives it, he is confounded ; for then, when he is once sensible and apprehensive that he is resisted, doth he fly from us, as the Apostle speaks, James iv. 7, and that of his own accord, as the expression there imports ; even as a foiled and disgraced soldier. And this we may see in his carriage in those his temptations of Christ, which were managed by mutual disputes, and wherein the foiling of Satan was by the answers out of Scripture which Christ gave ; by which being confounded, ' he left him,' as the text says, Matt. iv. 11, as out of pride, ashamed that he was foiled. So that Satan, some way or other, is able to guess at, and discerns the replies in our hearts to his objections, as well as to make and cast in objections.

CHAPTER VIII.

That Satan is able to work upon that other corrupt principle in us : guilt of conscience.—Both how many ways Satan is able to know matter by us to object against us ; as also, to set it on, and work upon the guilt and erroneusness of the conscience.

THUS we see how able Satan is to join with and assist carnal reason in us against ourselves. We will now further consider what power and working he may exercise upon that other principle in us, our *consciences* ; in joining with the filth and defilement thereof, in accusing us and laying particulars to our charge ; in which consisteth the greatest of his strength, even in an army of accusations of us to ourselves, which in this warfare he musters up against us. This sort of temptations we have in hand consists either of false *majors* or false *minors*, which are like the two wings of an army. His false *majors*, they are such as, misapprehensions of the ways and of the work of grace, or misunderstanding of sayings of Scripture, &c., which by reason of that darkness of ignorance that is in us, he puts upon us wrested and perverted. As, that to relapse into the same sin again and again is not compatible with grace ; and many the like. For the opinions whereby some do measure what strictness is essential to the being in the state of grace are often too severe and rigid ; as in others, too loose. The measure of some is too scant, not giving allowance to failings ; as of others, too large, taking in such gross corruptions, and the constant practice of them, as cannot stand with grace. And Satan deceives with both : as the one sort, of profane men, to flatter themselves to be in a good condition when they are not, so the other, of weak and tender consciences, that they are not in a good estate when they are. And in like manner places of Scripture misunderstood do oft prove matter of great temptation to many ; as that Heb. vi., unto one who, having fallen from his first love, concluded he could never be saved, because it is there said, that ‘they which are once enlightened, if they fall away, it is impossible they should be renewed to repentance ;’ whereas it is only to be understood of a revengeful total apostasy. Thus, as Elymas ‘perverted the right ways of the Lord,’ Acts xiii. 10, so doth Satan also ; Elymas being therefore there called ‘child of the devil,’ because he did the work of his father therein.

Now, all such false reasonings as are founded upon such mistakes of the things, and of the rule itself whereby we should judge of our estates—false *majors*—do properly belong to the former head of carnal reason. But he hath another wing of forces to join to these ; and they are false accusations of a man to himself. from the guilt of his own heart and ways, misconceits of a man’s self, and misapplications to a man’s self : another sort of arguments, wherein the *minors* are false. So, although a man be full of knowledge, and through the light thereof hath a right judgment both of the Scriptures and of the ways of the work of grace by which men’s estates are to be judged,

and so therein Satan cannot be too hard for him with all his sophistry; yet by misrepresenting a man to himself, and by perverting his own ways to him, making that which is straight seem crooked, and all in him to be hypocrisy, a man is brought to pass a false sentence upon himself. So as if this subtle pleader cannot deceive the judge, as I may so speak, with false rules and mistakes in the law itself, then he endeavours it by misrepresenting the case of the party, and puts in a false bill of accusation, so ordered and coloured as to procure a judgment against him; laying before the eyes of men's consciences their by-ends, deadness, and hardness of heart, and falseness in such and such turnings of their lives; excepting against what is good in them, aggravating what is evil, and all to enforce from thence a false conclusion. To instance in some one false reasoning of this latter sort, Satan oft argueth and chargeth the conscience of one distressed in this or the like manner:—

‘Those in whom any sin reigneth, or in whose hearts hypocrisy and self-love is the predominant principle, are not in the state of grace.’

‘But such a one art thou,’ &c. For the proof of which *minor* he musters up and sets in order, in the view of conscience, a multitude of instances of sins committed, thus heinously, thus oft; of duties omitted, and if performed, yet with such and such pride of heart, self-aims, &c. In which sort of reasoning the *major* and first proposition is true; but the *minor*, the assumption, *such a one art thou*, that is most false. And although there be a truth in the instances alleged to prove it, that such sins have been committed, and that in performance of duties such particular by-ends, &c., do arise and are found in the heart; yet not in that manner as he would lay the charge, not as reigning, not as the swaying and prevailing principle in a man's whole course. That hypocrisy is there cannot be denied; but that hypocrisy rules there and is predominant, and that nothing but hypocrisy, is false, which yet Satan amazeth the conscience with, to bring forth this conclusion out of all, ‘Therefore thou art a hypocrite’ Which conclusion likewise, how able he is to set on with terrors and affrightments, we shall shew anon. That which we have now in hand is to shew how able he is for those kind of false reasonings, the deceit of which lies chiefly in the assumption and *minor* proposition; that is, in misapplications to a man's self. In which he hath principally to deal with conscience; for the guilt of a man's particular ways, actions, and corruptions, the seat whereof is the conscience, is made the matter of the evidence and the proofs of those *minors*; and the defilement and erroneousness of the conscience is that principle in us which he works upon when he enforceth such a misapprehension from those evidences.

Wherein, by the way, we may take notice of a difference between the Holy Ghost's dealing with a believer, when at any time he comes with the word, and searcheth and tries his heart, and discovers corruptions to us,—to wit, such a searching as David prayed for, ‘Examine me, O Lord, and try my heart,’ &c., Ps. xxvi. 2, cxxxix. 23,—convincing and reproving us, and that sometimes with some sharpness, for our by-ends, hypocrisies, &c.; when also he ‘bores the ear, and shews wherein we have exceeded,’ as Elihu speaks, Job xxxvi. 9, 10;—and between these other siftings and winnowings of Satan, as Christ's phrase is, Luke xxii. 31. The difference is, that the Holy Ghost dealeth sweetly herein, but as a father that rebukes and convinceth his child of his misdemeanours; but without putting in any such sting in the conclusion, that therefore we are hypocrites; nor to any such meaning or purpose thence inferred, that therefore sin reigns in us, &c.: but in these of Satan, that is the issue he mainly drives all to, and it is made the foot, the burden

of all those his accusations, and is as the scope and argument that runs through the whole of that his charge against us.

And in respect to this his misrepresenting our estates, and false aggravations of our sins unto us, he is called, as the *tempter*, which is in a general relation to all sorts of temptations, so the *accuser*, κατήγορος, Rev. xii. 10, or impleader against us; and as the accuser of us to God, in God's court, and before his tribunal, (for to accuse in a court the word may seem to import,) so in the court of our own consciences. And as he tempts us unto sin, so also for sin and by sin,—that is, the guilt of it,—to draw us to despair. He that accused Job unto God, would sure accuse Job unto himself much more.

And though it may be truly affirmed that neither Satan nor our own consciences can ever aggravate unto us too much the intrinsical sinfulness, the heinousness and vileness of our sins in their due and proper colours, and true aggravations of them, which we can never come to see enough, as not to hate nor loathe and mourn for as we ought; yet Satan and our own consciences may, in the representation of our sins, put such false apprehensions and such aggravations upon them as may make us apprehend too much about them; as when it is suggested that they are such as are not compatible with the state of grace, or that they are utterly unpardonable. He may likewise use them as inductions to prove a false conclusion. And also, although our sins, if truly, can never be enough represented, if it be in order to drive a man more to God's grace and unto Christ: yet to present them singly and alone, and to hold the mind and intention of it so to them as to cause us to forget our own mercies, and in such a manner as thereby God's mercies and all comforts are hidden and concealed from us; this is that is Satan's practice, and is the cause of this deep bondage we thus here speak of. And in this respect that name, κατήγορος, the accuser, is given this evil spirit in a direct and full opposition to that special name and office of the Holy Ghost, παράκλητος, the comforter or pleader for us: because as the Holy Ghost maketh intercession in our own hearts unto God for us, and upon true repentance helpeth us to make 'apologies' for ourselves, as the word is, 2 Cor. vii. 11, and comforteth us by discovering 'our graces given us of God,' as 1 Cor. ii. 12, and by pleading our evidences, and witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God; so on the contrary, Satan is κατήγορος, an accuser, by laying to our charge the guilt of our sins, by impleading our evidences, misrepresenting our estates, thereby to deject us and 'swallow us up with sorrow,' as 2 Cor. ii. 7.

And further; because in these accusations his scope is to misrepresent our estates to us, and falsely to disquiet us, therefore he is yet more especially called διάβολος, a slanderer, as one that falsely and lyingly calumniateth and slandereth all our graces, all God's dealings towards us, all our dealings towards him; slandering our persons, our estates to us, charging us to be hypocrites, unsound, and carnal, and counterfeit Christians, still misconstruing all unto the worst. Which false calumnies and charges of his, I take most properly to be those 'darts' mentioned Eph. vi. 11, which are there said more especially to oppose our faith; and therefore faith is there said to quench them. From which trade of his forging darts of calumnies, he hath his name διάβολος, a slanderer, from διαβάλλω; a metaphor it is, from casting darts, (for the slanderous calumnies of the tongue are 'as a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow,' as Solomon speaks, Prov. xxv. 18; their teeth spears and arrows, Ps. lvii. 4;) and such are these kind of Satan's temptations and accusations against us, even as darts and arrows that wound and pierce,

and run through the passions and affections, that strike the soul through and through with fears. His name, *πειράζων*, the tempter, is from *πειρώ*, to pierce; because such are his darts, so sharpened, and flung with that force, as they are fitted to pierce, and enabled to run through. And besides the sharpness of the darts themselves, they are said to be fiery, as making double way for themselves; for a piece of iron, though blunt, yet if fired red-hot, it runs through without resistance.

Satan, he is that great general of the whole powers of darkness in us; and therefore even the forces of the guilt of sin, the proper seat of which is the conscience, he hath some command over, as well as of the power of sin in other members: and therefore as he can muster up and set on fleshly lusts which fight against the soul, and provoke and back them in their assaults upon us, so he can clap on the chains of guilt and bondage upon our consciences.

And as he can stir up that guilt that is in us, so also work upon that injudiciousness and erroneous defilement that is in the conscience, to judge of a man's own estate; this Satan works upon and abuseth. For as he hath a power to work upon the corruption in the rest of the faculties, so also over the defilement and pollution of the conscience; misleading it in its verdict of our estates, as cunning pleaders do a silly jury. The wards of conscience are of themselves loose, and naturally misplaced, but he with his false keys wrings and perverts them much more; it naturally gives an uncertain sound, but he by his false alarms and panic fears cast in doth much more confound the testimony of it. And how easy is it to trouble a soul disquieted already, and to work upon jealousies which are raised! We see how far a cunning man can insinuate with jealous natures, to increase suspicions and surmises. When a humour is stirred, how easily is it wrought on! And thus often when the Spirit hath already read us a sharp lecture, and examined our consciences, then Satan he strikes in, and descants upon it all to deeper terrors and distress.

But the more full and distinct explication of Satan's work of accusation of us herein requires a further search and inquiry, and a larger demonstration: how Satan should come, and how far, to know matter by us thus to accuse us of. For if he doth accuse, he must, as is said Acts xxviii., 'have aught against us whereof to accuse;' else it were in vain. And there is this difference between these kinds of temptations wherein we are exercised about the guilt of sin, and those other unto sin: that the object-matter of other temptations is what is without ourselves; but in these, that which is in us and from us, and hath been committed by us, is made matter of objection against, and disquietment unto us. That which is from within the man disquiets the man.

But ere I enter upon this inquiry I must premise a general caution, to set limits to our discourse therein.

And the caution is this: That we are to reserve and maintain this, both as an undoubted truth and as God's sole and royal prerogative, that he can alone both search and know the heart and conscience. As in like manner, That he can only by his wrath immediately make those deep and killing wounds and gashes with which men's souls are often here and hereafter externally wounded: (of which by way of caution also in the next chapter.) Which two glorious and incommunicable attributes of his, that eulogium of the word of God, Heb. iv. 12, 13, seems fully to hold forth unto us: where, as at the gate of Paradise was set a cherubim with a flaming sword to keep our fallen parents from ever entering in again, so there Christ is represented as

that supreme judge with whom, as at the 13th verse, we are eternally to have to do, (or, as the original, *πρὸς ὃν ἡμεῖς ὁ λόγος*, to whom we are to give an account, for so *λόγος* is, Rom. xiv. 12, and elsewhere, taken ;) and he there stands with that dreadful sword of his word ready drawn and brandished,—that word by which he will judge men at the latter day, John xii. 48, and which therefore is called *κριτικὸς*, ver. 12, a judger of the thoughts, &c.,—and this to the end that by the awful terror thereof he might compel and drive those that hear the gospel to ‘enter into that rest,’ to which he had exhorted, ver. 11, which is set open by him for men now fallen to come into.

Which sword, as it hath a double edge, as there, so in his hand, who alone can wield it, it serves to a double use. That whereas in a judge two things are requisite to the complete performance of his office,—(1.) skill and knowledge to find out and examine the fact ; (2.) power to execute and torture the malefactor when found guilty,—he shews how both these do transcendently and solely meet in him, by relating what power is found to be in his word, (which is the ensign of his justice and instrument of his power in judging,) which is said to be a ‘discerner of the thoughts,’ and a sword that pierceth and woundeth the soul and spirit with unutterable anguish. Which wounding power of the word is distinctly set forth (as some) from the beginning of the 12th verse to those last words, ‘and is a discerner of the thoughts ;’ from whence, to the end of the 13th verse, that other, the searching and all-judging property of God and his word, is laid forth to us : but rather, as I conceive, the Apostle, in one continued metaphor, carries along the expression of both throughout the whole, though more eminently the one in that former part of the words, and the other in the latter ; yet so as both are alike made the royalty of God, which is the thing we have in hand.

Neither needs it stumble any that this is there attributed only to the word of God, of which he only seems to speak, for that is all one as to ascribe it unto God ; for as ‘where the word of a king is, there is power,’ says Solomon, Eccles. viii. 4, so, where the word of God is, there is the power of God, and so is it here to be understood : and therefore, as in other scriptures, his word is said to create, and by it the heavens to be established, &c., and also, Gal. iii. 8, in the like phrase of speech, the Scripture is said to foresee, that is, God foresaw, who writ the Scripture, so also here, to know and wound the heart. Which to be the Apostle’s express intention here appears by the connexion of the 12th and 13th verses. For whereas, ver. 12, he begins with attributing this power unto the word, yet in the end he closeth his speech with transferring all that was said thereof upon God himself, ver. 13, ‘with whom we have to do.’

To open the words a little more largely, so as to clear this assertion out of them, which it is necessary to premise. The words are, ‘For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart : neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight ; but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.’

And, first, of that sole searching power of the soul in this chapter, and of that other, the sole wounding power of the conscience, in the next chapter, we shall have the like occasion to premise.

For the present ; that searching, examining, and judging power of the word now in hand, he expresseth by an allusion to the anatomy of bodies ; which

then, though not so frequently as now, was yet in use ; or else to the cutting up of the sacrifices, whether those of the Jews or as it was used among the heathen, especially by the soothsayers, who curiously searched into every inward part, as we find in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxi. 21 : and his similitude stands then, that look, what the entrails are to a sharp sword, or sacrificer's knife, or the like instruments of anatomy in a strong and skilful hand, such are all the most inward and secret parts of the heart, even those which are most difficult to be divided, unto this sword in God's hand, when he is pleased to use it to search heart and reins, and to discover and bring forth to judgment the secrets thereof. He can use this sword not only to unrip and strip off the outward clothes of outward and formal actions, and so present the soul naked, as his expression is, ver. 13 ; nor only to flay off all the skin, to excoriate, and so to see what lies under it, as the next word there, *τετραχλισμένον*, which is translated 'opened,' doth sometimes signify ; but, further, to cleave and cut up to the back-bone, for even so deep doth the signification of that word reach, that so all the inwards may appear, and this so curiously divided and laid asunder, as to see and view apart what is in each. 'It pierceth to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.' By which, grace and corruption are not so properly here to be understood, for then he would have rather said flesh and spirit ; and besides, the persons he speaks this of are principally those who shall be found secret unbelievers, who have not spirit in that sense at all in them ; but they are here used to express those two main powers of the heart : the soul,—that is, the inferior part, that more sensual part, wherein the affections are, as 1 Thess. v. 23 it is also used,—which it divides by discovering how close and inordinately all those affections cleave to sin ; and then of the spirit,—that is, the superior part, of the understanding, conscience, &c.,—which it rips up by discovering how these plot and contrive the accomplishment of sin. 'Dividing ;' that is, discovering apart, with difference, how things are carried severally in each : and withal, what correspondency and intercourse there is between these ; how sin and all our actions pass through them from the one to the other, even as blood and spirits do through the veins and arteries, in all the parts from each to other. And as in the body there are several regions, as anatomists call them, divided by partitions : the vital parts in the upper loft next the neck, in which are lodged the heart and lungs ; the natural parts in that lower, and these divided by the midriff, as by a floor between them : so in the soul—to which haply Solomon alludes, when he calls the several powers of it 'the chambers of the belly,' Prov. xviii. 8, as some read it—there is the sensual part of the affections, the soul, &c., which is, as it were, in a distinct room from that more sublime and spiritual part, the spirit. And as the 'spirit of man'—that is, the conscience and understanding of a man—'searcheth all those chambers,' as it is there, (that is, 'knows what is in man,' as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. ii. 11 ; which yet when it doth so it is not by an innate light, but with God's candle, as Solomon's expression there is ; that is, by the word and the light thereof set up by him in it :) so here, the word, under another similitude,—namely, of a sword,—is said to cut up and to discover all within those several regions. And in the spirit it is said to discover what can be imagined, most retired and withdrawn, and so locked up as no eye could find it out, which he expresseth by mentioning such parts as are most inwardly seated of all other : the marrow, which we know is enclosed within the bones ; and the joints, or ligaments by which the joints are knit and move ; these it unbare and discovers also. Both which he interprets in the next words, 'and is a discoverer of the thoughts

and intentions of the heart,' which are a more plain interpretation of what he had expressed by those two metaphors. The utmost intention and end, in all our actions, that is as the marrow; because as the marrow gives moisture to the bones, so by these our ends, all our purposes and resolutions, by which we are supported in all our actions, are strengthened and confirmed. And then our devising thoughts or plottings, our contrivements and machinations, those by which we artificially do connect and hang together many joints of means to accomplish and bring to pass our intentions,—which thoughts of all others we strive to hide and conceal,—these are as the joints, or (as the word *αἰμοὶ* rather implies) as the ligaments, and the sinews, and the tendons by which the joints do move; so these are they upon which our designs do move and turn: even all those *cogitationes compaginatae*, plotting thoughts, the word it discovers and cuts up, and also judgeth and examineth, and passeth sentence upon them; yea, and that so exactly, as not the smallest fault can pass uncensured by it. It is as a curious critic in this review: *κριτικὸς*, it judgeth exactly, as critics use to do. So as by this anatomy which the word makes, all things in man, every creature, even the least *fibra*, the smallest sting in the heart, which would escape the sight of the most exact anatomist, are all 'naked and opened,' and cut up, 'before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'

The reasons why God hath reserved this to himself are:—

1. It was for the glory of God that he should have one private cabinet among the creatures, which he alone should know and keep the key of, which might argue his omniscience; as also one place to be sanctified in, whither no creature's eye could pierce: that so the greatness of his glory might appear, namely, in this, that he is not worshipped outwardly only, as great ones are, but inwardly, 'in spirit and truth;' and that his glory is such as commands the inward parts, which no eye seeth but his own: so as a man will respect God so much as to sanctify him in secret when no creature looks upon him.

2. That God alone might be the judge and rewarder of men's ways, and so looked at by them, to whom alone men must give an account; which would draw the creature's eye alone upon him, when the strength and first-born of all our actions are his subjects alone, and do come under his eye and view. Therefore it is said that he 'rewards men according to their works, whose heart he knows.' It was fit that he only should take upon him to reward who only could know the principles of all actions; in which the chief of the good or evil in the action lies. This is the great glory of God and Christ at the day of judgment, that 'they will discover the secrets of all hearts,' 1 Cor. iv. 5. It is not said so much of men's actions, that they shall be then discovered, as that the secrets of their hearts; for therein lies God's glory, which he will not give to any other.

This premised as a most necessary caution, I come to the disquisition of that query mentioned: How, and how far, Satan may come to know so much matter against us whereof to accuse us?

1. In general, it may be considered—

(1.) That he knows what ends, and intentions, and thoughts, and lusts such corrupt hearts as ours usually produce and bring forth in all men; and therefore can imagine what by-ends, &c., may be stirring in such and such actions, and so lay them to our charge; and so often hit right therein, and speak a man's heart thus at random. For our natures are apt to bring forth 'all concupiscence,' as the apostle says, Rom. vii. 8. Therefore if there were no more than he knows all temptations common to man's nature, he might

go far in accusing every man ; he having keys of all sorts, sorted to all men's spirits, tries with every one which will enter. And as David's elder brother charged David, when he came into the wars, 'This is the pride and the naughtiness of thy heart,' guessing at his by-ends in it, so doth Satan ; he often in like manner charges us by guess. Thus he did Job ; 'Doth Job serve God for nought ?' He knew such by-ends were in men's hearts, and so ventures to lay them to Job's charge also.

(2.) Though he should know very little of us, yet he may from some one particular which he doth know or suspect, cast in a suspicious thought about a man's estate ; and so set the jealous heart a-work itself to search out more matter against itself. As in case of treason, the least hint given by some one sets the state a-work to examine the bottom of the business, and so to get all out. So as Satan often gives and casts in but a scruple, which proves as a theme for the heart itself to dilate upon, and the conscience upon inquiry finds matter against itself to prove and increase that surmise.—Thus in general. But—

2. He may more particularly know much against us to accuse us of, and so frame bills against us out of what he knows, and this first supposing he had no access to our inward parts, and that he had no further way of knowing of us than men have one of another, it being made the limits of man's knowledge, by God to Samuel, to 'judge by outward appearance ;' yet all those advantages which men have to know one another by, he hath over us, more than any man can have, and all more eminently. For—

(1.) Those spirits can discern all corporeal actions, though not of all men at once,—for then why should Satan travel up and down the earth to review all in it ?—yet in that distance is proportioned unto them. They understand not only by innate inbred species, but some things *per species acceptas a rebus*. They learn daily. Thus 'by the church,' the good angels are said to 'learn what they never knew before of the mysteries of the gospel, Eph. iii. 10. And though those species in them, and their manner of knowing corporeal things differs from ours, yet they are analogical with ours, and we no more know the manner how they should receive *species a rebus corporeis*, the images of all things done by bodily substances, than a blind man can imagine how men that see should receive in colours. Yet this we may be sure of, that all that the senses or mind of man can know, that they can also, for natural things are all *debita objecta*, due objects made for them : for they were therefore made to be discerned by intelligent creatures ; and if by any, then by the most supreme and intellectual natures.

(2.) They make it their business to study men ; it is their trade to go up and down and consider men : 'Hast thou not considered,' says God to Satan, 'my servant Job ?' Satan useth to consider and study men ; and as the Apostle exhorts to 'consider one another to provoke to love,' so Satan considers men to provoke to sin, and to tempt for sin unto despair.

(3.) He may be privy to our vocal confessions of sins to God or men ; unto our laying open our own hearts to God in private prayers, or to others in trouble of conscience : therefore so much of the heart as is this way discovered he can and doth know. And why may not God permit him, and give him the liberty and advantage to accuse us, even of that which he comes to know by this means ? It being for the trial of his servants, especially in case they have returned again to those sins which they confessed, and yet have not forsaken ; it is just that then as the guilt of former sins returns upon us in such a case, so that Satan should be permitted afresh to charge us with them ; and that, in this case, a man should lose the privilege of *sigillum*

confessionis, of the secrecy and seal of confession, as I may so speak. And if God may permit a man to whom we have confessed, according to God's own ordinance, yet to tell things confessed, and to cast them in our teeth, as sometimes it hath fallen out; why may not Satan, the accuser of the brethren, sometimes be permitted to lay that to our charge which he only knew this way?

(4.) He is and can be present at all our more retired actions, and is privy to them, being with us at bed, board, in all companies. By means of this he can accuse us—

[1.] Of all gross actions done that are obvious to sense; which, indeed, are usually the greatest matter of accusation, and do lie upon us most heavily in such temptations, as David's murder and adultery did on him. 'My sin,' says he, 'is ever before me.' And these having pulled a man down, and put him into prison and clapped him up, our own consciences then may come in, with all our more privy corruptions, as lesser creditors use to do. And when once the soul hath, by means of the accusing of one foul act, given way to doubting, then all other privy corruptions join and offer themselves to accuse us also; for they 'lie at the door,' as God told Cain, ready for such an occasion.

[2.] Also he may by this be able to accuse us of all deadness, and drowsiness, and neglect in the performance of holy duties, as want of attention and quickness in them, for these are easily discerned by any one that is observant; and of the want of stirring affections, and also of neglect of holy conference in all companies, and the like. If a godly man were to follow a man up and down in all companies, how much might he know of a man and be able to accuse him of!

[3.] By such observations he may know a man's bosom sins. So he knew and observed Judas's bosom sin to be covetousness, and accordingly sorted his temptation to it.

(5.) By what he sees outwardly of our actions, he can many ways guess at inward corruptions, which are the principles of them. He hath all the ways which a wise discerning man hath, who should always watch a man, and set himself to study a man, and that hath opportunity to suggest when he pleaseth, on purpose for trial and discovery; all the ways such a man hath to know the heart Satan hath. And that which Solomon says of a wise man, that though 'the heart of man be deep, yet a man of understanding will fetch it out,' Prov. xx. 5, holds true of Satan much more. As, [1.] by comparing one action with another, one speech with another; so wise men guess at men's ends in things, and their respects that move them. [2.] By gestures. By a cast of a man's countenance and behaviour, men are often discerned; by the like may Satan see into us. Thus Joab discerned David's pride in his command for numbering the people, so as it was loathsome in his eyes. And if Joab discerned this by the outward carriage of the matter, how much more might Satan, that put in the motives to persuade him to it! The Jesuits bid those of their followers who are to deal with men, when they talk with any whose minds they would discern, still to observe their eyes, to see what alterations are in their countenances, as through which the mind is transparent; now Satan he is a good physiognomist, and he eyes a man. [3.] Further, he himself suggesting many motives and reasons in businesses, this way and that way, casting in many by-ends and motives to be considered by us, he observes how the heart comes off at such and such suggestions, or where it stuck, and what suggestion it was that turned a man this way or that way, and fetched him off. The Jews might see what moved Pilate to

crucify Christ, because at that saying, as the text notes, that 'else he was an enemy to Caesar,' he gave sentence. So Satan, when he stirred up David by proud arguments to number the people, he must needs know what pride was in his heart. Now—

(6.) Besides all this, how far he may have an insight into the fancy and the images therein, which follow and imitate the inward thoughts of the mind, as the shadow doth the body; and also into the passions, which are but the flowing and reflowing of corporal spirits, and in which the affections of the will discover themselves; thus I leave to others to determine. For the present, this is certain, that although all the powers of the reasonable soul be fast locked up from him, as we shall shew, and the immediate acts which are immanent in the soul itself utterly hidden from him; and that, take the soul as it is the immediate subject and root of them, so *intuitive* no devil can discern them, no more than one angel can discern the thoughts of another; yet *arguitive*, and as they do *transire*, and appear, and are put forth in the body and corporal organs, outwardly in actions, or inwardly in the images of the fancy or the passions, and so, *quasi in alios*, and mediately, they may be very far discerned and looked into by angels. Which yet will nothing at all prejudice that prerogative which is given to God, when he is said alone to know and search the heart, but give its full allowance; nor that privilege which is given to the soul itself to enjoy, namely, that 'none should know the things of a man, but the spirit that is in man,' 1 Cor. ii. 11; as we shall have occasion to shew in the Appendix to this discourse.

Besides, therefore, these advantages and ways of knowledge, somewhat common to us men, each of other, they have a further and more near way of knowing the acts of the reasonable powers, the understanding and will, than we men can have; even as they have also a way of communicating their thoughts to us in a more intimate, close, secret manner, yet still such as falls short of an intuitive knowledge of them. They can go into a room further than we; and into a room which is next the privy chamber, which yet remains fast locked up unto them. As their power in all other things reacheth a degree higher than ours, so in this also. To open this a little:—

Those reasonable powers and faculties in us, the understanding and the will, the immediate immanent acts of which are thus in themselves fast locked up, being yet in this life drenched in the body and bodily organs, upon which their working doth depend: as, the understanding is joined to the fancy, which makes *parhelii*, and resemblances, and shadows of those thoughts the mind secretly conceives and forms, so as scarce any thoughts do stir but the fancy imitates them, and acts them as far as it is able; and the will also is conjoined with the affections, which are drenched and shew themselves in bodily organs and spirits, so as not any motion of the will puts itself forth, but more or less some affections of the body do stir with it; and therefore affections are as well defined by their motion in the body as by their seat in the will itself. As when anger is defined, *ira est ebullitio sanguinis circa cor*, a boiling of blood about the heart; and affections are but the flowings and reflowings of spirits to and from the heart.

Now both these, both phantasms and passions, all divines do grant that the devils may know, and that to know them they have a nearer access to us than men can have each to other; yea, and that they may discern them *intuitive*, as we do things which are present before us: how else should they work upon fancy? And otherwise, there were no diabolical dreams; nor angelical neither, caused by good angels. But we find that a good angel dictated to Joseph a great article of faith—Christ's divinity and nativity.

It was done in a dream, and therefore to his fancy. So they inspired the Sibyls, and dictated prophecies, as was said. And so the evil angels prompted Saul's fancy. And this they do, not by creating new species and images, but *evocando*, calling forth the images there already. For the images of things in the fancy being corporal species, they can no more beget a new corporal image than they can make a body anew. And therefore, all the power of the angels cannot cause a blind man to dream of colours.

And therefore, their way in communicating their suggestions to us herein must be by discerning the species, to wit, of all words heard or read that lie in the fancy already; and so by ordering and composing them, even as a compositor in printing doth his letters that lie confused before him, into words and sentences, to represent to the reader's eye what he would have read by him: so he to the understanding, which doth naturally print off and take the impression off from the fancy of whatever is in it as fast as he doth set them. And by the like reason, that he can call these phantasms forth, and so view the species and images laid up there already, to set them thus as he pleaseth; by the same reason it must be supposed that he is as able to discern any of them in the fancy at any time, then when reason itself calls upon any of them, and maketh use of them, as it doth whenever it sets itself to think or muse. And these and all other operations of the sensitive powers they may view and see as truly, for aught I know, and as intuitively even, as we see colours and species of things in the eye of a man. So as these evil angels may, when God permits, get into the head, and see all the images and species in the fancy, and those that are in direct conjunction with the understanding, which it is then thinking and musing of; even as a man doth what images are in the apple of the eye of another man; and so by discerning those phantasms, which the understanding actually then vieweth and maketh use of, he may then judge what the mind is musing of. And again—

2. As we discern men's passions when they dye and affect the outward parts, as if shame dyes the face red, or fear paints it white; so may the angels more secretly discern the motion of them within us, which is the cause of this alteration without. They can go further than we men can; they can see the inward commotion of the spirits in our inward parts, even in their channels and springs, as in that bodily heart we carry within us, and in the veins and arteries, and so know what affections are stirring. And this is evident by this, in that they are able to work upon the passions also. Now, their power of working upon these affections ariseth from their knowing them, and skill to move and stir those spirits and humours electively, wherein these passions are seated. And herein their power of discerning us exceeds that in us men in discerning other men, as that of communicating their minds to us also doth. For as they can communicate secretly by fancy itself, we but by outward words and signs to the outward senses of others, so they can discern more secretly what is in the fancy, and not only what appears in the outward parts, which is yet but a room further that they get into, which we men cannot come to. So in like manner their power over our passions doth exceed also. They can see into the passions and discern the least rising of the tide, the least turn of the stream of affections in our veins, and in the corporal heart. Satan can discern those lesser aguish fits of passion that accompany any act of the will which men discern not. As also, they can stir those passions by working upon the humours and spirits they float in, which men cannot come to do. But of this great and necessary query, as also how by means of this he communicates all his temptations to us, more largely in an Appendix to be annexed to this treatise.

CHAPTER IX.

How able Satan is to work upon that third principle, the passions and corrupt affections, and bring home his false conclusions with terrors.

THUS we have seen how able Satan is to work upon those two forementioned principles, of carnal reason, and abuse it with false *majors*; and also upon conscience, in laying our sins to our charge, with misrepresentations of our estates. It remains now only, that we shew how he can stir and work upon the *passions and corrupt affections* in us, and make use of them; and so set on all those false conclusions—that we are hypocrites—thence deduced, with hideous and horrid rears and terrors.

1. And in respect to these terrors, as he is called a serpent, as was said, for sleights, and cunning reasonings, and wiles; so likewise a lion, of all beasts the strongest, Isa. xxxviii. 13.* A roaring lion, of all the terriblest, and most terrible in his roaring; whose roaring is therefore often in Scripture put to express the working of dreadfulnes and horror: 'The lion roars, who will not tremble?' Amos iii. 8. And, as some have observed, and the Psalmist seems to intimate it, Ps. civ. 21, by his roaring he strikes such horror and amazement into all other beasts, as they stand still as exanimated, and so he seizeth and preys upon them as he pleaseth. And in this respect also of his working on the passions is it that those darts beforementioned are principally called fiery; namely, for that dolour, and anguish, and inflammation, and combustion they cause through the distempering the affections. Those fears which our own hearts engendered within us were but as smoke; these darts of his put a fire into them, and do cause them to flame and blaze. The allusion is to the poisoned darts which the Scythians of old, and other nations now, use in war, dipped in the blood and gall of asps and vipers; the venomous heat of which, like a fire in their flesh, killed the wounded by them, with torments the likest hell of any other. Which Job also alludes to, chap. vi. 4, 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me: the poison,' or, as others read it, the heat and fervour; we may use both, and read, 'the hot poison thereof drinks up my spirit,' even as fire preying upon moisture. And what were those arrows he speaks of there but terrors? So it follows, 'the terrors of God,' &c. In the same phrase of which that Corinthian is said to have been in danger to have been drunk up—*καταποθῆ*—as the word signifies, with over-much sorrow, when Satan had to do with him, 2 Cor. ii. 7; and the same word is again used of the devil, 1 Pet. v. 8, 'seeking whom to drink up.' So that as Satan inflames other members, and the inordinate lusts in them, with a superadded natural vehemency and violence; as the tongue, which, though of itself full of poison, is said to be 'set on fire from hell,' James iii. 16, that is, from Satan, (who is called hell, as in that speech, 'the gates of hell;') as the good angels, the noblest creatures, are

* It seems clearly to be not Satan, but God himself, that is so designated in this passage.—ED.

called heavens, Heb. vii. 26,) he inflaming men's tongues with an overplus of venom and malice, to wound men's names with; even as on the contrary the Holy Ghost did set on fire the apostles' tongues with zeal. As, I say, he doth thus inflame other members, so in like manner he can and doth put fire into those darts he wounds the conscience with; and thereby augments our fears and griefs, and causeth such disquietments and pangs, as that hell-fire, as it were, begins to flame in a man's conscience. As Christ is that 'brazen serpent,' so Satan is that 'fiery serpent' that can sting us by the guilt of sin.

And here I must bring in the like caution as I used in the former chapter; namely, that he works not these terrors by immediate impressions upon the conscience, which in that respect is subject to God's stroke alone, as to his knowledge alone. Which, as I intimated, I take to be that other principal part of the drift of those words, Heb. iv. 11, 12, 'The word of God is quick and powerful,' &c. For there he sets forth Christ to us, as was shewed, as a judge completely enabled for vengeance against us, not only in respect of an omniscieny to find us out in all our shiftings, but also, because a judge would not be much feared if he had only skill and knowledge, though never so much, to search and find out the guile and guilt of malefactors, if he were not armed with power to avenge and torture them; therefore withal, the Apostle's scope is to strike terror into their hearts in respect of that vengeance he can execute. And therefore his aim is to exhort them not to dally with God, or with his word; in which he had sworn, of those that believed not, 'they should not enter into his rest,' in the former verse. So as the purport of the words must necessarily also be supposed to be to shew the dreadful power of God, and of his word, in avenging itself upon the contemners of him and it, and not merely to describe his conscience, and knowing of the heart, but as joined also with power to pierce as deep in wounding of the soul as in knowing of it. Yea, and that so large an illustration of his knowledge is brought in but as a clearer demonstration of his power to punish, who can dive so deep into our hearts. As from whence we might argue and fear the stroke of that sword in his hand whose eyes are so piercing. And accordingly to set forth the dreadfulness of this his power, all those his expressions there used do as fully tend, as to set forth the other; and he likewise useth such a comparison as, both in the nature of the things and according to the more usual phrase of Scripture, doth more properly and abundantly intimate this slaying and wounding of men's souls that should be disobedient, by this his sword, than that other of searching the soul and spirit. As—

(1.) This word, says he, is quick and lively; so called not in respect of duration only, as abiding ever, but in respect to working and execution. Things that are exceeding operative, though inanimate, we call quick; so quicksilver, which runs through a man's bowels like hail-shot: and so oppositely, drugs and drinks that have lost their virtue, and are ineffectual, we call dead. And in respect to this energy and power to work upon men's hearts, is that in John vi. 63 to be understood. 'The words I speak,' says Christ, 'are spirit and life:' that is, are full of an operative principle. For an active working principle we use to call the spirit, as the spirit of wine, &c. In that therefore he says the word is quick, he notes out that that word is inspired with a principle, most quick, spiritual, and active, and fit to work as occasion is; that is, even with the Holy Spirit, who is as the internal form of it. And therefore—

(2.) Having thus intimated this internal form of working, he adds *ἐνεργής*,

powerful and mighty in operation, as noting out that power which flows from thence—that ability to produce strange effects upon the soul. These expressions carry report of more than of a skill and dexterity to search and know the heart only. And then—

(3.) He further instanceth in such operations of it, as the effects of that power, which are most dreadful, as the comparisons he useth do import: ‘more piercing than any two-edged sword.’ Now, as elsewhere the word is compared to an armoury of all sorts of weapons, and engines for war and vengeance,—‘The weapons of our warfare are mighty,’ &c., 2 Cor. x. 4,—in like manner here he more particularly resembles it to a sword, the most usual and most terrible of all the instruments of death which were then in use; the brandishing of which strikes paleness and horror into a man ere the stroke comes at him; which is usually put in Scripture to express vengeance, and more especially in the prophecy of Ezekiel. And also Ps. vii. 13, ‘If he turn not, God hath whet his sword, and prepared his instruments of death;’ that is, to inflict torments, and eternal torments also, as Deut. xxxii. 42. And indeed, whatsoever doth torment, or cause dolour and anguish, is in Scripture called a sword; and the ‘piercing with a sword’ is used to express the most exquisite dolours: as Luke ii. 35, ‘Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy soul also;’ speaking to the blessed mother of Christ, and of that her anguish and grief, wherewith she should be cut even to the heart, when she should behold her Son upon the cross. Of whose dolours upon the cross likewise, the same expression is used, Ps. xxii. 20, when he prays, ‘Deliver my soul from the sword.’ And in this respect the word in Christ’s hand is still, when he is spoken of as a judge, compared to a sword, Ps. xlv. 3; Rev. xix. 15; Isa. xlix. 2, and so here.

And we may further observe, how, thus to strike the more terror into their hearts in respect of the wounds and torments it inflicts, he goes further on to exaggerate the dread thereof. He says not only that it is as sharp, but more sharp, not than a sword of one edge, but than a two-edged sword; not than some, but than any two-edged sword. And further, to shew that he speaks it in relation unto wounding, and anguish, and torment it causeth in the soul, he mentioneth the division of such parts as are not only most hid and inward, in relation to discovery,—for such the marrow is, being covered with the bones, and the ligaments covered with flesh,—but which are also of most exquisite sense, and the wounding of which causeth the greatest dolour. He saith, it pierceth to the dividing the marrow, and therefore cuts through the bones; for so it must needs be supposed to do, when it is said to reach unto the marrow. Now the ‘breaking of the bones’ is still put to express those exquisite and unsupportable terrors and dolours of conscience, and woundings of the spirit, which a man cannot bear or sustain; for when the bones are broken, a man cannot stand nor support himself. And the like is also the cutting of the ligaments, the nerves, sinews, and arteries,* those *ἀρτηραι* that knit the joints, which are the organs of sense and motion. Again, he says, it divideth not only the soul,—that is, the sensual part, the passions of the mind, as wounding them,—but *τε καὶ πνεύματος*, that is, the spirit also, which is with an emphasis expressed; and his meaning is not so much that it divideth the soul from the spirit, as some have understood it, but the soul and spirit also. It is a two-edged sword, and can at one blow strike through both; this ‘axe strikes at the root,’ at the spirit, which, when ‘wounded, who can bear?’ says Solomon. And then he concludes, ver. 13, that, as

* It can scarcely be necessary to point out, that the author’s deficiency of anatomical knowledge in no way vitiates his argument.—ED.

'before him all things are naked;' so also *παραχρησμένα*, that is, they lie with their throats cut, if he but strike them dead and speechless at his feet, as Theodoret expounds that word, which is translated 'opened.' Now thus far—that is, to this spirit in man—no created sword can reach; they turn edge at it: but even this the word reacheth, and that alone. So as the summary drift of all herein is the same which Christ expressed elsewhere in other words, to exhort them to fear that God, whose sword and powerful word is able thus alone to wound; and 'not to fear those who can only' wound and 'kill the body,' and but reach to the sensual soul that is drenched in it, but cannot wound or kill the spirit, which God alone can do, and no mere creature whatsoever. And therefore, in all our thoughts and fears of Satan's power of knowing our sins, or troubling or disquieting our spirits, as also throughout this discourse, we are to set such bounds as that this incommunicable royalty of God, and of his word, may be reserved untrentrenched upon; namely, that he alone knows, and can immediately wound the spirit and conscience. Both which at once this place held out unto us, which made me the largelier to insist upon the opening of it.

2. But yet although Satan cannot immediately wound the conscience, and make impressions of God's wrath upon it; for as no creature can shed abroad God's love, and cause the creature to taste the sweetness of it, so nor the bitterness of his wrath, but God is his own reporter of both; yet—

(1.) When the Holy Ghost hath lashed and whipped the conscience, and made it tender once and fetched off the skin, Satan then may fret it more and more, and be still rubbing upon the sore, by his horrid suggestions and false fears cast in. And—

(2.) He can, by renewing the experimental remembrance of those lashes which the soul hath had from the Spirit, amaze the soul with fears of an infinitely sorer vengeance yet to come; and flash representations of hell-fire in their consciences, from those real glimpses they have already felt, in such a manner as to wilder the soul into vast and unthought-of horrors. And then—

(3.) He can bring home all the threatenings that are thundered forth in the word against hypocrites and men unregenerate, and discharge them all with much violence and noise upon a poor doubting soul. He can and doth present and shew his prisoners those terrible chains, and racks, and other 'instruments of death,' as the Psalmist calls them, Ps. vii. 13, which God hath prepared against sinners, and hath stored up in that great armoury of his word, which he 'hath in a readiness to revenge all disobedience,' 2 Cor. x. 6. With the rattling of which chains, &c., Satan can make a noise in the conscience of a poor sinner, to affright him. Which he is the more enabled to do, out of experience of such terrors in himself; 'being bound up in chains everlasting, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day,' Jude 6. And as a son of consolation and child of light is enabled 'to comfort others the more, by the comfort wherewith he hath been comforted of God;' so this prince of darkness is the more powerful to terrify weak consciences that are ensnared with the cords of their own sins, by reason of the terrors which he hath received from the Lord. And therefore in Scripture, as a power in sin is attributed to him, so the 'power of death,' as Heb. ii. 14; where by death is meant not so much that bodily as that eternal death, to which, as the proper punishment of sin, the guilt of it doth bind us over. Which power of his is not that of the judge in sentencing to death, or casting men to hell, which is a special flower of Christ's crown; who, Rev. i. 18, 'hath the keys of hell and death' at his girdle; and of God's, who is there—

fore only to be feared, because 'he only can cast body and soul into hell.' Nor is it as if he were the main tormentor and executioner of men's souls, after that great day, seeing that they are to be tormented by that fire which in common 'was prepared for the devils' themselves. And who is it that doth torment them? It is therefore principally meant, [1.] of that power and advantage he obtained over sinners when he had seduced them; so as to come boldly as a pleader against them, enabled with authority to urge God's righteous law and word, and to call upon, and to provoke his justice to condemn poor sinners, and adjudge them unto death: until Christ, that righteous advocate, despoiled him of those his pleas and power, by that satisfaction of his, which before the law had put into his hands; and so he 'destroyed him that had the power of death,' enervating all his pleas and terrors. And, [2.] the meaning is, that as he hath this power in God's court over the sentence of death upon poor sinners, so also in our consciences, to urge the law upon us, and to plead all that the law says against them that are under the law, and to put us into the fears of that death threatened therein; and to increase in us the fears of that death, by presenting to us the terrors of the law, unto which, in respect of natural conscience, men of themselves are subject all their life long. And unto this latter power hath that 'power of death' there especial reference; for those words, 'and deliver them who through fear of death were subject to bondage all their life long,' follow in the next verse, ver. 15. And because the children of God, whilst in this life, as they 'know but in part,' so they love but in part, and so far as love remains imperfect, so far 'fear, which hath torment,' keeps possession; for it is 'perfect love only that casts out all fear,' 1 John iv. 18: hence therefore, so far as slavish fear remains, so far they may be subject to be terrified by him that hath power of death; and that over all those that are in any degree subject to the fear of it whilst in this life. And—

(4.) He can immediately, by his own power, stir the passions of fear and grief, &c., excite them beyond nature, as the winds can raise the billows in the sea, and make the floods to make a noise; so can he a tumult in the affections, and put all the soul into a hurry and violent perturbation. He is the prince of the airy part of the little world in man, as well as of that elementary region in the great world; and so can raise unnatural storms and vapours that shall darken reason, and cause such thunders and lightnings as shall hurl all into a black confusion, such as if hell and the soul would presently come together. And though it is true that he cannot turn the stream and current of our affections back,—God only can turn this Jordan back,—yet he can drive them faster, and cause them to swell above their natural channels; that as a man possessed hath the strength of ten men in him, (as that man, Luke viii. 29,) so shall the affections have that are blown up by him, as we may see in David. What a strong mind do we find in him, so needlessly to number the people, 2 Sam. xxiv., against all reason as well as religion, and the persuasion, yea, opposition, not of Joab only, but others also of his counsellors, 'the captains of the host!' A man would wonder that a man so holy and wise should be so transported to do an act so foolish, as himself saw afterwards: 'I have done very foolishly,' says he, ver. 10; yea, and so grossly sinful, as that it was abominable in the eyes of Joab, 1 Chron. xxi. 6, one that seemeth by his other carriages to have had but nature in him. But the devil was in it; so ver. 1, 'Satan provoked David to number the people,' by raising up such an affection and inclination in him.

The like appears in the affection of love; which how strongly hath Satan drawn forth in some, even to madness, towards such as before, and also after

his fascination was overpast, they have loathed and hated above all others, is evident in stories by many instances. And as he can raise up other passions in us, so also fears and terrors, jealousies and distrusts ; to 'fear where no fear is.' And thus he handled Saul, when God left him to him : 'An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him,' or, as most read it, and our margin varies it, 'terrified him,' 1 Sam. xvi. 15. And in the raising up of these affections of fear, and the like, he works more than simply morally,—that is, than by bare propounding such objects as shall move them, which men can only do,—but, further also, physically, by stirring such humours in the body, which such passions do act and stir in. And so those humours in the body, which shall put a man into a timorous and trembling disposition, he can electively work upon as he pleaseth.

And then also, he can disturb the phantasms in the head, the organs of the understanding ; as in him, Luke viii. 35, who, through Satan's working, is intimated not to have been 'in his right mind.' And when he hath thus distempered and disordered all in a man, and put a man to such dispositions, to fears, &c., then he comes with his suggestions, and speaks nothing but of wrath and terrors, and of the threatenings, and of the heinousness of a man's sins, the fearfulness of God's wrath, unto that conscience that is troubled. And then look, as when a man's choler is up, every small thing provokes him ; so now, when fear and melancholy are excited, every suggestion, every surmise doth strike the soul through and through with horrid fears and jealousies. And thus, though not immediately, yet through the means of these mists and vapours, and fogs raised, which environ and darken this sun, he works upon the conscience ; and therefore we see, by experience, that he prevails most in this sort of temptations with melancholy tempers, whom, dwelling in dark shops, he much deceives with false colours and glosses. And when once affections are up and do cloud the mind, then multitudes of troublesome thoughts arise, and every suggestion suitable to that passion takes and prevails with a man's spirit ; as appears by that speech of Christ, Luke xxiv. 38, 'Why are ye troubled,' or afraid, 'and why do thoughts arise in your hearts ?' Passions, like to heavy weights hung upon a clock, do not only make the wheels, the thoughts, move faster, but also pervert them and wrest them the wrong way ; so as to a heart thus distempered all things come to be presented amiss, even as to a bloodshot eye all things seem red. In a word, as he deludes his enthusiasts by setting on and backing their false opinions and illusions with joys and ravishments of spirits, which differ as much from the joys of the Holy Ghost, which are unspeakable and glorious, as heaven from earth ; so he can and doth back his false reasonings and accusations to holy men about their estates with abundance of terror and disturbance, which also differs as much from the impressions of God's wrath made immediately by the Spirit upon the conscience, as those joys are found to do.

CHAPTER X.

The conclusion of this discourse about Satan.—Seven advantages, in common, Satan hath over us in all those forementioned dealings.

AND for a general conclusion to this, and all the rest of this discourse about Satan's working on us, I will but only mention some of those great and many advantages he hath in all these his false reasonings and accusations over us, for to set them on, and to fasten his slanders and false conclusions thence deduced, and to persuade the mind of them. Which I therefore bring in here, as being common to all those particulars which have been related.

1. It is no small advantage that he can familiarly and frequently suggest them again and again unto us. The frequency of any thought that comes in again and again, that lies by us and haunts us, hath secretly the force of an argument to persuade us to think it is so. We use to say, I have thought so again and again. A cunning flatterer, that is continually suggesting, and taking all hints and occasions so to do, may at last put hard to work out a near and a dear friend, and to make one jealous of him. As the judge yielded to her importunity, Luke xviii. 5, so is the mind apt to yield to a suggestion that haunts it, and importunately presents itself, yea, though it be to pass a false sentence against a man's self. And—

2. He can also, and doth, represent a multitude of reasonings and considerations together at once, all tending to confirm the same persuasion. He will sometimes bring in a cloud of witnesses and instances to prove us hypocrites, and environ the mind round about with them, that, look which way it will, it sees nothing else. As he represented to Christ 'all the glory of the world in the twinkling of an eye,' so he can do a man's sins, &c. ; that a man shall have a general prospect of them, and see nothing else, look which way he will. And what force this must needs have to prevail with the mind and judgment to assent, experience shews. As when a man doubting of a truth in a thing controverted, reads an opposite party, presenting all that can be said for the other side alone, it often staggers him, and for the present wins and gains his opinion to that side, till he reads and considers what is said to the contrary ; yea, though a man is confirmed and settled in the truth, yet sometimes a man shall have an army of arguments on the other side come in upon him, so ranked and ordered as for the present shall shake and stagger him. And so it must needs be in the agitation of this great controversy about a man's estate, when Satan shall muster and marshal up an army of objections at once together, and not scatteredly ; as he is able to do.

3. He is able to hold the intention of the mind so to them, as to keep off all that which should any way comfort : he can turn down that column in the leaves of our heart wherein grace or anything that may comfort is written, and turn over only, and hold our eyes fixed to read nothing but that other wherein our errata and sins are written ; so as to cause a man's soul to 'forget all good,'—as, Lam. iii. 17, the church in desertion is said to do,

—and to ‘forget his own mercies,’ as Jonah speaks. He can multiply suggestions so fast, and come in with such a tempest, that as Job complains, chap. ix. 18, he will not ‘suffer them to take breath.’ And therefore the Apostle calls them the ‘buffeting of Satan,’ 2 Cor. xii. 7; because, like unto buffetings, they come in thick and threefold upon a man’s spirit, so as a man’s spirit cannot take breath. He rains down temptations sometimes, not by drops, as in ordinary rains, but by spouts, as mariners call them, when a cloud melts, as in hot countries, suddenly, and falls by wholesale, and often sinks a ship. ‘He breaks me with a tempest,’ says Job, in the place forementioned. He speaks it of God, but such like tempests Satan also raiseth.

4. He adds weight to his lying accusations and false reasonings by an imperious and obstreperous affirmation that so it is; he suggests not reasons only that are fitted to persuade, but sets them on with words of affirmation therewithal suggested. And so, like as in reasoning a weak spirit is oftentimes borne down by a stronger, not by force of argument so much as by strength and violence of spirit; for many, when the ‘iron is blunt,’ and their arguments ‘want edge, put to the more strength,’ (as Solomon speaks, Eccles. x. 10,) and so prevail; and so doth Satan, he being a spirit of greater strength than ours by creation, and guilt also further weakening us in arguing with him. Cunning pleaders may so argue the case, with such violence and confidence, that as Soerates said when his accusers had done, that if he had not been very innocent he should have suspected himself guilty; how much more, when the accusation shall fall upon persons that are so guilty, as we all are, and the thing also impleaded be that which we are already suspicious of? What a man already fears he easily believes, as what a man hopes, *quod metuunt, facile credunt*. We see that there falls out often in opinions a preconceit which exceedingly sways the mind, a giving of mind that such a thing is so or so; and in such a case Satan can strike in exceedingly to strengthen such a conceit. This I take to be implied in that phrase, 2 Thess. ii. 2, where the Apostle gives warning they should not be troubled ‘neither *by spirit* nor by word, to think the day of judgment was at hand.’ By *spirit* he means a pretence and opinion of some revelation, concerning something which a man’s own private conceit and imagination inclined him so to think; thus, 1 John iv. 1, spirit is also taken. And thus oftentimes when Satan perceives the mind inclined to think so or so, he adds weight unto the balance; and so a man is given up to the efficacy of delusion. As we see in those false prophets which the Apostle there speaks of, when he says, ‘Believe not every spirit, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.’ Thus likewise those false prophets in Micah became confident of the truth of their prophecies, ‘that walk in the spirit and in falsehood,’ says the prophet, chap. ii. 11. They took up such conceits, and the devil he joined therewith and confirmed them in them. Now, as Satan by false revelations confirms enthusiasts in their opinions and conceits, so he joins with the jealousies of believers and puts weight into the balance, strongly swaying them to judge amiss of their estates.

5. In that he, as was said, backeth his false conclusions thence deduced with terrors, &c., this becomes an argument to sense; and such arguments do exceedingly carry on the judgment in our opinion of things. A conceit that comes in with joy, we are apt to conclude is true; and so in like manner what comes in with terror. Such impressions are as it were a seal to what is suggested to confirm it. And as the Holy Ghost ‘sealeth his instructions,’ Job xxxiii. 16, with impressions of joy, &c., so doth Satan his temptations with impressions of fear and disquietment. If a man hath a dream with any

strong impression, a man is apt to give heed to it, to think there is something in it : that which made Nebuchadnezzar think there must needs be something in that of his, Dan. ii., iv., when yet he had forgot what it was, was that it made 'him afraid, and his thoughts troubled him,' ver. 5.

6. A sixth advantage is, that he suggests and works all these impressions undiscerned at all by us to be from him, so as we know not but that they are our own thoughts, yea, sometimes think that they be from the Holy Ghost, working as the spirit of bondage in us. This is also an exceeding great advantage ; as it would be to an enemy to have gotten the opposites' own watchword, their own colours. This causeth us readily to yield and open the gates to him. And though when the temptation is over we perceive his delusion in it, yet still, because we cannot discern his suggestions from our own thoughts when upon us, when we are in the mist and eclipse, therefore he can come again and again with the same temptation, to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day, and we perceive it not : which if we did, we should not listen to it, no more than we would to one who had formerly deceived us. Thus Ahab's prophets knew not that Satan was a lying spirit in them, for says one of them to Micaiah, 'When went the Spirit of God from me to you?' Those 'strong delusions,' 2 Thess. ii. 11, could not have prevailed upon their minds to have 'believed a lie,' had it been discerned by them that Satan had suggested them. Peter knew not that Satan did by him tempt his Master to spare himself : which yet Christ perceived, and therefore called him Satan.

7. Last of all, a man can no way avoid his suggestions, nor subduce himself from them ; neither can any take Satan off from a man but God. He must rebuke him, none else can. A poor soul fights with Satan in this darkness like unto a man that is assaulted by one that carries a dark lantern, who can see the assaulted, and how to buffet him, and follows him wherever he goes ; whereas the poor man cannot see him, nor who it is that strikes him, nor be aware how to ward the blow. Therefore the Apostle, when buffeted by Satan, 1 Cor. xii., knew not what to do, but only to have recourse to God by prayer : for he could no more avoid or run away from those suggestions than from himself. Nor could all the saints on earth any other way have freed him : none, till God should cause him to depart.

CHAPTER XI.

The second general head : The cases wherein God leaves his unto this darkness.—First, three cases extraordinary.

II. HAVING despatched the efficient causes of this darkness,—the causes physical,—I now proceed to the *cases* wherein, and *ends* for which, God leaves his children to such a condition: the causes moral. The cases, they were the second general head I propounded to be handled; and they are either *extraordinary* or *ordinary*.

1. Extraordinary; as—

(1.) Out of his prerogative.

(2.) In case he means to make a man eminently wise, and able to comfort others.

(3.) In case of extraordinary comforts and revelations.

(1.) What if God will use his absoluteness and prerogative in this his dealing with his children, and proceed therein according to no ruled case or precedent? This he may do, and, as it is thought, in Job's case he did; who is thought by some to be set up as a type, among the Gentiles, of Christ at his crucifying, who was to be left by his apostles, forsaken of God, &c. And though Job's desertion began but with his estate, children, and body, yet it pierced further in the end, and seized upon his spirit; this we read nowhere of him, yet it was seen in God's withdrawing himself in the comfort of his presence, and in Satan's making him a butt to spend his arrows on. And yet, although the Lord had cause enough against him, yet no cause, as I remember, is pleaded. But it is resolved into an extraordinary dealing, wherein God took a liberty to glorify himself, by singling out one of his stoutest, valiantest champions, and setting him hand to hand to wrestle with the powers of darkness. And because Satan was, as it were, not hard enough for him, he turned enemy himself, Job xiii. 24. None more just than he before; the Lord, you know, glories in him: none ever led a stricter life, read chap. xxxi.: no man kept more in awe, and that by fearing such a desertion aforehand; which was the only way to prevent it, for what a man fears he prays much against; which he expresses when, complaining, he says, chap. iii. 25, that 'though he feared it, yet it came,' implying that it was not ordinary; nor indeed is it so. And although Job justifies himself too far, yet this was it which made him so stoutly to plead his own cause, that he could find no precedent, no ruled case of the like proceeding. And therefore Elihu, who took both God's part and Job's, and stepped up as a moderator, and as one 'in God's stead' to decide the matter, resolves it most of all into God's prerogative, though not without Job's desert; yet not such as according to which God ordinarily proceedeth, not so severely with others, as appears by the 34th chapter. And to that end he set forth God's greatness in the 36th and 37th chapters. And thus also God himself, when he

came to plead with Job about it, and to shew him a reason of it, he only tells him how great a God he was, and therefore might do as he pleased; and useth no other arguments in the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st chapters.

God indeed never wants a cause, nor doth deal thus where sin is not; yet, as is said of the young man, that he was blind, 'not for his sin, nor his parents,' yet not without it, 'but for the glory of God,' it was an act of God's prerogative: so here. God hath higher ends of glorifying himself in the patience, the victory, and the conquest of such a champion as Job was; and of confuting the devil, who accused him of not 'serving God for nought,' the falseness of which to demonstrate, God tries conclusions with him: as also to confute the opinions which in those days were generally received, as may seem by his friends' arguings, and also by the 73d Psalm, that godly men did prosper and flourish outwardly, according to their godliness. For these and the like reasons God did it. However, Elihu gives Job this good and seasonable counsel, to make this use of it, to 'search into his sins,' chap. xxxiv. 31, 32. And God might well take liberty to deal thus with Job, because he could make him amends, as afterward he did, in restoring double to him; and indeed it was but the concealing a while of his love, as many parents love to do by their children, and yet to shew it the more in real effects, as God even then did, in making him more than a conqueror.

(2.) A second case extraordinary is, when he intends to make a man a wise, able, skilful, and a strong Christian; wise, namely, in this, which is the greatest learning and wisdom in the world, experimentally to comfort others.

This may seem to be the reason of this his dealing with Heman. Heman was brought up in this school of temptation, and kept in this form from a youth, Ps. lxxxviii. 15. He was put soon to it; and so deep lessons had he set him, as he had like to have lost his wits, as he says there. Yet in the end, when God raised him up again, this Heman, who lived about David and Solomon's time, is reckoned among the wisest of his time, and one of the four that were next to Solomon for wisdom, 1 Kings iv. 31. So that great Apostle was a man exposed to the same combats that others were; he was buffeted by Satan, 2 Cor. xii., filled with inward terrors, as well as those without. What was this for? Not so much for any personal cause of his own, as to make him able to comfort others, 2 Cor. i. 4, 5. For that comfort which answereth a temptation in one man's heart will answer the same in another's: when temptations have the same wards, that key which unlocked one man's bolts will serve and answer to another's.

It is not every word that will comfort a weary soul, but only 'a word in season,' ver. 4 of this 50th of Isaiah; that is, which is fitted to the party's case. Now, who are they who are furnished with such apt, and fit, and seasonable considerations to comfort such, but those who have had the same temptations, and have been in the like distresses? This art of speaking peace and words of comfort in season is the greatest wisdom in the world, and is not learned but in Heman's school. Temptation was one of Luther's masters. And therefore of all abilities of the ministry, Christ in this chapter instanceth in this, ver. 4, and calleth the tongue of him that is able to speak seasonably to weary souls, 'the tongue of the learned;' and therefore, Job xxxiii. 23, to raise up one 'whose soul draws nigh to the grave,' is said to be the work of 'one of a thousand.' Which is easily granted, if you consider the danger of such a distress. - In Scripture it is called the 'breaking the bones,' Ps. li., because the strength of a man's spirit that should uphold it, as the bones the body, sinks within him. Now, to be a bone-setter is not every

man's skill; he must have special art and cunning, and withal a lady's hand, as we use to say, that is, meekness and pity; which also are never kindly but when we have tasted the like, or may fear the like. The Apostle commands them to set such a one in joint again, Gal. vi. 1, *καταρτίζετε*, as the word signifies, 'lest thou also be tempted;' and it is the work of one that is spiritual, 'You that are spiritual restore such a one.' It requires skill to get out every shiver, to meet with every scruple, and set all straight again. It is also called the wounding of the spirit; so Solomon, 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14. As the power of sin wounds, so the guilt also; and the one as incurably as the other: and it being the spirit of a man which is wounded, that which must heal it must be something dropped into the heart, that may come at the spirit. And there are to be peculiar elective plasters to heal these wounds, because these wounds are often differing. Some objections there are that often the learnedest men never met with in books; and Satan hath 'devised methods,' Eph. vi., of tempting souls deserted, which he useth again and again: and a man shall not know those depths, and fathom them, unless he hath been 'in the depths' himself, as Hieman speaks; and then he shall see such wonders of God in those deeps which none else ever saw, and thereby gain such wisdom as to be able to encourage others, by his example, to trust in God and call on him; so David, Ps. xxxii. 5, 6.

(3.) The third case extraordinary; God doth desert, in case a man hath had, or is to have, from God an abundance of revelations and comforts.

[1.] First, in case he hath already had abundant revelations from God. As after that glorious testimony given to Christ at his baptism, 'This is my beloved Son,' &c., Matt. iii. 17; 'then was Jesus led aside to be tempted,' Matt. iv. 1. He points out the time to this very purpose. In like manner doth God often deal with the members of Christ for the season and time of their desertions and temptations. This was also that great Apostle's case, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 'Lest I should be exalted above measure, through abundance of revelations, a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me.' That which he calls there 'the thorn in the flesh,' that pricked him, is meant rather I think of a desertion, and leaving him to distress of spirit, than of a lust. For his scope is, 'to glory in his afflictions,' ver. 9, 10. Now if it had been a lust, it had not been a thing to have been gloried in. Again, it was a 'messenger of Satan,' which imports something external; and it buffeted him, he was as a mere patient in it, as a man buffeted is. In the exercise of lusts our spirits are active. And besides, he prayed it might depart; which phrase would seem to note out something external. God had took him aside into heaven, and spoke wonderful things to him, and when he comes down again, Satan must take him to task and batter him; the flesh would have grown proud if it had not been thus beaten black and blue. He had been in heaven, and heard the language of angels and saints, 'things not to be uttered;' and now he must hear by devils the language of hell. This buffeting, I take it, was by Satanical injections.

[2.] Secondly, before God doth dispense great revelations and comforts, he doth sometimes desert. And as before great distresses, which he means to lead his children into, he fills their hearts with joy unspeakable and glorious, to strengthen them against the approaching conflict, (thus God, to hearten his Son against that great agony in the garden and combat on the cross, transfigureth him on the mount first;) so, on the contrary, sometimes before great revelations and comforts, to make them sweet and the more welcome,

God useth to withdraw himself then most; thereby preparing the heart for them, as physicians do the body for cordials. The greatest spring-tide of comfort comes in upon the lowest ebb of distress. Distress enlargeth the heart, and makes it thirst after comfort the more, whereby it is made more capable of consolation; for that rule holds usually true, 2 Cor. i. 5, that 'as sufferings abound, so comforts shall abound also.'

CHAPTER XII.

The cases ordinary wherein God doth leave his in darkness.

2. Now, secondly, we come to the more ordinary cases wherein God dispenseth this darkness. Ere I name particulars, I will premise concerning them this general rule : We shall find that God goes not constantly by the same rule in the dispensation of them,—so as no man can say that in such and such cases God will and doth desert men, or that he always doth so,—but is various in his dealings herein. For some men he leaves for a while in darkness, in and upon and immediately after their conversion ; their sun riseth in an eclipse, and continueth so till noon, yea, till their night. On the contrary, towards others sometimes he never shines in more comforts on them than at their first conversion. Again, some he deserts upon a gross sin committed ; to others he never reveals himself more at any time than after a gross sin humbled for and repented of, thereby to shew the freeness of his grace. So likewise, some that have less grace and have lived more loosely, he fills their sails at death, and they have ‘abundant entrance,’ with full sail, into the ‘kingdom of Christ.’ Others that have walked more strictly with God, and whose ends you would expect should be most glorious, he leaves to fears and doubts, and their sun doth set in a cloud.

And the reasons why God is thus various in these his dealings is both because spiritual comforts tend not simply *ad esse*, but *bene esse* ; not to the absolute being of a Christian, but his comfortable well-being : and also because in respect of their dispensation they are to be reckoned in the rank of temporal rewards ; and though light and assurance is not an earthly but a heavenly blessing, yet it is but a temporary blessing. And therefore, as the promises of other temporal good things are not absolute, no more are the promises to give assurance to a believer absolute, as those to give him heaven and salvation are. Therefore likewise, on the contrary, darkness and distress of conscience is but a temporal chastisement, as outward crosses are, differing from them only in the matter of them ; the one being conversant about things of the outward man ; this of the inward, namely, a man’s spiritual estate. Hence, therefore, in the dispensation of both, though God always goes by some rule, as in all other dealings of his, yet so as he varies and deals differently with his children therein ; as he doth in dispensing outward prosperity and adversity, ‘setting the one against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him,’ as Solomon says, Eccles. vii. 14, that is, gives such cross and contrary opposite instances in both kinds, that men might not ‘find him out’ in these ways, or ‘trace’ him, as the phrase is, Rom. xi. 33, not so as to say certainly and infallibly what he means to do in such and such cases. Indeed, in the world to come, he makes even with all the world, how differing soever his dispensations of rewards or punishments have been here ; and what is behindhand to any one, he then pays with respect to what they have received. Thus in matter of spiritual joy and assurance, God may

vouchsafe it to one that hath not feared and obeyed him so much as one that walks in darkness ; but then if any one hath received more earnest-pennies beforehand, and hath not walked answerably, God considers it as an aggravation of his sin, as he did in Solomon, whose sin is aggravated by this, 1 Kings xi. 9, 10, that he sinned against God, who 'had appeared to him twice.' Otherwise, if these comforts make a man, in any proportion to such cost, more fruitful than others are, I see not but that God, who crowns his own graces, will reward them the more ; this being one means sanctified to some to work more grace, as afflictions are to others. Thus it is in like manner in desertings and distress of mind ; they being a temporal punishment, God is as various in them. So as one of more grace, or whom God intends more grace unto, shall be afflicted and forsaken, when one of less shall 'reign as king,' as it is said of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iv. 8, in case of worldly prosperity. So he shall have peace and liberty of mind, triumph over Satan, and hell, and discomfort ; when apostles in comparison—that is, men eminent in grace—are, in respect of spiritual conflicts, made 'spectacles to angels and men.'

This rule premised, the ordinary cases follow :—

(1.) First, in case of carnal confidence. Thus, Ps. xxx., David had been in great distress of mind for a while, as appears by what is said, ver. 3, 5, that 'though heaviness be over-night, yet joy cometh in the morning ;' and in this sunshine David looks about him, and sees never a cloud appear in view that might again eclipse his comfort. Then he grew confident, upon no other ground but present sense, thinking it would always be so with him, and so trusted in that comfort he had at present, as if now he could never have been troubled so again, as in such cases good souls are apt to think : 'Now I shall never be removed,' says David. This was carnal confidence, and God, to confound it, hides himself again, ver. 7.

Now, carnal confidence is either—

[1.] First, when we trust to false signs shuffled in among true ; which is incident even to believers that are in the state of grace, and have good evidences to shew for it ; who yet, together with those sound evidences, do often rake together many other signs that are but probable, yea, and which are deceitful, and but common to hypocrites. This we are apt to do, to take many things as infallible signs which are not. As many are said in Daniel to cleave to the better side by flattery ; so in a man's heart, many false signs will come in, and flatter a man, and give their testimony, and speak the same thing true evidences do. Now God, to discover which are false, and which are not, leaves a man ; and then he will find all his false signs to leave him, as flatterers use to do ; and to be but as broken teeth among those which are sound and whole, to fail and disquiet him ; like reeds that break when any stress is put to them, and so to run into his hand. Or—

[2.] Secondly, when we put too much of our confidence upon signs, though true, and trust too much to comforts and former revelations, and witnesses of God's Spirit, and to our graces, which are all but creatures, acts of God upon us and in us. When, therefore, we let all the weight of our support to hang on these, God in this case often leaves us, 'that no flesh should rejoice in his presence.' Or—

[3.] Thirdly, when we think graces and comforts are so rooted in ourselves, that we neglect God and Christ, for the upholding, increase, and exercise of them ; then God withdraws the light of these, that we may have recourse to the spring and well-head. As too much confidence in the power of inherent grace caused Christ to leave Peter to the power of sin, so the like

confidence also in the power of grace, causeth God to leave us to the guilt of, and terrors that come by, sin.

(2.) The second case : for neglecting such precious opportunities of comforts and refreshings as God hath vouchsafed ; as for the neglect of holy duties, wherein God did offer to draw nigh to us, the sacraments, prayer, &c. So, Cant. v. 4-7, Christ stood at the door and knocked ; that is, moved the heart of the church there to pay or perform the like duty in which he useth to come into the heart and visit it ; he offered to assist her, and began to enlarge and prepare her heart, but she made excuses. Upon this, Christ went presently away ; only he left behind him an impression, a scent of himself in her heart, ver. 4-6, enough to stir her up to seek him, in the sense of the want of him ; as in desertion God useth to do.

(3.) Thirdly, in case of not exercising the graces which a man hath, not stirring them up, &c. ; when Christians are, as it were, between sleeping and waking, which was the church's condition in that Cant. v. 2 ; then also Christ deserts. To perform duties with the inward man half awake, as it were, and half asleep ; to pray as if we prayed not, (as, on the contrary, we are 'to use the world as if we used it not ;') thus to do the work of the Lord negligently, this provoketh God to absent himself ; as he did there, Cant. v. 2. And so, 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things,' that is, useth them not, neglecting to 'add grace to grace,' (as the former words expound that phrase ; and it agrees with the like elsewhere used ; as, Matt. xxv. 29, he that useth not his talent, is said not to have it, 'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not,' &c.) a blindness soon falls on such a man, and he forgetteth all that ever he had, as was opened before. And, indeed, there is no reason that a man should have present comfort of future grace, when he neglects the use of present grace. Isa. lxiv. 7, God complains that there was 'none that stirred up himself ;' and for this 'God was wroth.' Whereas otherwise, ver. 5, 'God meets with him that worketh righteousness,' and rejoiceth in him that rejoiceth to work righteousness ; God meets such, and rejoiceth with, and draws nigh unto them. But others, that stir not up themselves, God rouseth and stirs them up by terrors : 'He that walketh according to this rule, peace be on him,' Gal. vi. 16 ; not else. Though comfort is not always the present necessary fruit of righteousness, yet it is never without it.

(4.) Fourthly, in case of some gross sin committed against light, unhumiliated for, or proving scandalous, or of old sins long forgotten. I will give instances of each particular :—

[1.] First, for some gross sin committed against light. An instance for this is David ; who, though he was a man after God's heart, yet we meet with him often complaining, as one that was frequently in these desertions. Amongst other times, once in the 119th Psalm, verse 25, 28, where 'his soul cleaveth unto the dust,' and is even at death's door, for he says, 'quicken me :' he means it in regard of the sense of God's 'favour, which is better than life ;' which also is the meaning of that phrase, that his 'soul did cleave unto the dust,—that is, was brought to the apprehension of death ; therefore, Ps. xxii. 15, Christ upon the cross, of whom the psalm is made, cries out that 'God had forsaken him, and brought his soul to the dust of death.' And David says here also, that 'his soul melted, and was dissolved ;' even all the powers of it were loosened and failed within him at the sense of God's wrath, even as wax melts before the fire. Ordinarily we find in Scripture no such eminent desertion, but we find the cause of it not far off, if we read on ; so here, in the 29th verse, 'Remove from me,' says David, 'the way of lying.' He points

to the sore of his heart, and wherein his grief lay. David, among other corruptions, had a lying spirit. In 1 Sam. xxi. 2, David very roundly telleth two or three lies together, when he fled from Saul and came to Ahimelech, who, fearing to harbour him because of Saul, asked him why he was alone; it being a suspicious thing that he, so great a man, should have no greater train to attend him; and did argue that he fled as a proscribed person, and then it would be dangerous to foster him. To this he answers roundly, 'that the king had commanded him a business,'—there is one lie; and that 'the king had commanded him secrecy in it,'—there is another; and because 'my servants should not know it, I have sent them away' to several places,—there is a third. And again, at the 8th verse, 'I have not brought my sword, because the king's business required haste,'—there is a fourth lie. David went on here in a way of lying; they were all made and deliberate lies. Other such like speeches of his—as that, 1 Sam. xxvii. 8, 10, where he told Achish, 'that he went against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Kenites,' ver. 10, whenas he went against 'the Geshurites and the Amalekites,' ver. 8—some excuse, because those nations bordered over against the south of Judah and the south of the Kenites, and so make out a truth in that his speech; but yet the last verse, that says Achish believed David, implies that as he understood it, so David indeed meant it, as if he had gone up against his own countrymen; and then it can no way be excused. These, therefore, being gross sins, sins against light, as of all sins lying must needs be supposed to be, because it is against that truth which riseth up in the mind, and is a sin wherein a man's mind shews art, cunning, and wit, and a sin which, when the truth is discovered, proves exceeding shameful and scandalous; therefore this sin, especially when it had been some while gone on in by him, which therefore he calls a 'way of lying,' lay heavy on him long after. Therefore he entreats God to take the load of it off, 'Remove from me the way of lying.' It was the load hereof which did lie so heavy on him, as it pressed his soul to the dust of death, as he had before complained.

[2.] So for the second particular, in case a sin be not thoroughly humbled for and confessed; or if when we committed it, we had shifts to keep us from thinking it to be sin, or not so heinous, or were doubtful whether it were a sin or no, and so were loath to acknowledge it to be a sin, and to burden ourselves with it in our confessions; but our hearts stood out rather to clear ourselves in it, as it is likely David did in the case of his murder of Uriah. He had done it so cunningly as he thought he could clear himself and wash his hands of it; or it was but the chance of war, says he, that did cut him off—'The sword devoureth one as well as another,'—and so he excuseth it, 2 Sam. xi. 25. God in this case brings him to the rack, Ps. xxxii. It is thought that psalm was made, as well as the 51st Psalm, upon that occasion of this murder; and indeed it may seem so, they are tuned so near together, as might be shewn in many particulars. These sins being known and become scandalous, David was to confess publicly; as in the end he did, when, in making the 51st Psalm, he stood to do penance in a white sheet, that I may so speak. Now David was loath to come to this; that murder being done so cunningly, he could hardly be brought to confess it so much as in secret, much less publicly. God in this case lays his hand so sorely on him that his 'natural moisture was dried up,' as that psalm tells us; for in men troubled in conscience, their trouble of mind casts their bodies often into as great heats as men that are in burning fevers. So, Ps. cii. 3, in the like fit, he says, 'his bones were burnt like a hearth,' and this was without intermis-

sion, 'day and night;' and thus he lay 'roaring,' (so he expresseth his carriage in his torture,) like a malefactor on the rack; though haply he cried out for mercy to God, yet because not with a broken heart, God therefore accounted it but as roaring,—that is, the voice of a beast, as it were, rather than the voice of a man humbled for his sin. And why was David put to the rack thus? He would not confess and humble himself for his sin; 'I was silent, and yet roared,' ver. 3; a still, broken-hearted confession might have saved all this torment. But when in the end 'I said I would confess my sin,' ver. 5, and in his heart he resolved once to lay open all that sin of murder and adultery in the circumstances of them, then God pardoned him, as you know he did; for Nathan coming to him, told him, as soon as but a word of confession began to fall from him, 'that his sins were pardoned.' And yet after that, as appears in the 51st Psalm, God did not yet 'restore comfort' and 'the joy of his salvation' to him, for there he prays for it in the sense of the want of it; not until he had publicly confessed it also, and thoroughly humbled himself; it having caused 'the enemies of God to blaspheme,' God would have a public satisfaction given.

So when the incestuous person had committed that sin, 1 Cor. v. 1, 9, for which, as then he was not humbled, (for afterwards, in 2 Cor. ii. 7, when he was humbled indeed, he bids them comfort him,) yet till that his humiliation was apparent, he bids them to 'deliver such a one to Satan,' to the jailer, to the tormentor, to the prince of darkness, to terrify him and afflict his spirit. Now, the meaning of that delivering him up to Satan was, that he should be solemnly excommunicated; which, when it is performed as it ought to be, 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' and with the power of the Lord Jesus, then, as the church cuts them off from communion with them, so God from communion with himself, and he withdraws all fellowship with their spirits, as was before declared, and so leaves them alone in darkness and to desertions. And not only so, but 'delivereth them up to Satan,' not with a commission to carry them on to more sin,—for the end propounded by the Apostle was thereby to 'destroy the flesh,' ver. 5, not to nourish it by provoking him to more sin,—but to terrify and afflict his conscience, and to stir up therein the guilt of sin, and terrors for it, which God sanctifies to humble man and to mortify the flesh. And thus when that Corinthian was excommunicated, and given up to him, did Satan deal with him; for, 2 Cor. ii. 7, he was nigh being 'swallowed up of too much sorrow,' and this occasioned by Satan, 'whose devices we are not ignorant of,' says the Apostle, ver. 11. Now, as every ordinance hath a proper peculiar work it is appointed for, an inward effect to accompany it in a man's spirit, so this; and that proper effect and inward working and event of this great ordinance of excommunication is terror, and sorrow, and desertion of spirit, thereby to humble a man; even as it is the proper effect of sacraments to convey comfort and assurance, and to convey the 'seal of the Spirit.' And when this ordinance is neglected or omitted, when yet gross and scandalous sins require it; then a man belonging to God, God himself often works thus, and inflicts this on him without that ordinance. Thus he dealt with David and others after gross sins. God inwardly excommunicates and casts them out of his presence, and from all comforts in his ordinances, although they are not refused by men to come to them; dealing herein as a father that is a public magistrate, with an unruly child, after some great misdemeanour, though he cast him not off, yet he may send him to the jail, to be for example's sake imprisoned: for the jailer to take him, and to clap irons on him, to have him down into the dungeon, where he sees no light, and into the little-ease, where

he is in so strait a condition as he can neither sit, nor stand, nor lie, as Elihu expresseth it, Job xxxvi. 16 ; he calleth it 'bringing into a strait place,' and 'binding them in fetters and cords of affliction; and then he shews them their transgression, and wherein they have exceeded,' ver. 8, 9.

[3.] Yea, and thirdly, this God doth not only presently after the sins were committed, but sometimes a long while after, and that when they have been often confessed. Yea, and after that God hath pardoned them also in our consciences, as well as in heaven, yet the guilt may return again and leave us in darkness. Thus, Job xiii. 26, for 'the sins of his youth,' which questionless he had humbled himself for, and had assurance of the pardon of, yet God did 'write bitter things against him' for them many years after, and 'made him possess them,' as himself speaks. God gave him over to the jailer, and put him into the little-cage in prison: 'Thou putttest my feet into the stocks,' says he, ver. 27. For as the power of sin and the law of sin is but in part done away in our members, so in our consciences the guilt of sin is likewise but in part done away, in regard of our apprehensions of the pardon of it ; and therefore as those lusts we had thought dead, and that they would never have risen again, do sometimes revive and trouble us afresh, coming with new assaults, so in like manner may the guilt of those sins revive which we thought long before had been pardoned ; and after the commission of some new act, or forgetfulness of the old, and security about them, God may let them loose upon us afresh, that we shall look upon them, as if they never had been pardoned.

Now the reason of all these particulars, both why gross sins, especially if against light, when not confessed thoroughly, should yet after many years cast us into such fits of desertion, is—

Because therein we rebel against God's Spirit ; and that Spirit, *ita nos tractat, ut à nobis tractatur*, doth deal with us as we with him. If you grieve him, he grieves you ; if you rebel against him, he fights against you as an enemy. So, Isa. lxiii. 10, 'They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit ; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.' Now to sin against light is called rebellion ; so Job xxiv. 13. When men go about to extinguish and darken the light of direction which God had set up in their hearts to guide their paths by, God puts out the light of comfort, and so leaves them to darkness. But especially then when our hearts are so full of guile, as we plead that they are no sins, or extenuate them, as David in all likelihood did, Ps. xxxii. ; in reference to which he says, in ver. 2 of that psalm, that 'that man is a blessed man in whom is no guile ;' and in the 51st Psalm, ver. 6, 'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.' David had dealt guilefully and deceitfully in that sin. If man keeps a sin under his tongue, and will not be convinced of it, nor bring it forth by confession, God in that case brings him to the rack, as they do traitors, to confess ; and if it be that any of our old sins revive and cause these terrors, it is because we began to look on them as past and gone, and thought we needed not go on to humble ourselves any more for them, making account they are so buried as that they will never rise again, whenas the remembrance of them should keep us low and humble us all our days. It is laid to the charge of them in Ezek. xvi. 22, 'that they remembered not that they lay in their blood.' We are apt to think that time wears out the guilt of sins ; but to God they are as fresh as if they had been committed yesterday, and therefore nothing wears them out but repentance. Great sins forgiven must not be forgotten.

(5.) Fifthly, in case of a stubborn, stiff spirit, under outward afflictions ; when

we will not mend nor stoop to God. This may be part of the case mentioned Isa. lvii., where God alleging the reason why he contended with a poor soul of his, he gives an account of it. Ver. 17, you shall see where the quarrel began : 'For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth ;' that is, for some inordinate affection, which we call concupiscence ; he mentioneth not a gross act of sin committed, so much as some lust harboured : for which God began to be angry, and to shew the effects of that his anger in smiting him, haply with some outward cross first, 'I was wroth and smote him : ' and when that did no good, God began to be more angry, and to hide himself, 'I hid my face ;' and this he speaks of inward affliction, which he also calleth, ver. 16, 'contending with the soul,' and so far leaving it as that the 'spirit was ready to fail.' It came to inward affliction in the end. And he further intimates the cause of all this, 'He went on frowardly in the way of his heart.' When lighter and outward strokes will not take us off, God leaves and deserts our spirits, and wounds them. And the reason is, for in this case what course else should God take ? For either he must give him up to hardness of heart, and leave him to his stubbornness, and so he should have lost his child ; but that God is resolved he will not do : 'I will heal him,' saith he, ver. 18. When, therefore, the heart remains stubborn under other strokes, he hath no way left, in his ordinary course and progress in the way of means, but to lay strokes upon his spirit, and wound that. And this yoke is like to break and tame him, if any ; for this he cannot bear. Other outward afflictions man's natural spirit, stoutness, and stubbornness, may bear, and hath borne, even in heathen men ; they have endured anything rather than be put out of their way—'The spirit of man will sustain its infirmities ;' but in this 'the spirit fails in them,' ver. 16. Other afflictions are but particular—but as taking some stars of comfort out of the firmament, when others are still left to shine to them. But when God's countenance is hid, the sun itself, the fountain of light, is darkened, and so a general darkness befalls them. And therefore then the heart is driven to God, and broke off from all things else ; and then God delights to restore and to comfort a man again, 'I will restore comfort to him,' ver. 18.

(6.) Sixthly, in case of deserting his truth, and not professing it and appearing for it when he calls us to do it. In this case he left many of the martyrs ; many of whom, especially until those in Queen Mary's days, (when with the gospel's increase, and the light of it, God gave more strength also ;) and some then also did desert the truth for a while, and then God in respect of comfort deserted them ; and then they recovering God's favour again upon repentance, and a new resolution taken to stick to the profession of the truth whatever came of it, that their desertion made them the more bold and resolute. And this was in part Jonah's case, who having a commission sealed him to go to Nineveh with a message from God, he withdrew himself, and went another way ; and God in the midst of his security cast him into a whale's belly : and when he was there, God withdraws himself from him, as if he meant never to own him more, insomuch that Jonah says, chap. ii. 4, 'Then I said, I am cast out of thy presence.' And there is this equity in this dealing of God thus with us : that as when we are ashamed of Christ, the punishment fitted to it is, that Christ will be ashamed of us ; so when we will not witness for God, there is no reason his Spirit should witness to us. And so, when we seem to evade persecution for the cross of Christ, then it is meet God should meet with us, and take us in hand himself, which is far worse.

(7.) Seventhly, in case of unthankfulness, and too common an esteem had

of assurance, and light of God's countenance, and of freedom from those terrors and doubtings which others are in ; which is a sin Christians are apt to run into. For as the light of the sun, because it is ordinary, is not regarded, none mind it or look at the sun, but, as he said, when it is in the eclipse ; so a continual sunshine of God's favour enjoyed occasioneth but a common esteem of it. And in this case God withdraws those comforts and assurance, because they are the greatest and sweetest comforts of all other ; and which to abuse or not to value, of all other provokes most ; therefore in this case God takes them away. For, as Hos. ii. 9, in case of being unthankful in outward mercies, God 'took them away,' and restored them not again, till they esteemed them better, and acknowledged whence they had them ; so also in spiritual assurance, light, and comfort, doth God in like manner deal.

CHAPTER XIII.

The third general head : The ends for which God leaveth his children unto this darkness.—First, such as are drawn from God, and his faithfulness, &c.

III. Now let us come to those ends which God may have in this his dealing with one that fears and obeys him ; which are many and holy ones.

1. First, to shew his power and faithfulness, in upholding, raising up, and healing such a spirit again as hath been long and deadly wounded with inward terrors ; which is as great an evidence of his power as any other ; and therefore saith Heman, Ps. lxxxviii. 10, 11, ‘ Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead ? shall thy faithfulness be declared in destruction ? ’ That is, in raising my soul up again to joy and comfort, which is as much as to raise up a dead man ; nay more, as much as to raise up a soul already in hell ; for the same terrors, says he, that destroy them do in like manner seize on me. In Eph. i. 19, it is said, that the exceeding greatness of God’s power was seen in raising Christ from death to life ; and wherein lay principally the demonstration of that power ? Not simply in raising his body up again ; that was no more than he did to others. But in Acts ii. 24, the power is said to be shewn in this, that he having ‘ loosed the pains of death, wherewith it was impossible he should be held, he was raised up again.’ His soul was heavy unto death with terrors : and those pains in themselves were deadly, though not to him, in that he being God as well as man, it was impossible for him to sink under them. Now therefore to raise up and glorify that his soul, that was so bruised, wounded, and pierced through and through, herein lay the wonder ; and such a wonder God shewed in recovering Heman. And to shew the greatness of this work, let us consider a little the depth and deadliness of this kind of distress. It is compared to the ‘ bruising of a reed ; ’ which when it is bruised, who can make it stand upright again ? It is called ‘ the wounding of the spirit,’ Prov. xxviii. ; which no creature knows how to come at to heal, none but God, who is the Father of spirits, who made them, and knows how to mend them. It is not only called the sickness of the spirit,—as Isa. xxxiii. 24, where the want of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins makes poor souls to say, ‘ I am sick ; ’ which to heal is made the prerogative of ‘ the Sun of righteousness, arising with healing in his wings,’ Mal. iv. 2,—but also it is called ‘ death and destruction ; ’ for so in that 88th Psalm, Heman calls that distress that he was in. And the reason is, God’s ‘ favour is our life,’ by which we live and are upheld ; which therefore being withdrawn, the soul is ready to fail and faint, and to come to nothing, and sink into destruction, Isa. lvii. 16. And again, the pains of those terrors are more violent, and more powerful to hold us under, than are the pangs of death ; the wounds of the guilt of sin being as deadly, and as strong, as the lusts of the power of it : and it requires as great a power to dissolve and

scatter them. For all the strength that the law and God's justice hath, sin also hath to back it ; 'for the strength of sin is the law,' 1 Cor. xv. 56.

2. Secondly, as to know the power of Christ's resurrection, 'so the fellowship of his sufferings ;' that thereby the soul may be made more 'conformable to him,' as it is, Phil. iii. 10. As there are the sufferings *for Christ*, so the sufferings *of Christ* : and God makes his partakers of both—persecutions without, and terrors within ; with which Christ's soul was filled then whenas the text says, 'He was heard in what he feared ;' and 'his soul was heavy to death ;' and 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and so, Isa. liii., 'it pleased God to bruise and wound him.' Now then, to conform us to his image, we that are his brethren, and are the persons guilty, must suffer somewhat in spirit as well as he, and have a portion therein also. And therefore, as Christ did suffer both inwardly and outwardly, so do many of his members : 'If you have suffered with him, ye shall also be glorified with him.' The sons of Zebedee would have been glorified in Christ's kingdom more than the rest of the apostles ; but says Christ, Matt. xx. 22, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup whereof I shall drink?'—he means that cup delivered to him at his crucifying ; 'Let this cup pass,' the bitter cup of God's anger,—'and are ye able to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?' namely, outward afflictions and persecutions for the name of God ; which are called baptisms, because they set God's mark on us that we are God's, as baptism doth seal to us that we are his ; and because then the church owns us, and takes notice of us as sincere, when we have believed and suffered, as at baptism the church receives us. And of this baptism Christ speaks in the present tense, because that he was already baptized with outward persecutions ; but the cup, which was inward affliction of his spirit, this he was to drink of at his agony—'which I *shall* drink of,' in the future ; which cup cast him into that sweat, ere he came to the bottom. This, though no creature was able to drink off to the bottom, yet taste they might ; and he tells them they should, ver. 23, 'Ye shall drink of it,' &c., that is, taste of inward affliction and desertion, as well as of outward persecution,—terrors within and without,—and all to make us conformable to him, and so come to know in part what he endured for us.

3. Thirdly, to put the greater difference between the estate of God's children here, and that hereafter in heaven ; to which very purpose is that speech of the Apostle, 2 Cor. v. 7, that here 'we walk by faith, not by sight.' He had said before, that the estate of believers in this life is an estate of 'absence from the Lord,' wherein we want his presence, and so enjoy not the sight of him ; and therefore are to exercise faith the more, which is peculiar to this estate, and a grace given of purpose for us to walk by, whilst we live here. And though sometimes we have some light, and glimpses of him and his presence, yet we walk not by sight always ; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We shall have enough of the sight of God hereafter, when 'we shall see him, as we are seen, face to face,' and be 'evermore with the Lord,' 'when in his light we shall see light, and be satisfied with his image.' We may therefore be content to want it here sometimes. You may well endure over-cloudings here, and sometimes that all sight should be taken away ; for in the world to come there will not be one cloud to all eternity. 'Your inheritance is light,' Col. i. 12, 13. Light is your portion, but now is the seed-time ; and 'light is sown,' Ps. xcvii. 11, 'for the righteous.' You must be content to let it lie under-ground ; the longer it doth so, the greater crop and harvest will come up in the end. You must endure the vicissitude of

day and night here, 'sorrow overnight, and joy in the morning;' for hereafter you shall have continual day and no night. This difference there is put between earth and heaven, to make heaven sweeter, and to exercise faith: the estate in heaven is as a state of perfect and continual health; which that we may prize, we are ever and anon sick here, and qualms come over our consciences, fears our sins are not forgiven; but when we come thither, 'The inhabitants there shall be no more sick, but their sins shall be forgiven them,' Isa. xxxiii. 24.

4. The fourth end is, to let us see whence spiritual comforts and refreshings come: that God alone keeps the keys of that cupboard, and alone dispenseth them how and when he pleaseth. That we may know (as it is Isa. xlv. 6, 7) that it is 'the Lord that formed the light and creates darkness, evil and peace;' and that as 'affliction riseth not out of the dust,' as Job speaks, so nor comfort out of our hearts. Whereas if continually we enjoyed comfort, we should be apt so to think. God will let us see that our hearts are nothing but darkness; and that to cause any spiritual comfort is as much as to create light at first: therefore he says, 'I create the fruit of the lips; Peace,' Isa. lvii. 19, and that he it is that doth 'command light to shine into our hearts, who commanded light at first to shine out of darkness,' 2 Cor. iv. 6; which can no way more fully be manifested than by withdrawing that light sometimes, and leaving us to darkness. As why doth he sometimes assist us in prayer, and fill the sails, and again at some times leaves our heart empty? Is it not that we may learn that lesson, Rom. viii. 26, that it is 'the Spirit that helpeth our infirmities,' and that we of ourselves 'know not what nor how to ask?' Which lesson, although he sometimes straitens us, yet we are difficult in learning, nor are easily brought to acknowledge our dependence on him for his assistance. In like manner, for the same end doth he sometimes hide, and then again sometimes reveal himself, to shew that he is the immediate fountain of comfort,—'The God of all comforts,' 2 Cor. i. 3,—that so we might know whom to thank, whom to depend on, whom to go to for comfort: it being as difficult a thing for us to go out of ourselves, and from the creatures, for comfort, to God alone, as to go out of ourselves to Christ alone for righteousness. Hereby also we see, that though we have never so many outward comforts, that yet the comforts of our spirits do depend on God alone; for if he in the midst of them withdraw himself, they all prove but miserable comforters.

CHAPTER XIV.

A second sort of ends for the trial and discovery of graces ; especially of faith.

5. OTHER ends God hath, to make trial of our graces and a discovery of them. The same end that God had in leading his people through 'the great wilderness, where no water was,' where 'scorpions stung them,' Deut. viii. 16, which was to prove them, &c. ; the same ends hath God in suffering his people to go through this desert, barrenness, and darkness, where no light is, and where terrors of the law do sting them,—for all those his dealings then were types of God's dealings with his people now,—even to prove them, and to make trial of their hearts. For the same ends as he left Hezekiah to the power of sin in the point of sanctification,—namely, 'to know what was in his heart,'—doth he also leave others of his children to the guilt of sin in the point of justification, to discover also what is in their hearts. This is conceived to have been his end in deserting Job, to shew what strong patience, unconquered faith was in him. There be many gracious dispositions which actually have not opportunity to discover themselves but in case of this kind of desertion. Some of those which are the highest acts of grace and purest fruits of it, and which are the surest evidences of the truth of grace, would never appear but in case of such desertion. For instance, then it is known whether a man love God for himself, and for those excellences of wisdom, holiness, and goodness that are in him, when yet he knows not whether he himself shall be ever the better for them, yea or no. Then also it is manifested to be pure, sincere, and unfeigned obedience. Then it is seen his repentance is true, when he repents not of it, then when he is out of hopes of any reward for it. Then it is seen his sorrow is godly sorrow, when, though the sentence of condemnation is read to him in his own apprehension and conscience, and he verily thinks he is taking his leave of God for ever, and going to execution, yet he can down upon his knees, and ask him forgiveness, and mourneth that ever he wronged him ; is angry and displeased with himself that a God so good, so just, should have so just cause to be angry and displeased with him ; and he finds that he could have some rest and contentment that God is glorified upon one who hath so much dishonoured him. Such dispositions as these would never see the light, if it were not for this darkness. But as *natura vexata prodit seipsam* ; nature, when conclusions are tried upon it, and it is put out of its course, then it discovers itself, (even as anger discovers itself when a man is vexed,) as, if you would know the properties that are in herbs, you must try conclusions with them ; so also here doth God with a man's graces, and then they discover their most occult and hidden properties.

It were needless to go over all particular graces ; I will but more distinctly instance in that glorious grace of *faith*. Which in this trial deserves more than all graces else, and though in all the varieties of conditions we pass through it stands us in stead, yet in desertions it alone doth wonders ;

standing like Samson, encountering and conquering alone, when there is none to help. Because likewise, it is that grace which is called for in the text, 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord,' as being that grace which God principally tries, to discover the truth, and magnify the power thereof in such desertions.

(1.) First, this is certain, there is no grace God tries more than this grace of faith. Therefore, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7, 'Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, being tried in the fire, might be found to glory, praise, and honour;' that is, both to the honour of God who is believed in, and also of faith itself, which is the most glorious grace a Christian hath; which God loves to try, to that end the glory of it may appear. In the 5th verse he having said, that 'we are kept by the power of God to salvation,' if any now should ask, Wherein is that power of keeping us most shewn? he answers, In and through faith. 'Ye are kept by the power of God through faith.' And if you ask, When and wherein is the power of God through faith seen most? he instanceth in 'manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith,' &c.

Now then, as of all graces God would have faith tried; so—

(2.) Of all temptations none try it more than desertion of God's countenance, this of darkness and of terrors. Other temptations strike but obliquely at faith, but these lay direct battery to our faith, for they strike at that which is the immediate aim and object of it; namely, that God is a man's God. These speak the direct contrary to what faith endeavours to apprehend, and that directly, and not by consequence only. Again, other temptations are easily borne and answered, whilst the assurance of God's favour remains unshaken. It answers them all, and shakes them off, as he the viper off his hand; but when that shall begin to be questioned, as in this case it is, who is able to stand? And what is able to strengthen a man then but the power of faith? As Solomon says of the spirit of a man, that it will bear all kinds of infirmities, if itself be whole; but if it be wounded, who can bear it?—so I say of assurance: if it be weakened and battered, the very foundations thereby are shaken; a man's freehold touched, the root struck. Now, in such a case, it is faith's peculiar office to stand a man in stead, when nothing else can. Therefore he says, 'Let him trust,' &c., because it helps thus at this dead lift.

(3.) Again, thirdly, in these conflicts of faith with desertions, consisteth the height of our Christian warfare. This is the highest pitched battle, the greatest, and, as it were, the last brunt, upon which all is either won or lost; for in these a man encounters with God himself, apprehended as an enemy. God called out Job to try him by fighting a single combat with Satan, and he became, as I may so say, too hard for Satan alone; and God joins against him also. Now then, to bear the brunt and shock of his wrath, and yet to stand upon a man's feet; this, to the utmost, argueth the strength of faith. Hos. xii. 3, it is said of Jacob that 'by strength he had power with God;' it argued strength indeed: and this is done by faith, by the power whereof, God's power rather supporting it, a man relies on God, when all his dealings would argue he had forsaken a man; that though God put on never so angry a countenance, look never so sternly, yet faith is not dashed out of countenance, but can read love in his angry looks, and trust God beyond what he sees, it being the 'evidence of things not seen.' Then, faith goes wholly out of itself, as seeing nothing in itself but barely a capacity of mercy and plenteous redemption, which it knows to be in God. This faith is a

miracle of miracles, for it is founded, as the earth, upon mere nothing in itself, and yet bears the weight and stress of sins, devil, yea, of God himself. And this is the faith ye are converted by, in believing then ‘on him that justifies the ungodly,’ Rom. iv. 5 ; and that which we must live by when all comforts fail: and this is that faith which must stand you in stead at death, when the king of fears comes and besiegeth you: and this is the faith ‘that is to honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.’

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CHAPTER XV.

Six ends more, for the increasing of several graces, and destroying corruptions.

6. SIXTHLY, as it makes for the trial and discovery of graces, so it is a means sanctified to increase them, and to eat out corruptions :—

(1.) First, it is a means to *destroy the flesh*. The incestuous Corinthian was to be delivered to Satan,—that is, to be terrified,—to destroy the flesh. As corrosives eat out dead flesh, so these terrors the dead corruptions; and the reviving of the guilt of old sins doth kill the seeds of those that remain in the heart. For if an outward affliction, which crosseth but the satisfaction of a lust, is a means sanctified by God to kill a lust; then much more the inward terror which the conscience feels, and which ariseth immediately from the guilt of a sin, must needs be a means much more.

(2.) Secondly, it is a means to *humble*. So, Deut. viii. 16, the end of the biting of the Israelites by scorpions—which were the types of these stings and terrors—was, as to prove, so to humble them; and for this end was that buffeting by Satan we have so often mentioned, 2 Cor. xii. 7, to keep down being exalted above measure. So also, 1 Pet. v. 6, ‘Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;’ and if in any other affliction his mighty hand lays hardest on, surely in these.

(3.) Thirdly, it is a means to bring you in *more assurance* and establishment. 1 Pet. v. 10, ‘The God of all grace, after you have suffered a while, stablish and strengthen you.’ He knew they could not be settled till they had suffered in this or some other kind. The tree roots itself the more, the more it is shaken. ‘Comforts abound the more that sufferings do abound.’ That light is clearest and strongest that ariseth out of darkness, because God creates it. Those things which men doubt of most, God gives the greatest evidence of in the end.

(4.) Fourthly, it trains you up to *fear* God more, and to *obey* him. Therefore, in the text, these are added as the concomitant dispositions of the soul in such a case. For of all other, these of fearing God and obeying him do most eminently and sensibly appear in that estate: Heb. v. 8, ‘Christ himself learned obedience by what he suffered.’ The yoke tames the wanton wildness in beasts, and makes them serviceable, breaks them; and so do these the stubbornness of a man’s spirit.

(5) Fifthly, to set believers’ hearts a-work to *pray* more and more earnestly. So the Apostle’s buffetings, 2 Cor. xii., made him pray thrice,—that is, often. So Christ, Luke xxii. 44, ‘being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly;’ and being in fear, he did lift up strong cries, Heb. v. 7. So Heman, by reason of his terrors, was a man much in prayers, Ps. lxxxviii. 1, ‘I have cried day and night before thee.’ Christians that enjoy not communion with God, yet if they think they have not lost him, they are secure and lazy in prayers; but if they apprehend once that their ‘beloved is gone,’

or that they are in danger to lose him, then they will seek him all the world over but they will find him, Cant. v. 6-8 ; and make hue and cry after him, as the church did there.

(6.) Sixthly, it causeth them to *prize the light of God's countenance the more* when they again obtain it, and so set a higher price upon it, and to endeavour by close walking with God, as children of light, to keep it ; to prize it 'more than corn and oil.' Cant. iii. 2, 'she loseth him ;' but at the 4th verse 'she finds him again,' and then 'she holds him,' and will not let him go

PART II.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?—ISA. L. 10.

USE I.

IF those that fear God and obey him are exposed to such a condition as hath been described ; then, ‘ Who is among you that feareth not the Lord, nor obeys the voice of his servants ? ’ You that live in known sins, and in omission of known duties, which God’s servants, your ministers, tell you you ought to perform ; that pray not with your families ; who make not conscience of your speeches nor dealings, &c.,—‘ where shall you appear, if the righteous be thus scarcely saved ? ’ If they whom God hath loved with a love as great and unchangeable as himself, yet suffer his terrors here ; what shall you do whom he hath set himself to hate, and to shew the power of his wrath upon, without repentance ? ‘ If these things be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry ? ’ Luke xxiii. 31, which is fitted for wrath and the fire, even as ‘ stubble fully dry,’ Nahum i. 10, as the prophet speaketh. If such an estate of darkness and horror befall them that are children of light, whose inheritance is light, Col. i. 12 ; then what is reserved for you that are darkness, and ‘ love darkness more than light ? ’ And if this befalls them for not stirring up the grace which they already have ; what to you that are utterly devoid of it ; and not only so, but despise and scoff it ? If this befalls them for not humbling themselves for old sins, though long since committed ; what will befall you for going on to add new to the old with greediness ? If to them for neglecting the opportunities of drawing nigher to God ; what to you for neglecting the offer of grace, and trampling under foot the blood of Christ ? All you that think there is no hell, or if there be, that it is not so dark as it is usually painted, look upon Heman ready to run distracted through terrors, and to give up the ghost every moment, Psalm lxxxviii., when yet his body was strong and outward estate whole. Look upon David lying upon the wheel, and the Spirit of God ‘ breaking his bones,’ Psalm li., whenas otherwise, he being a king, had all outward things at will. Look upon holy Job, chap. vi., ‘ Oh that my grief were weighed ! it is heavier than the sand ; and my words are swallowed up ;—that is, I am not able to express and utter my grief ;—‘ the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit ; the terrors of God do set themselves in battle array against me,’ ver. 4. Insomuch, that at the 8th verse he wisheth ‘ God would cut him off ;’ and, ‘ Is my strength the strength of stones,’ says he. ‘ or my flesh brass,’ as he complains, that he should be able to hold out against such fierce encounters ? My brethren, God’s people find

pains beyond those of the stone, gout, and toothache ; the falling of God's wrath on the conscience is more than the dropping a little scalding rheum on a tooth ; and yet these, which Job and David felt, are but a taste of that cup which you that obey not must drink off to the bottom ; and it is eternity to the bottom. Psalm lxxv. 8, 'There is a cup in the hand of the Lord, and it is full of mixture,'—that is, all the bitter ingredients in the world are in it, the quintessence of evils are strained into it ; and here indeed God 'pours out of the same,' as it follows there,—that is, in this life some few sprinklings of it fall from the top of the cup, which his own do taste and drink of ; but the bottom, 'the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall drink, and wring them out,'—that is, leave none behind ; but the vials of it, which will never be emptied, shall be poured forth, even to the utmost drop. And if God's people do begin to taste of it,—as Christ himself did, it 'could not pass him,' and Zebedee's sons were to pledge him, as was observed,—then, as God says by Jeremiah, chap. xxv. 27–29, 'If my people have drunk of it,' and begun to you, 'and I have brought evil upon the city that is called by my name ; then certainly you shall drink of it, and be drunk, and spue, and fall and never rise again.' If God's people be thus shut up in darkness, what darkness is reserved for you ? Even as Jude says, ver. 13, 'blackness of darkness ;' 'darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth,' Matt. xxii. 13. Blackness of darkness, because there is not a cranny of light, nor one beam of comfort that shines in to all eternity. And this is not for a moment, or a few years, but for ever. You 'that live many days in pleasure here, and rejoice in them all ; remember the days of darkness, for they are many,' says Solomon, Eccles. xi. 8. Many indeed ! Days ! An eternal night that shall know no end, which no day shall follow.

USE II.

Who is among you that fears the Lord and is translated out of the state of darkness, and yet never was in this darkness of desertion which I have described unto you ? You that have been free from those terrors of conscience, which are beyond all the miseries the world hath,—for as the joy of the Holy Ghost is unspeakable and glorious, so these terrors are unutterable and unsupportably grievous,—which yet souls that fear God and have obeyed him more than you, have been made the anvils of ; you that have been dandled, cockered, and fed with sweetmeats, had into the wine cellar, and have had all the Trinity to sup with you, John xiv. 23, Rev. iii. 20, when others have eaten 'gall and wormwood,' as it is, Lam. iii. 19 ; and likewise you who, though you enjoy not much ravishing joy, and 'peace which passeth understanding,' yet, 'being justified by faith, you have' a solid 'peace with God,' Rom. v. 1 ; and so walk in freedom of spirit, in the use of God's ordinances, and in the performance of holy duties ;—let me out of this doctrine give all such this great instruction : To take notice that such kind of troubles there are that do befall God's people beyond what they have experience of. Many there are that think not so ; Job's friends did not, and therefore censured him. And this is a necessary instruction :—

1. For this very knowledge of it doth prepare men for such a condition, if it should befall them ; and therefore, beforehand to prepare them he wrote to, for afflictions, the Apostle bids them 'not think it strange concerning the fiery trial,' 1 Pet. iv. 12. For if they be strange to any, then if they befall them at any time, they are the more grievous. As if some strange disease befall a man which he had never heard of before, no physician hath skill in,

it amazeth a man, and makes him desperate; but if he hath heard that such and such have had it, as well as himself, and have been recovered, this something helps to assuage the bitterness of it to him. Job's trial was a strange trial to his friends, and therefore you see how unskilfully they go about to heal it, and so left the sore worse than they found it. So that to prepare you for it, it is good to take notice that such a condition there is. In like manner also, in 1 Cor. x. 13, for the same end, the Apostle says of other kind of trials, that 'nothing had befallen them but what is common to man.' There is a great relief in that, that it is common, and others have been in the like.

2. Secondly, also, take notice of it, that you may be kept more in dependence upon God, and that you may fear him more whilst you live in this world. Men that know not any afflictions in this life beyond what they see with their eyes and feel in the outward man, nothing beyond loss of friends and credit, these do often fear God less, though truly; and when they come to part with any of these for God, are less willing,—as when they must endure a cross rather than sin, are apter to choose sin rather than affliction,* as Job says,—but when they shall hear and know that God's wrath is beyond Pharaoh's wrath, as Moses knew it, who yet in the vast apprehension of the greatness of it, cries out, Ps. xc., 'Who hath known the power of thy wrath?' then they will obey God and fear him more than they would all the kings of the earth, as Moses did; 'not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh,' Heb. xi. 27. When men enjoy a confluence of all carnal worldly comforts, and think their mountain strong, well built, with wife, children, about them, and riches, health, and honours, they think they are then more out of God's danger than other men, and are apt to say, 'Soul, thou hast goods for many years;' but know, that God, without taking either thy goods away or thy soul away, can in this life put thy spirit into such a condition of darkness as thou wouldest give all the world to have a moment's ease, when all other comforts shall be to thee but as the white of an egg, as Job says. As he hath joys the world gives not, so he hath afflictions the world inflicts not. Therefore fear him more than the loss of all, obey him rather than to keep all; for God can meet with thee in the midst of all: so he met with David, though a king, and then all his wives and kingdom could not comfort him, till God would 'heal the bones that he had broken.'

3. Thirdly, take notice there are such troubles, and learn not to censure others when they are in this condition. Thou walkest in the light, and thou seest another in the dungeon; he may be dearer to God than thou. It was Job's friends' fault, who, having not had experience of such a condition in themselves, concluded that he was a hypocrite. If you thus judge, then, as Asaph says, 'you condemn the generation of the just,' Ps. lxxiii. 13, 14. And herein Satan also is gratified, the strict ways of grace scandalised. If God use his children thus, 'Curse God and die,' says Job's wife; and so the foolish men and women of this world.

4. Fourthly, 'pass your sojourning here in fear, and serve him with fear,' 1 Pet. i. 17; for even 'our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29. Keep the heart in awe with the knowledge of such an estate. This kept Job in awe, and made him so strict a man all his days. Read the thirty-first chapter throughout, and you shall see what a righteous man he was, and then see the reason of all: ver. 23, 'Destruction from the Lord was a terror

* In the original edition it is 'affliction rather than sin.' The sense seems to require the change which I have ventured to make. Besides, this is really what Job says, chap. xxxvi. 21.—ED.

to me. And to the same purpose also, chap. iii. 25, 26, he says that 'he had always feared that which now had befallen him,' whereof the distress of his spirit was the greatest evil; this he feared might befall him when he had most assurance.

5. Lastly, be thankful that God spares thee. Haply thy body is weak; and he knows that thou art but flesh, and so stirs not up all his wrath: if he should fall on thee as on others, it would destroy thee. But consider that thou hadst a stone in thy heart as well as any other. God hath cured it by gentle draughts, and so dissolved it and carried it away; whenas he hath cut others, and bound them, and put them to much pain in taking of it out. Oh, be thankful! You that are healthful and have strong bodies, are you not thankful when you see others sick, and lie bedrid, roaring of the stone, toothache, gout, whereof you are free? And ought you not to be much more for the healthfulness of your spirits, (cheerfulness being the marrow of them,) whenas others are sick, as the expression is, Isa. xxxiii. 24, for want of assurance that their sins are forgiven? Others roar all day as on a rack, and are distressed almost out of their wits, and even themselves are a burden to themselves. Oh, be thankful that it is not so with you!

USE III.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and hath been in darkness, but now is out of that eclipse, and walks in the light again? You who have been in the dungeon, and have been set free again; who have had the wounds of your spirit healed, your souls raised from the nethermost hell, when they 'drew nigh to the grave, and have found a ransom,' Job xxxiii.; learn your duty also:—

1. First, to be thankful to God and Jesus Christ, and to love the more; for you know and have tasted what he did for you. You know how bitter a few sips of the cup was which he drank off and took down, and therefore must needs love him more. You also have more experience of God's power and faithfulness, and what a miracle God hath wrought in raising you up again: he hath 'shewn you wonders among the dead,' as Heman speaks; be thankful. Thus David, in Ps. cxvi. 3, 4, compared with ver. 1, 'I love the Lord.' And why? 'The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow; I was brought low, and he helped me.'

2. Secondly, learn to pity others in that condition. Who can do it better than you, that have experience of the like? If you hear of any soul in distress, it is expected of you to pray for him more than of another. Christ learned to pity us in all our infirmities the more, by bearing our infirmities himself, Heb. iv. 15. To that end God raised you up, that you might be able to comfort others with 'the comforts you have received,' 2 Cor. i. 4, and might pray for them. Therefore, Isa. lvii. 18, when any poor soul is smitten, God, as it is there said, is moved to restore him again, for his mourners' sakes as well as his own.

3. Thirdly, declare what God hath done for you. You have been in hell: give warning to others from coming there. 'We, knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men.' If the rich man had come from hell, what stories would he have told to have scared all his brethren! Tell you the like. You have seen 'the wonders of God in the deep;' now you are ashore, tell men of the rocks, and shelves, and storms they are like to meet with in such and such courses, of uncleanness, worldliness, &c. David says, when he would

have once his bones that were broken healed again, that 'then he would teach sinners God's ways,' Ps. li.

4. Fourthly, take heed of what may prove the fuel of such a condition. The devil may come and cast you into your old fits if he find the same materials to work upon, such as gross sins, acts of uncleanness, lying, unjust dealing, &c. You know what brought David to his broken bones. And likewise take heed of performing duties formally, coldly, and in hypocrisy, and of resting in them; which are but as a hollow tooth (as Solomon speaks, Prov. xxv. 19) that is broken, better out of the head than in; these may cause the toothache again. Take heed of sinning against light; if the devil found no such things in you, he should not trouble you. So also, get small straggling doubts answered, let them not lie neglected; they may come in together one day and make an army; though, several and apart, as they now rise in your consciences scattered, you can despise and neglect them.

USE IV.

The fourth and main use, to such as fear God and walk in darkness.

Then, who is among you walking in darkness, that yet fears to offend God as much as hell, and endeavoureth and desires to obey him in all things as much as to go to heaven? Such, when they find God withdraw, and their hearts left comfortless, their spirits dead and hard, do call God's love and their own estates into question; especially if they were in the sunshine before, but now sit 'in the valley of the shadow of death.' If dandled in God's lap before and kissed, now to be lashed with terrors and his sharpest rods, and on the tenderest place, the conscience; to have their songs in the night turned into writing bitter things against them; how bitter is it to them! Once, they say, they could never come to the throne of grace but their hearts were welcomed, their heads stroked, and they went seldom away without a 'white stone,' an earnest-penny put into their hands; but now God is a terror to them, and when they arise from prayer or the like duty, their hearts condemn them more than when they began. Once they never looked to heaven but they had a smile; now they may cry day and night and not get a good look from him. Once, say they, they never hoist up sail to any duty, but they had a fair and good wind, God went along with them; but now they have both wind and tide, God and the deadness of their own hearts, against them. In a word, God is gone, light is gone: God answers them neither by vision nor by prophets; neither in praying nor in hearing; and therefore hath forsaken them, cast them off, yea, will never be merciful. Oh, woe to us, say they, we are undone!

You err, poor souls, not knowing the Scriptures, and the manner of your God, and of his dealings with his people, to think that his mind is changed when his countenance is, and so to run away from him, as Jacob did from Laban; to think he hath cast you off, when he is but 'returning to his place,' that you may 'seek him more earnestly,' Hos. v. 15. Like children, when their mother is gone aside a little, you fall a-crying as if you were undone. So it is that you are always in the extremes: if he shines on you, then 'your mountain shall never be removed;' if he hides his face, then 'he will never be merciful.' This, as it is a fond and childish fault, so it is beastly and brutish also, thus to judge. I term it so because you are led therein by sense, and, like beasts, believe nothing but what you feel and see, and measure God's love by his looks and outward carriage; which when Asaph did in other afflictions, as you in this, he cries out he was 'ignorant, and as

a beast,' Ps. lxxiii. 22. What! will you trust God no further than you see him? It will shame you one day to think what a great deal of trouble your childishness put the Spirit of God unto. As what trouble is it to a wise man, to have a fond and foolish wife, who if he be but abroad, and about necessary business, haply for her maintenance, yet then she complains he regards her not, but leaves her; if he chides her for any fault, then she says he hates her, and is so much distempered by it as a whole day's kindness cannot quiet her again? Thus deal you with God, and though he hath given you never so many fair and clear evidences of his love, and these never so often reiterated and renewed, yet still you are jealous, never quiet, always doubting, questioning all upon the least frown; that either God must undo you, by letting you go on in your sinful dispositions, without ever rebuking of you, or else lose the acknowledgment of all his love formerly shewn, and have it called in question by your peevish, jealous misconstructions, upon every small expression of his anger towards you. Some of you that are less troubled, and thus 'wanton against Christ,' I would chide out of it.

But you that are more deeply and lastingly distressed, I pity you, I blame you not for being troubled; for when 'he hides his face, the creatures all are troubled,' Ps. civ. 29. God would have you lay it to heart when he is angry, Isa. lvii. 17. God there took it ill that 'when he smote him, he went on stubbornly.' If you should not thus lay it to heart, it were a sign you had no grace; that you made not him your portion, if you could bear his absence and not mourn. Carnal men, having other comforts, can bear the want and absence of him well enough; but not you, that have made him your portion, and your exceeding great reward. But yet though you are to lay it to heart, so as to mourn under it; yet not to be discouraged, to call all into question. For though you change, yet not God, Mal. iii. 6, James i. 7; nor his love, for his love is himself, 1 John iv. 8-10. We may change in our apprehensions and opinions, and God's outward carriages and dispensations may be changed towards us, but not his rooted love. We are not the same to-day that yesterday we were; but 'Christ is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8. To say that he hath cast you off because he hath hid his face, is a fallacy fetched out of the devil's topics, and injurious to him; for, Isa. liv. 8, 'In a little wrath have I hid my face for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I remember thee.' I have but 'hid my face,' not cast thee out of mind; and though in 'anger,' yet but a 'little' anger; and not long neither, but 'for a moment.' And all that while I am not unmindful of thee, 'I remember thee,' &c.; and this with 'kindness from everlasting to everlasting.' When the sun is eclipsed, (which eclipse is rather of the earth than of the sun, which shines as it did,) foolish people think it will never recover light, but wise men know it will.

Obj.—But you will say, If this desertion were but for a moment, it were something; but mine hath been for many years.

Ans.—How many years? This life is but a moment; and God hath eternity of time to shew his love in; time enough to make amends for a few frowns; 'everlasting kindnesses.' Remember the text says, one that fears God may *walk* in darkness; not for a step or two, but many wearisome turns in it. Heman was afflicted from his youth; David so long, that, Ps. lxxvii, he thought God had forgotten mercy. And doth his promise fail for ever? Remember what he said in another case, Luke xviii. 8, that though he bears long, yet he comes speedily; that is, though long in our eyes, yet speedily in his own, who hath all time before him, and knows how much time is behind to be spent in embraces with you.

Obj.—Yea, but you will say, It is not only hiding his face ; but I suffer terrors : he is wroth ; he is turned enemy ; he fights against me ; and therefore I am a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction.

Ans.—So it was with Job, chap. xiii. 24, ‘ Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy ? ’ So Isa. lxiii. 10 ; Ps. lxxxviii. 16. All these are but the effects of a temporal wrath. There is a wide difference between a child *under* wrath, and a child *of* wrath. Thou mayest be a child under wrath, when not a child of wrath. God, as he may afflict you in your estates and bodies, so your spirits, as a father ; for, Heb. xii. 9, he is ‘ the Father of spirits.’

TEN DIRECTIONS

FOR THOSE WHO ARE MORE DEEPLY TROUBLED ; AND MEANS TO BE USED HOW
TO RECOVER LIGHT AND COMFORT.

FOR their sakes who are thus more deeply troubled, I will prescribe some *directions* how they are to behave themselves in such a condition, so as to come more comfortably and the more speedily out of it. For it is in these long and great sicknesses of the soul as in those of the body ; men are kept the longer in them, and under them, for want of right directions and prescriptions, as we see in long agues and fevers, and the like diseases.

DIRECTION I.

First, Take heed of rash, desperate, impatient, and unbelieving speeches and wishes ; such you will be forced to recall again with sorrow. As David, when he was in fears, uttered a desperate speech, namely, that Samuel's prophecy concerning him, and message to him from God, that he should be king, would prove false ; and he says not only, that 'one day he should perish by the hand of Saul,' 1 Sam. xxvii. 1 ;—the ground of which speech was, that he finding himself every day in some danger or other of his life, and so, though God had preserved him again and again, yet he thought that some of those many arrows which were shot against him so continually, and which still so narrowly missed him, might, at one time or other, hit and speed him, it were a wonder else ;—but he says further, Ps. cxvi. 11, 'I said in my haste, that all men are liars,' the prophet Samuel and all ; that it was but a promise of a vain man. But he soon recalls himself, and adds, 'I said 'his in my haste.' So likewise, Ps. xxxi. 22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off.' They were rash speeches, as he confesses, spoken in haste. Even so doth many a poor soul break forth and say, after they have had strong hopes, at first conversion, that a kingdom is theirs, that heaven is theirs, and that it is reserved for them ; and they kept for it also through the power of God : yet the devil being let loose to persecute them, as Saul did him, and God hiding his face, and the arrows of the Almighty flying thick about their ears, the sorrows of hell encompassing them, and well-nigh every moment cutting them off ; they, although upheld again and again, yet are apt to say that, one day or other, they shall in all likelihood be cut off by God's hand, swallowed up of Satan, and everlastingly destroyed. And when they are told of the hopes they had at their first conversion, and the promises that are made to them, they are apt to say that their graces by which they should now claim those promises are all a lie, false and counterfeit, and but in hypocrisy. This they say in their haste too often. So at another time, when David was in doubt about that other promise of an eternal kingdom, made to him in Ps. lxxvii., he says, 'God will never be merciful.' What a desperate weak speech was this, that what a man sees not at present, he should conclude

would never be ! But he acknowledged his error in it : ‘ It was my infirmity,’ ver. 10, thus to speak. So the church, Lam. iii. 17–19 : ‘ I said, My hope is perished from the Lord.’ What a desperate speech was this ! But she eats her words again with grief, ver. 21, ‘ This I recall to mind, therefore have I hope.’ Job, though for a while, at the beginning of the storm, he was somewhat calm and quiet in his spirit, and it was his commendation ; and therefore, in chap. i. 22, it is said that ‘ in all this’—that is, so long and thitherto—‘ he had not charged God foolishly :’ but this held but to the first and second chapter, for when he began to be wet to the skin once, and the drops of God’s wrath began to soak into his soul, then he falls a-roaring, chap. iii., and ‘ curseth the day of his birth ;’ and, chap. vi. 8, 9, wisheth God would cut him off ; and, chap. vii. 15, says, ‘ his soul did choose strangling rather than life.’ For which speeches God in the end steps out, as it were, from behind the hangings, overhearing him, taking him up for them : chap. xxxviii. 2, ‘ Who is this,’ says he, ‘ that talks thus ?’ How now ?

But, good souls, you that are in trouble ; oh, take heed of such impatient wishes or speeches as these or the like, that all which you have had is but in hypocrisy ; and, Oh that God would cut me off ! that I were in hell, and knew the worst ! Take heed, I say. When a man is sick and raves, whereas otherwise the physician and those that stand about him would in pity use him gently, they are forced to hold and bind him. *Impatiens ægrotus crudelem medicum facit*,—an impatient patient makes a physician more cruel than otherwise he would be. So would God deal more gently with thee but for such impatienties. And know that this is taking God’s name in vain in a high degree. You must know that the graces of God written in your hearts are a part of God’s name, as whereby his love is manifested to you. Now for you to call the truth of these in question, and say they are counterfeit, is as if you should say of the king’s hand and seal, when it comes down to you, that it were counterfeit, and deny it ; which is *crimen læsæ majestatis*. So if a special friend, or your father, had given you some old precious pieces of gold or jewels, &c., as tokens of their love and remembrances of them, for you to say in a distempered fit of jealousy, all these are but counters and but alchemy, you should exceedingly wrong and abuse their love. Thus is it if you deny God’s handwriting in your own hearts, when he hath written therein by his Spirit, joy, fear, love, zeal, &c., and should say it is not like his hand. So if you deny the seal of the Spirit, after he hath sealed you up unto the day of redemption, and say that all the earnest-pennies of heaven are but counters, and alchemy, and nothing worth, in so doing you take his name, his love, his mercy, and all in vain ; yea, you lie against the Holy Ghost, as the Apostle said in another case. Thus though God give you full leave to try and examine all his graces in you and dealings with you ; yet not desperately, at the first blush and view, upon the least mistake or flaw, to say they are no graces, and that he will never be merciful. You abuse him when you do so ; take heed of it.

DIRECTION II.

Secondly, Let the troubled soul make diligent search. Let an inquisition be set up in thy heart, So, Ps. lxxvii. 6, David, in case of desertion, is said to do : ‘ I communed with mine own heart, and made diligent search.’

Now in this search make inquiry into two things :—

First, What might be the true *cause* which provokes God thus to leave thee, and hide himself from thee ?

Secondly, What in thine own heart is the main doubt and objection, reasoning and apprehension, which causeth thee to fear, and thus to call all into question?

These are two distinct things. For though God hath just cause and reason to leave us to this trouble, yet often the thing that troubles and disquiets us is a mere mistake, a misapprehension; even as a father sees good reason often to scare the child, but yet the thing he suffers him to be affrighted with is but a mere bugbear. It is necessary to inquire into both.

First, Examine what might be the true cause that provokes God thus to leave thee. So Lam. iii. 40, 'Let us search and try our ways;' it was spoken by the church in desertion, as appears by the former part of the chapter. And to help yourselves in this, go over all the *cases* which have been propounded. Hast thou not been carnally confident in false signs? or rested too much on true, to the neglect of Christ and God's free grace? Didst thou not before neglect to stir up thy own graces? &c. Go over all those cases mentioned; something or other will be found to be the cause. This is necessary, for till the cause be known, the heart submits not; neither will it sanctify God's name, nor will the trouble cease, till that which provokes God to lay it on be confessed and forsaken. And if it be a particular sin that God aims at, then usually God useth the horror for, and the guilt of, that very sin to afflict thee with; and then that sin itself is made the cause of thy trouble in thy own apprehension. So as then it is easily found out; thou wilt find thy sin to be the thorn in thy foot, the stone in thy shoe, that did grate, gall, and vex thee. David easily knew, in Ps. li., what it was for which God broke his bones; for his very sin was the iron mace, the instrumental cause itself, of God's executing it upon him: the horror of that murder God used as the hammer to break him withal, and as the rod to whip him with: ver. 3, 'My sin,' says he, 'is ever before me;' it was ever in his eye. Indeed, in outward afflictions it is more difficult to find out the cause why God afflicts a man; unless sometimes you may, through God's wise-disposing hand, find and read the sin in the punishment, they so resemble one another: so as a man may say, This cross lay in the womb of such a sin, they are so like,—*in quo peccamus in eodem plectimur*. But in those inward distresses of conscience, that sin which is the true cause, and that moveth God to afflict, God often useth even the guilt of that very sin to terrify thee; to cast a man into the distress, and to keep him in it; it is both the procataretical cause and executioner also.

But in case thou canst not find out the cause, as Job, it seems, did not; and Elihu did suppose he might not, therefore gives him this counsel, (which do thou also follow till God shew thee the cause,) Job xxxiv. 31, 32, 'to say unto God,' as he adviseth there, 'That which I see not, teach thou me, and I will not offend any more;' and if thou findest it, say also, as ver. 31, 'I have borne chastisement' for such a sin; 'I will never offend any more.' Till then God will not let thee down.

The *second* thing to be searched into is, What is the chief and main reasoning in thy heart which makes thee call all into question whether God be thy God? What is the reason why thou thinkest so, what makes thee conclude so?

For this you must consider, that although God for some sin committed doth hide himself from thee, terrifies and lasheth thy conscience, yet that which causeth in thee and worketh in thee this apprehension, that God hath cast thee off, is usually some false reasoning or misapprehension, some mere mistake, some device and sophistry of Satan. When the Corinthian was ex-

communicated for his sin, Satan had leave to terrify his conscience for it; but Satan went further, he would have 'swallowed him up of sorrow,' by persuading him that such a sin was unpardonable, and that God would never own him again. Now the reasoning Satan used to bring this upon him was a false one, some trick and device, 2 Cor. ii. 7, compared with ver. 11; whereof if a man be ignorant, he may go mourning a long while as a cast-away. Therefore take thy soul aside, and seriously ask it, and examine it, why it is thus troubled; what reason, what ground thou hast to think that God is not thy God; and then examine it whether it be a true ground, yea or no. As the Apostle, 1 Pet. iii. 15, bids us 'give a reason of our faith, so ask thou of thy soul the reason of its doubting.

Thus David, Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' And because doubts arise again and again, therefore he asketh the reason again, ver. 11, 'Why art thou cast down?' David knew the way to dissolve them was to search into and examine the reason of them; for still, when he had thoroughly examined them, he found them needless and causeless to put him into such desperate fears. The child of God is often cast into prison, into fears and bondage, and after he hath lain long in them, and begins to read over the writ and *mittimus*, he finds it to be false imprisonment, a mere trick of Satan, his jailer. For as carnal men, when they think their estate good, and that they are in the favour of God, it is some delusion, some false reasoning that is still the ground of such their opinion; as because they prosper in the world, therefore God loves them, because they perform some duties, have some good motions, which grounds they cannot endure to have examined: so contrarily, one that fears God, the ground of his apprehension that he is out of the favour of God is likewise some false reasoning, which, when examined, appears to be such, and when it appears the soul is freed out of its fears and doubts. Heman thought and said that God had cast him off; and what was the reason persuaded him to think so? Ps. lxxxviii. 14, 'because God had hidden his face.' It doth not follow, Heman. A father may hide his face from his son, and yet not cast him off. So David also reasoneth, Ps. lxxvii. 2, 3, 'I have sought God,' prayed, and used the means, and 'yet I am troubled,' and yet God reveals not himself; and what doth he conclude from this? Ver. 7, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever?' He thought, If God had loved me, he would presently have heard me; he thought his soul would not have been worse after praying. This was a false reasoning; for, Ps. lxxx. 4, sometimes 'God shuts out his people's prayers.' A father may sometimes seem so angry that he may throw away his child's petition, and yet resolve to be his father still.

It were infinite to reckon up all the false reasonings that souls in distress have sometimes, from a place of Scripture misunderstood and misapplied. Some who, being annoyed with blasphemous thoughts against God and Christ, and his Spirit, though they be their greatest affliction, yet have thought they have sinned against the Holy Ghost, upon the misapplying that place, Matt. xii. 31, that 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven;' whereas that place is meant only but of some one kind of blasphemy, which indeed is wilful blaspheming of God and the work of his Spirit, out of revenge, Heb. x. 29. So some, because they have sinned after enlightening and tasting, and fallen into some gross sin, think they shall never be renewed, by reason of that place, Heb. vi. 4; whereas he speaks of a wilful and revengeful falling away, with such a revenge as they would, if they could, 'crucify Christ again,' ver. 6. For otherwise David had not been renewed, for he sinned presumptuously, and 'despised the command-

ment.' 2 Sam. xii. 9. So some, if they hear but of some fearful example, and of God's severe dealing with others, how he cast them off upon such a sin, as he did Saul, they think and conclude that upon the commission of the like that God hath cast them off also. But there is no certain ground for such a thought; for 'secret things belong to God.' So because some hear there is a time after which God sometimes offers grace no more, but swears against some men, therefore that their time is also past; which they can have no ground for: for though it be true God doth so with many that hear the gospel, yet the word gives us no certain rules to judge he hath done so by any of us. It is good to fear lest thou shouldst provoke him to it, but thou hast no sign to fear he hath done so with thee. And indeed herein lies the main and first business to be done in raising up a troubled soul, even to find out the ground of their doubting, and to examine the truth of it, and confute it. If a man be falsely imprisoned or cast in a suit at law, what doth he to remedy it? He seeks to find out the error in the writ. So do thou search out the ground of thy trouble; go to some spiritual lawyer skilled in soul-work: keep not the devil's counsel; he opposeth nothing more than making your doubts known.

DIRECTION III.

The third direction I give to such is, that they keep and lend one ear, as well to hear and consider what makes for their comfort, as unto what may make against them.

This direction meets with a great infirmity of such as are in distress, who through Satan's temptations have their hearts so deeply possessed with prejudicial conceits of the misery of their estates, that, as the people of God in Exod. vi. 9, 'through the anguish of their hearts,' were so far distempered that they listened not to the good message which Moses brought them, nor believed that so good news could be true of them: so are the souls of many that are in distress so filled with anguish and sense of misery, and so strongly prepossessed with desperate opinions, and so far put out of hopes, that they reject all that is spoken for their comfort; so as they will not so much as be brought to cast an eye or a thought upon anything that may be an occasion of comfort to them. Like some prisoners at the bar, through extremity of fear they cannot read that in their hearts and in the word which might save them. Tell them of what God hath wrought for them and in them, as evidences of his love; and as they cannot, so often they will not, read them over; or if they do, they read them over but as a man doth a book he means to confute: they pick quarrels, and make objections at everything that is said, as if they were hired as lawyers to plead against themselves, and to find flaws in their evidences. I have observed some who have set all their wits a-work to strengthen all arguments and objections against themselves, and who have been glad if they could object anything which might puzzle those who have come to comfort them; if they could hold argument against themselves; as if they were disputing for the victory only. And thus through much poring upon, and considering only what might make against them, they have had the bolts of their hearts so far shot into despair, and fixed in desperate sorrow, and the true wards of sound evidences so far wrung and wrested by false keys, that when the skilfullest and strongest comforters have come with true keys to shoot back the bolt, they would not turn about; nay, could scarce get entrance.

This was David's infirmity, as at the 10th verse of the 77th Psalm, com-

pared with the 2d verse, 'My soul refuseth to be comforted.' He spilt all the cordials and physic that were brought him: he was not only void of comfort, but refused it. What! bring me promises to comfort me!—will such a one say,—you may as well carry them to one in hell, or give physic to a man past recovery; and so will take down nothing that is given them. So also the church, in the 3d of the Lamentations, ver. 17, 18; her heart was deeply possessed with a desperate apprehension: 'My hope,' says she, 'is perished from the Lord.' And what was it that shot her soul into so fixed despair? Ver. 17, 'she forgot all good:' she *forgot*,—that is, she would not so much as take into consideration and remembrance anything that had been comfortable to her. *All good*,—so the original,—that is, all God's former good and gracious dealings with her, all the good things wrought in her, and for her, whence she might have comfort. And in stead thereof, what did her thoughts feed and chew upon? Only wormwood and gall, her bitterness and distress, poring only on what might make against her: 'I said my hope was perished from the Lord, calling to mind my affliction and my misery, my wormwood and gall.' These she could revolve and roll up and down in her mind, though they were bitter, and would entertain thoughts of nothing else. But when, on the contrary, she began to take into consideration God's gracious and faithful supporting her in that very desertion, 'in faithfulness renewing his mercies every morning,' ver. 22, 23, and that still he maintained in her heart a longing and lingering after him, and a secret cleaving to him, and that God did enable her to choose him as her portion, ver. 24,—'*this* I recall to mind,' says she, ver. 21, (which speech hath reference to those words fore-cited, which follow there,) 'therefore have I hope,'—she spits out her wormwood, and eats her own words. And now that her heart began to listen to what might comfort her, presently she began to have hope. This sullen, peevish, desperate obstinacy is a thing you ought to take heed of; for hereby you take Satan's part, and that against those you ought to love so dearly, even your own souls. But as they said, 'Let Baal plead for himself;' so let Satan plead his own cause, do not you. Hereby also you 'forsake your own mercies,' as it is said, Jonah ii. 8; you give up your own right, and are so far befooled as to plead against your own title, your own interest in the best things you can have interest in—God's mercies, made yours by an everlasting covenant; you give up your portion bequeathed you in your Father's will, which you ought to maintain; and you trust to lying vanities, the soothsayings and fortune-tellings, as I may call them, of Satan and of your own hearts. Hereby also 'ye become judges of evil thoughts,' James ii. 4; for he is an ill hearer of a cause who will hear but one party speak.

DIRECTION IV.

The fourth direction is, to make diligent search into, and to call to remembrance what formerly hath been between God and you. The remembrance of former things doth often uphold, when present sense fails. This David practised in the like case, Psalm lxxvii. 5, 6, when his soul had refused comfort, as I told you, ver. 2; yet in the end he began not only to be willing to listen to what might make for him, but set himself a-work to recall to mind, to 'consider the days of old, to make diligent search,' namely, into the records and register of God's dealings, ver. 11, to see if there were never a record extant which might help him, now the devil pleaded against his title. Even as if your houses and lands were called into question, you would search over old writings and deeds; so do you in this. 'I considered,' says he.

‘the songs in the night,’—that is, that joyful communion he had enjoyed with God, when God and he sang songs together,—and ‘I communed with mine own heart, and made diligent search;’ I tossed and tumbled over my heart, to see if no grace formerly had been there, and if no grace at present were there. He searched into what might comfort him, as well as into the causes might provoke God thus to deal with him; for I take it both may be meant.

And so Job did, when he was thus stricken and forsaken of God: he views over every part of his life; he seeks what dry land he could find to get footing upon in the midst of seas of temptations; recounts what a holy life he had lived, with what fear and strictness he had served God, chap. xxix. and chap. xxx., and chap. xxxi. throughout, and tells them plainly, chap. xxvii. 5, 6, that let them plead and argue what they could against him, and go about to prove him a hypocrite, ‘till I die,’ says he, ‘I will not remove mine integrity from me, nor let go my righteousness:’ I will never give up mine interest in God’s mercies, nor the evidences I have to shew for them. And, says he, chap. xix. 27, 28, ‘Though my reins be at present consumed, yet the root of the matter is in me,’—that is, though God deals thus hardly with me, as you see, yea, though the exercise of grace is much obscured, the sunshine of God’s favour withdrawn, his face hidden from me, and the joyful fruits of righteousness, and comfortable fresh green speeches, and leaves you have known to grow upon this now withered stock fallen off; yet there is the root of the matter still in me—a root of faith that decays not, a constant frame of grace that still remains, which hateth sin, loveth God; and you shall all never beat me from it. And canst thou call nothing to remembrance betwixt God and thee, which argues infallibly his love? What! nothing? Look again. Did God never speak peace unto thy heart, and shed his love abroad in it? Hast thou at no time found in thine heart pure strains of true love and good-will to him, some pure drops of godly sorrow for offending him, and found some dispositions of pure self-denial, wherein thou didst simply aim at his glory more than thine own good? Hast thou never an old tried evidence which hath been acknowledged and confirmed again and again in open court? What! not one? And if thou canst now call to mind but one, if in truth, it may support thee. For if one promise do belong to thee, then all do, for every one conveys whole Christ, in whom all the promises are made, and who is the matter of them. As in the sacraments, the bread conveys whole Christ, and the wine also whole Christ: so in the word every promise conveys whole Christ. And if thou canst say, as the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 6, ‘This thing I have, that I hate sin,’ and every sin, as God hates it, and because he hates it: as Christ owned them for this one grace, and though they had many sins and many failings, yet, says he, this thou hast, &c. If Christ will acknowledge thee to be his for one ear-mark, or if he sees but one ‘spot of his child’ upon thee, Deut. xxxii. 5, thou mayest well plead it, even any one, to him. Yea, though it be but in a lesser degree, in truth and sincerity. For God brings not a pair of scales to weigh your graces, and if they be too light refuseth them: but he brings a touchstone to try them; and if they be true gold, though never so little of it, it will pass current with him; though it be but smoke, not flame, though it be but as a wick in the socket, Matt. xii. 20, (as it is there in the original,) likelier to die and go out than to continue, which we use to throw away; yet he will not quench it, but accept it. Yea, and though at present thou findest in thy sense no grace stirring in thee, nothing but hardness, deadness, &c., yet if thou canst remember, Yea, but this once I had; as a woman with

child, though after her first quickening she doth not always find the child to stir, yet because she did feel it stir, she still conceives hopes and thinks she is with child ; so think thou of the new creature formed within thee.

These things you are to recall and consider in time of distress : to remember former graces and spiritual dispositions in you ; and God's gracious dealings with you. God remembers them to have mercy on you ; and why should you not remember them to comfort you ? Therefore, Heb. vi. 9, 10, 'We hope,' says he, 'better things of you ; for God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love ;' namely, to reward you. And therefore he calls upon them in like manner, Heb. x. 31, 'to call to remembrance the former days' to comfort them ; how they held out when their hearts were tried to the bottom ; when shipwreck was made of their goods, good names, and all for Christ,—yet they made not shipwreck of a good conscience. And if thou dost thus call to remembrance things of old, and yet canst find no comfort at first from them,—as often ye may not, as was David's case, Psalm lxxvii., for after his 'remembrance of his songs in the night,' still his soul was left in doubt, and he goes on to say, 'Will God ever be merciful?'—yet have recourse to them again, and then again, for though they comfort not at one time, yet they may at another ; that it may be seen that God comforts by them, and not they alone of themselves. Hast thou found a promise (which is a 'breast of consolation,' Isa. lxi. 11) milkless ? Yet again suck ; comfort may come in the end. If after thou hast empannelled a jury and grand inquest to search, and their first verdict condemns thee, or they bring in an *ignoramus* ; yet do as wise judges often do, send them about it again, they may find it the next time. Jonah looked once, it seems, and found no comfort, chap. ii. 4, for he said, 'I will look again towards thine holy temple.' A man's heart is like those two-faced pictures : if you look one way towards one side of them, you shall see nothing but some horrid shape of a devil, or the like ; but go to the other side and look again, and you shall see the picture of an angel or of some beautiful woman, &c. So some have looked over their hearts by signs at one time, and have to their thinking found nothing but hypocrisy, unbelief, hardness, self-seeking ; but not long after, examining their hearts again by the same signs, they have espied the image of God drawn fairly upon the table of their hearts.

DIRECTION V.

But now if former signs remembered bring thee no comfort in, but the waves that come over thy soul prove so deep that thou canst find no bottom to cast anchor on, the storm and stress so great that no cable will hold, but they snap all asunder, as is often the case of many a poor soul :—

Then take and put in practice this fifth direction, *renew thy faith and repentance*, set thy heart a-work to believe and repent afresh as if thou hadst never yet begun. Spend not all the time in casting out of anchors, but fall a-pumping ; leave off and cease a while to reason about the goodness of thy former faith and repentance, and set upon the work of believing and repenting anew. Say, Well, suppose I have not hitherto been in the state of grace, yet I am not incapable of it for time to come, I may obtain grace yet. Suppose my faith and repentance hath not been true hitherto, I will therefore now begin to endeavour after such as is true. And to that end make this use of whatsoever flaws the devil finds in either, to direct thee what to mend and rectify for time to come ; begin to make up the breaches and unsoundness which is discovered, endeavour after a supply of all those wants he

objects to be in either : mend all the holes he picks. Say, Lord, I cast my soul on all thy mercies afresh ; I desire now to make my heart perfect with thee for time to come, to part with every sin, to submit to every duty, to curse every by-end to hell, and to set up God and Christ as my mark, pole-star, and aim in all. And when thou hast done this, let the devil say his worst. This of all the former directions I commend to you, as a special means to dissolve and put these temptations about assurance to an end. I set a *probatum est* upon it ; take it, practise it, it is a tried one ; and it is that which at the last the church in desertion comes to : Lam. iii. 40, ‘Come, let us try our ways, and turn to the Lord ;’ that is the last way and course she takes. Now when the water is at the lowest, and the tide of assurance ebbed, mend up your banks, as you use to do at low waters. Now when nothing but hypocrisy, and unbelief, and falseness of heart appear to thee to be in thy heart, do thou groan, sigh, endeavour after the contrary sincerity ; and let Satan say his worst. And this direction I now in the next place prescribe you, because in time of temptation about assurance, it is the usual course of some troubled souls to spend all their thoughts upon what formerly they have had, as if they must have comfort only from the former work, or no way ; laying out all their time and cost in new suits and new trials about their former title ; and when they have been cast again and again, yet still to do nothing but read over old evidences again and again, and bring in and study new proofs.

But know, that though this is to be done, and not to be neglected, and is found often comfortable, therefore in the former direction I exhorted to it : yet you are not only to take that course, nor to look back so much to your former faith and repentance as to forget to practise new ; but being to practise new acts of faith and repentance, this is the rightest way, the shortest cut, and requires as little pains. Thou mayest with as little charge get a new lease renewed, as prove good the old one ; it will require many terms to examine over all thy evidences again and again, which also haply are blotted and blurred. Thou mayest cut the knot and dissolve the temptations sooner by new faith, than untie it by reasonings and disputings. And the truth is, in the end thou must come to this ; for God’s great end in deserting is to put you upon renewing your faith and repentance. ‘Except ye be converted,’ as Christ says to his apostles, converted as it were anew. He will not deliver thee out of the dungeon, till thou enterest into new bonds and bail for thy good behaviour. Therefore begin to do it soon. And whereas thou thinkest that by this thou mayest prejudice thy former title, that is not my meaning, as if thou shouldest utterly give up thy old faith and repentance as counterfeit ; ‘I will keep my integrity,’ says Job : only my advice is to forbear, and to cease pleading of it for a time, and to begin to renew it rather, that is it I exhort unto. And then the comfort of thy old repentance will come in. As the apostle says of the law, so I of thy former title, ‘it is not destroyed, but established’ rather by this. And as Christ says, John vii. 17, ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine that it is of God ;’ so as the best way to know the truth is not to spend all the time in disputing about it, but to practise it, which puts an end to controversies in men’s hearts : so say I, to know the truth of, and so to come to have the comfort of former grace, is to add to these reasonings about it, the practice of believing and repenting anew. This baffles the devil exceedingly, and gets the advantage of him ; for by this the suit is removed, all his old pleas dashed, this puts him upon a new reply, diverts the war, and indeed non-pluses him ; for what can he say to it ? He must now prove thou art

incapable of grace, that thou shalt never repent, which all the world and devils in hell cannot prove. And yet if in this case he tells thee, as usually he doth, that all will be in vain for time to come, as well as it hath been for time past :—

DIRECTION VI.

Then, sixthly, stand not now disputing it, but be peremptory and resolute in thy faith and turning to God, let the issue be what it will be. Faith is never nonplussed. Job vows ‘he will trust him though he kills him,’ chap. xiii. 15. So do thou ; whether he will damn or save thee, do what he will with thee, leave not to cast thyself upon him for mercy, nor to serve and love him. Go thou on to use the means diligently and constantly ; and be so much the more diligent, fear and hate sin still, pray day and night : as Heman did when he thought himself cut off, Ps. lxxxviii. 1, ‘I have cried day and night, though I be as one thou rememberest no more,’ ver. 4, 5 ; and so at the 9th verse, ‘I have called daily.’ Though, ver. 10–12, he thought himself in hell, and thought it a miracle ever to be raised up again, yet says he, ver. 13, ‘but I have cried to thee.’ That *but* seems to come in as an expression of his resolution hitherto, that though these were his apprehensions of his condition, yet howsoever, he had, and accordingly would go on to seek the Lord. Suppose thou findest no relish in the ordinances, yet use them ; though thou art desperately sick, yet eat still, take all is brought thee, some strength comes of it. Say, Be I damned or saved, hypocrite or not hypocrite, I resolve to go on. And there is good reason for it ; for if thou shouldst leave off to serve the Lord, and resolve never to look after him more, then thou art sure to be damned. If there be ‘an evil heart in thee to depart from the living God,’ thou art undone. But this other way of seeking him, thou mayest in the end prevail ; ‘Who knows but God may be merciful ?’ In the 3d of the Lamentations, ver. 29, this counsel is given to a soul being yoked and deserted, ‘to put his mouth in the dust ; and it waiteth,’ says he, suffers, and doth anything, not only if he hath hope, but ‘if there may be hope,’ if there be but such a thought it may prove so, he will make a venture ; and so do thou. See what Esther did in the like desperate case : thought she, If I hold my tongue, (and so Mordecai told her,) God will destroy me. And better it was to make a venture upon the king to speak, and so to carry her life in her hand ; and therefore she says, ‘If I perish, I perish.’ And so the lepers, see how they reasoned in a desperate case : 2 Kings vii. 3, 4, ‘If we go into the city, we are sure to die, for the famine is there ; if we sit still, we die also. Come, let us fall into the hands of the Assyrians : if they save us alive, so ; if they kill us, we shall,’ however, ‘but die.’ And there were many strong arguments to move them to think they would kill them, for they were Jews, and so of the enemy’s side, and might be suspected for spies ; if not, they were lepers, that might infect the camp, who were fit for no service, for nothing but to be knocked on the head. Yet in this desperate case they took the surer and more probable part, ventured to fall to the Assyrians’ side, and the success is known to you all. So reason thou : If I give over my believing, humbling myself, praying, attending on the means, I shall certainly perish, there is no help for it ; I will therefore rather go on to do all these as sincerely as I can to the utmost, and if God saves me, a sinner, a leper, an enemy, so ; if not, I can be but damned.

But let me tell thee, such a resolution can never go to hell with thee ; yea, if any have a room in heaven, such a soul shall : for this puts not the devil only to it ;—for in this case, what can the devil himself say to thee ?

for if thou wilt venture thy soul, service, and all upon God, let the issue be what it will, in this resolute yet safe way ; if thou wilt in a pure trust refer it unto God with contentedness and submission, what is that to him ?—but it puts God to it also, who cannot find in his heart to damn such a one who shall go on to do thus. When thou thus freely servest him, chooseth him, venturest and leavest thyself and all the issue of thy ways to him ; thou, by this one act in such a case, shalt win more upon him and his love, than haply by all thy obedience all thy life before. Thy salvation, and the assurance of it, that is God's work, leave it to him, try his faithfulness ; it is self-love makes us too much to be troubled about it. Go thou on to believe, repent, mourn for sin, hate, forsake it ; to use the means, &c. ; that is thy work ; and so doing, thou canst not be damned.

DIRECTION VII.

Let him trust in the name of the Lord.

If you ask what ground a soul in this case may have to venture thus upon—

I answer, His *name* ; which will make up a seventh direction.

Being thus resolved to turn to God, and to go on to fear and obey him, thou mayest safely and confidently trust in and stay upon the name of God, when thou hast nothing else to rest upon. This, you see, is the direction which the text gives ; and I had thought therefore to have made a distinct point of it ; but I will somewhat more largely open and explain it, only as it is a direction, and means of support and comfort in this distress, and so take it as it riseth out of the text. Thus—

That to one who resolves to fear God and obey him, the name of God is an all-sufficient prop and stay for his faith to rest on, when he sees nothing in himself, or in any promise in the world belonging unto him.

The name of God alone is here opposed to all other means and props which faith hath to rest on. It is opposed to all comfortable sense of God's love, to all sight of any grace in a man's self to which any promise is made. So that when the soul shall look into itself with one eye, and glance over all the word of God with another ; and yet shall see not any one grace in the one, nor promise in the other made to any grace within itself which it may rest upon ; yet the soul then looking upon God, and considering what a God he is, and what he says of himself, of his mercy and kindness, and free grace towards sinful men, even the sole consideration of what merely it knows to be in God, as he is revealed in the covenant of grace, may support him. This it is to stay upon his name.

Now, to explain this further to you. By the name of God two things are meant :—

First, Those glorious attributes, especially of grace and mercy, whereby God hath expressed himself, and made himself known to us.

Secondly, Jesus Christ, as he is made and set forth to be righteousness to the sons of men.

For the *first*, in Exod. xxxiv. 4–7, the Lord proclaimed his name, 'The Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and will by no means clear the impitent.'

For the *second*, I refer to that place, Jer. xxiii. 6, speaking of Christ, 'This is the name wherewith he shall be called,' or made known to us, 'THE

LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS ;’ that is, that Jesus Christ, who is God, hath righteousness in him for us, which may be made ours.

So that when a poor soul in distress is not able to say, I see such or such signs, or any evidence in myself, whereby I can say God is my God, or that Christ is mine ; yet because I see free grace enough in God, and righteousness in Christ, which I, being a sinful man, and not a devil, may therefore be capable of, and may come to have an interest in them, though I know nothing in myself whereby I can challenge any present interest ; and because Grace and Mercy is his name, and Our Righteousness his Son’s name, therefore I do cast myself upon both for pardon and favour, and thereupon my soul leans, stays, and abides, and from these it will not be driven. So that these two apprehensions meeting in the heart in truth, help to make up this resting upon his name here spoken of : namely, first, that there is such free grace, good-will, and mercy, &c., in God, and that Jesus Christ is appointed and made to be our righteousness ; and, secondly, that I am capable of, and may come to have an interest in both these, and that though there be nothing in me which may challenge an interest in them, yet there is nothing that excludes me ; whereupon I cast myself upon God for both, and there rest ; yea, though I cannot yet say that ever I shall obtain them. And this, where it is truth, and accompanied with that firm resolution of turning to God in all things before-mentioned, is as good faith as any of you have in your hearts.

And so I come to the proof of this : namely, that when the name of God and Christ are thus simply and alone apprehended, they may be sufficient ground for faith to rest upon ; than which nothing can be more comfortable to a poor distressed believer. Num. xiv., when God’s wrath waxed hot against his people, as sometimes in like manner it doth against a poor soul, that God began to say, ‘How long shall they provoke me?’ ver. 11, and speaks of destroying them, and of making Moses a great nation ; what hath Moses’s faith recourse unto, but to that proclamation of his name you heard of before ? and urgeth that, ver. 17, 18, ‘Let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken. The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.’ And he desires him to shew his power in pardoning, because as much power is seen in overcoming his wrath as in making a world. ‘Let thy power be great ;’ it was his name, you see, that was alleged by Moses, and prevailed with God for mercy. So also for his Son’s sake, ‘The Lord our righteousness :’ Elihu says, Job xxxiii., when a man’s soul is in deepest distress, as in ver. 19–22 he describes it, yet says he, ver. 23, ‘If there be a messenger to shew a man his uprightness,’—that is, that righteousness that is laid up for men in the Lord Jesus,—‘then God is gracious to him, and says, Deliver him ;’ and, he resting thereupon, ‘his flesh returns to him again,’ becoming a means to stay him and restore him. I mention these places of the Old Testament rather than of the New ; out of which you see God’s name and his Son’s name are all-sufficient to uphold and support a soul. So the penman of that psalm, whether David or whoever, Ps. cxxx., when he was ‘in his depths,’ as ver. 1, 2, plunged over head and ears in sorrow and discomfiture, what hath his faith recourse unto ? ver. 4, ‘to God’s name,’ to nothing that was in himself, but simply to what his faith apprehended to be in God. ‘Mercy is with thee ;’ he says no more : in him, and with him, it is to be had. And he confirms his faith in that by this argument, because else ‘none would fear him ;’ and, ‘if thou wert extreme to mark what were amiss, no man could stand,’ or would be saved. Therefore, ‘surely,’ says he, ‘mercy is with thee,’ and,

'therefore let Israel hope in the Lord,' ver. 7. And why? What! because Israel sees he hath grace in himself? No, but because 'mercy is with him and plenteous redemption,' ver. 7; which word redemption hath relation to his Son's name. There is enough in him, else he will have none; and Israel is mentioned in his will as capable of it; and therefore, says he, 'I will wait and hope in the Lord,' ver. 5. And though he could not say that God had forgiven him, yet 'forgiveness was with him,' and there he pitcheth and resteth his soul; as a beggar at a great man's door, when there is none else in the country able or willing to relieve him, there he lies, though he knows not whether he shall have anything or no. 'In my father's house there is bread enough,' says the prodigal; there it is to be had, and nowhere else; and there is enough. And crumbs will serve me, says the woman of Canaan. Thou art the Mediator, thought she, and it is thy business to save; and though I am a dog, yet I am capable of having crumbs. 'Woman,' says Christ, 'great is thy faith;' not such faith among all my disciples. These trusted in his name, and nothing in themselves. So Ps. lxii., David says, at ver. 5, 'he trusted in God for salvation and mercy,' and exhorts throughout the whole, 'trust in God fully, and at all times, and in no creature,' ver. 8, 9. And what was it he rested upon? Simply two attributes of his, viz., mercy and power: 'God hath spoken once,' (that is, irrevocably; as Ps. lxxxviii. 35, 'Once have I sworn,' &c.) 'and twice I have heard this,'—that is, often met with it in the word, and thought of it,—says he, 'that with God is power,' ver. 11, so as he is able to save in the greatest distress; and I have heard that 'to him belongeth mercy also,' ver. 12, and therefore he may be willing to help; and because these are in him, though I have nothing in myself, yet these I rest upon, and these alone. Many such instances more might be brought.

The *reasons* why the name of God, and what is in God, is prop sufficient for faith to rest upon, are—

Reason 1.—Because the name of God, that is, God's attributes, and Christ's righteousness, do sufficiently, and adequately, and fully answer all wants and doubts, all objections and distresses we can have, or can be in. Whatsoever our want or temptations be, he hath a name to make supply. For example, to take that his name in pieces, mentioned Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, consider every letter in that his name, and every letter answers to some temptation may be made by us.

Art thou in misery and great distress? He is merciful; 'The Lord merciful.' The *Lord*, therefore *able* to help thee; and *merciful*, therefore *willing*.

Yea, but thou wilt say, I am unworthy; I have nothing in me to move him to it. Well, therefore, he is *gracious*; now grace is to shew mercy freely. Yea, but I have sinned against him long, for many years; if I had come in when I was young, mercy might have been shewn me. To this he says, 'I am *long-suffering*.' Yea, but my sins every way abound in number, and it is impossible to reckon them up, and they abound in heinousness; I have committed the same sins again and again; I have been false to him, broke promise with him again and again. His name also answers this objection, he is *abundant in goodness*; he abounds more in grace than thou in sinning. And though thou hast been false again and again to him, and broke all covenants, yet he is *abundant in truth*; also better than his word, for he cannot to our capacities express all that mercy that is in him for us. Yea, but I have committed great sins, aggravated with many and great circumstances, against knowledge, wilfully, &c. He forgives *iniquity, transgression, and sin*; sins of all sorts. Yea, but there is mercy thus in him but

for a few, and I may be none of the number. Yes, there is mercy for *thousands*. And he *keeps* it; treasures of it lie by him, and are kept, if men would come and take them.

Object what thou canst, his name will answer thee. Needest thou comfort as well as pardon? He is both 'Father of mercies' and 'God of all comforts;' that is his name, 2 Cor. i. 3. Needest thou peace of conscience, being filled with terrors? He is the 'God of peace,' 1 Thess. v. 23. Yea, but I have a heart empty of grace and holiness, and full of corruptions. He is the 'God of all grace' to heal thee, as well as of peace to pardon thee. Needest thou wisdom and direction? He is the 'Father of lights,' as the Apostle says. Is thy heart inconstant and full of double-mindedness? He is 'unchangeable' also, as he speaks there, James i. Thus all objections that can be made may be answered out of his name. Therefore it is all-sufficient for faith to rest upon.

The like may be fully shewed in his Son's name; in whom God hath made himself strong to shew mercy and bestow all good things. Whose name is adequate to God's name; that is, is of as large extent in worth and merit, as God's heart is in his purposes of shewing and bestowing mercies, to purchase all that God meant to bestow. Whose name hath likewise an all-sufficiency in it to supply all our wants and desires, and satisfy all scruples. For example, that his name mentioned by the prophet, Isa. ix. 6, which he here directs to, compared with 1 Cor. i. 30. For, would we have peace of conscience, and the guilt of sins removed? He is the 'Prince of Peace,' and is made 'righteousness' to us. Are we in depths of distress, terrors within, terrors without, out of which we see no redemption? He is the 'mighty God;' 'able to save to the utmost,' being made 'redemption' to us. Want we grace and his image to be renewed and increased in us? He is 'the everlasting Father;' a *father* to beget his likeness in us, and *everlasting* to maintain it ever, when it is begun once: he is made 'sanctification' to us. Want we wisdom to guide us? He is the 'Counsellor,' and is made *wisdom* to us. All we want he hath; even as all he hath we want. And further, although we not only want all these, but never so much of all these, his name is also 'Wonderful.' For such he is in all these; able to do beyond all our expectations, to wonderment.

Or if the soul desires more distinct and particular satisfaction in point of justification, which consists in the pardon of sins and acceptance to the favour of God, it being the point which in this state of desertion is questioned, and wherein the soul desires satisfaction; that other name of his, 'The Lord our righteousness,' Jer. xxiii. 6, will answer all objections and doubts that our hearts can make, if we had but skill to spell all the letters in it. For if that righteousness of his satisfied God, who, in condemning us, is greater than our hearts, 1 John iii. 20, then it may satisfy our hearts much more. The righteousness of his life and death is not only *ἀντίλυτρον*, an adequate sufficient ransom, 1 Tim. ii. 6, but there is 'plenteous redemption' in it, Ps. cxxx, yea, to superfluity, as the Apostle's phrase implies: *ὑπερπερίονασι*, 1 Tim. i. 14, that is, over-full, more than would serve the turn, and that to pardon his sins, who, ver. 15, was 'the chief of sinners.' He elsewhere challengeth all the wit and powers of sin and hell and darkness to appear in this dispute, and undertakes to answer them all out of this one position, which he lays as a bottom truth, 'Christ hath died,' Rom. viii. 34, which is in effect the same with this, 'The Lord our righteousness;' 'Who therefore,' says he, 'shall condemn?' What can be alleged, either in the heinousness of sin in general, or in any of thy sins in particular, unto which

an answer may not hence be fetched from the righteousness of his death and life? Is it that sin is an offence against the great God—‘Against thee, against thee,’ &c., as David speaks? And is not this his righteousness, the righteousness of Jehovah—Jehovah our righteousness, who is the mighty God? Is the glory of this great God, and all his excellencies, debased by us in sinning? And will not the emptying of his glory, Phil. ii. 7, whose name is ‘the brightness of his Father’s glory,’ Heb. i. 3, in performing this righteousness for us, satisfy and make amends? Are our sins the transgression of the holy and righteous law in every part of it? And did not Jehovah, who gave and made that law, to make himself our righteousness, ‘make himself under the law,’ Gal. iv. 4, and, to make up a full righteousness, fulfil every part of it? Rom. viii. 3, 4. Is it thy continuance in sin, and the number and the iteration of them, that amazeth thee? ‘All fulness dwells in him’ who is our righteousness, Col. i. 19, and hath dwelt in him longer than sin in thee; and the righteousness of our Messiah is ‘everlasting righteousness,’ Dan. ix. 24; the merit of which an eternity of sinning could not expend or make void. And is all this righteousness laid up for himself only, or for any other sort of creatures, so as thou mightest never come to have an interest in it? No; the top of our comfort is, that ‘our righteousness’ is one letter of his name, and that our names are put into his. For us it is, and ours it is ordained to be: as much ours, to save us, trusting upon it, as his own to glorify him. Ours, not for himself; he had no need of it, being God blessed for ever. Ours, not the angels; neither the good, for they are justified by their own; nor the bad, they are put out of God’s will for ever. But ours, who are the sons of men; and among them, theirs especially who are ‘broken, lost, whose souls draw near to the grave, and their lives to the destroyers,’ and that come and pray unto God, and stay themselves upon it: unto them God cannot deny it, for it is theirs. For he will ‘render to man his righteousness,’ Job xxxiii. 22, 26. So as his Son’s name also is all-sufficient to answer all objections for faith to rest upon: ‘So as they that know his name will trust in him,’ Ps. ix. 10.

Reason 2.—A second reason why his name is sufficient, though you have and see nothing in you, nor any promise made to any grace in you to rest upon, is, because even all those promises made to conditions in us, which we ordinarily look unto, are ‘yea and amen’ only in this his name and his Son’s name. That is the original of them all, the root, the seed of them all; his name is the *materia prima*, the first matter of all those secondary promises, *ex quo fiunt, et in quod resolvuntur*; his name gives being to them all. If it were not for the mercy, grace, truth, kindness in him, and the righteousness which is in his Son, all the promises which are made, what were they worth? As the worth of bonds depends upon the sufficiency of the man who makes them, so all these promises upon his name. Therefore now, when you rely upon his name, having as yet no promise made to any thing in you to rely upon, you then rely upon that which is the foundation of all those promises; you then have recourse to the original, which is more authentical than extract copies; you rely on that which all those other are resolved into, and therefore is sufficient, though all the rest fail you in your apprehension.

Reason 3.—Thirdly, his mere name is support enough for faith, and may be so; because it is for his name’s sake, and his Son’s name’s sake, he doth all he doth; and for nothing in us, but merely for what is in himself. So Isa. xlviii. 9, 10, ‘For my name’s sake,’ &c.; so also Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32, ‘For my name’s sake, and not your sake;’ and Isa. xliii. 25, ‘I am he that blot-

teth out thy transgression for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' For it he blotteth out transgression, and pardoneth. And if it be for his name's sake he doth all he doth, and filleth all promises made to us, and to what is in us, then when thou seest nothing in thyself to which any promise is made, nothing which may appear to be any argument or motive that he will pardon thee, then trust thou in that his name; that because he is God, and hath mercy in him, that therefore he will do it. For that thing which is the only or main motive to God himself to do anything for us, must needs be, when apprehended and believed, the strongest and surest ground for our faith also, to persuade the heart that he will do it. As it is in knowledge, the knowledge of the cause of things causeth the surest knowledge; so in faith, the knowledge of the main motive to God the cause of all, causeth the greatest certainty of persuasion.

This then may direct poor souls in distress what to venture all upon; upon what ground to hazard souls, labours, endeavours, faith, repentance, obedience, and all, upon his name, when they see nothing in themselves to which any promise belongs. As David says, Ps. lxxiii. 26, 'My heart may fail, and my flesh may fail, but God will never fail:' so I may say, your comforts in prayers, in hearing, your joys, your earnest-pennies you have laid up, may be all spent in a dearth, your own graces, and all promises made to them; your own hearts may fail, and being creatures they use to fail again and again; but God's name and his Son's name, rested on, will never fail you. Lean on these, not by halves, in distress, but trust perfectly, as the Apostle says, on that mercy you hear is in God, upon that grace revealed, 1 Pet. i. 13,—that is, throw and cast your whole souls, your whole weight upon it. He only 'hath perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,' Isa. xxvi. 3. Have not half thy soul on that 'rock which is higher than thou,' Ps. lxi. 2, but creep up and get all upon it; and when all fail, renew thy faith on his name. Thereon rest, there die. To this purpose may that of Solomon serve, Prov. xviii. 10: 'His name,' says he, 'is a strong tower, and the righteous fly to it, and are safe.' Now what end is there and use of a tower in a city, but when all outworks are taken, the walls scaled, all fortifications forsaken, houses left? then a tower holds out last, and is a refuge to flee to. So also when the devil and God's wrath beleaguers thee round, and encompasseth thy soul, and the comfort of every grace in thee is taken from thee, and thou art driven from, and art forced to forsake all other thy holds and grounds of comfort, then fly to the name of the Lord as thy city of refuge; as, Heb. vi. 18, it is compared. Say, There is mercy in thee, Lord, and that is thy name; and there is righteousness in thy Son, and that is his name: and I am directed to trust in thy name in time of need. And here rest, and catch hold as on the horns of the altar; and if thou diest, die there.

DIRECTION VIII.

The eighth direction is, to *wait* upon God, thus trusting in his name, in the constant use of all ordinances and means of comfort. Waiting is indeed but an act of faith further stretched out. As an allegory is but a continued metaphor, so waiting is but a continuing to believe on God, and to look for help from him with submission, though he stays long ere he comes. Waiting is an act of faith resting on God; and an act of hope expecting help from him; an act of patience, the mind quietly contenting itself till God doth come; and of submission if he should not come. Therefore, says the church, being in this very case, Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good to hope, and quietly to wait

for the salvation of the Lord.' It is good indeed to do so : for God will afflict you less, ease you the sooner, comfort you the more when he doth come ; and in the meanwhile it makes you to ' possess your souls,' and to be yourselves, and upholds them. And to do otherwise, to be impatient, and to ' give over looking for the Lord,' as Ahaz did, is the greatest folly that can be ; for, as Job says, chap. xii. 14, ' If he shut up, there is no opening ;' all the world cannot let you out ; he keeps the keys of the dungeon, and you must stay his leisure. And he stays but for a fit time to let you out, Isa. xxx. 18, ' He will wait to be gracious to you, for he is a God of judgment,' a wise and judicious God, and knows the fittest times and seasons. And that he stays so long is not out of want of mercy, for he waits and longs to be gracious, but he doth it out of judgment, and his wisdom sees not a fit time ; he is grieved as well as you that you are not yet fit for mercy, that his mercy should not yet be exalted, if he would shew it, till you further see your misery ; and therefore, says he, ' Blessed are all they that wait for him.' And as he now waiteth but to be the more gracious to thee, so he did heretofore a long while wait for thee, that thou shouldest begin to turn to him and say, ' When will it once be ?' Jer. xiii. 27. Thou madest him stay thy leisure in turning from thy sin ; why may he not make thee stay his for the pardon of it ? And indeed the escaping hell in the end is so great a mercy, that it is worth the waiting for all thy days, though thou endure a hell here, and gettest not a good look till the very last gasp and moment of living ; therefore ' put thy mouth in the dust, and wait quietly, if there may be hope' at last, Lam. iii. 20.

And waiting thus, go on to use all the means of grace more diligently, more constantly, though thou findest a long while no good by them. Omit no ordinance God hath appointed for thy comfort and recovery. As in a long sickness, you still use means though many have failed ; as the woman who had the bloody issue spent all upon physicians, in the use of means for her recovery. That trouble of mind doth only hurt you that drives you from the means. Therefore the devil endeavours nothing more than to keep such souls from the word, from good company, from the sacraments, from prayer, by objecting their unprofitableness unto them, and that all is in vain, and that you do but increase your condemnation.

But, first, if thou learnest no other lesson in the use of the means but that thou art of thyself most unprofitable, and that unless God teacheth thee to profit no good is done, and so learnest to depend upon God in the ordinance ; this is a great degree of profiting.

And, secondly, as when men are sick and eat, and cast up again, you use to say, yet take something down, for some strength is gotten, something remains in the stomach which keeps life and soul together : so I say here, though thou shouldest forget in a manner all thou hearest, seemest to reap no benefit by it, yet hear, for some secret strength is gotten by it. And as for increasing thy condemnation, know that utterly to neglect and despise the means is greater condemnation ; and that to use the means would lessen thy condemnation. Therefore read, pray, meditate, hear, confer, receive the sacraments, forbear not these your appointed meals. Indeed when the body is sick ye use to forbear your appointed food, but when the soul is sick there is more need of them than ever. All these are both meat and medicine, food, physic, cordials, and all. Use reading the word ; the Scriptures were written for our consolation, therefore read them much ; attend on preaching, for ' God creates the fruit of the lips, Peace,' Isa. lvii. 19. So receive the sacrament often : those days are sealing days ; go thou and confess thy sins,

write over thy pardon, put in all thou knowest by thyself, bring it to Christ to set his seal to it.

Only take this caution, that thou trust not to the use of the means, but unto God in the means. To think, Oh, I shall have comfort by such a man, or at such a time, in such an ordinance; this often dasheth all. So believe in God as if you used no means, and yet as diligently use the means, even as if your confidence were to be in them.

DIRECTION IX.

To pray: pleas to be used to God in prayer for recovery out of this condition.

And, ninthly, above all things *pray*; and get others also to pray for thee, for God often 'restores comfort' unto such at the request of mourners for them, Isa. lvii. 18. But yet especially be earnest and fervent in pouring forth thy complaint thyself; for though the speaking of friends may somewhat further thy suit, yet, as between two wooers, so it must be wrought out between God and thee alone in private; and his good-will must be obtained by wooing him in secret. This counsel the Apostle gives you, James v. 13, 'Is any man afflicted? let him pray.' And because of all afflictions else, this of darkness in a man's spirit needeth prayer the most; therefore David pens a psalm on purpose, not for his own private use only, but for the benefit and use of all other in the like distress, as, by the title of it, doth appear, Ps. cii.: 'A prayer for the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.' And this, says David, is my constant practice, 'when my soul is overwhelmed, I pour out my prayer unto thee,' Ps. lxi. 2. And it was Christ's also, for in his agony 'he prayed yet more earnestly,' Luke xxii. 44.

When at any time, therefore, thy sins and God's wrath, meeting in thy conscience, make thee deadly sick, as Isaiah speaks, then pour forth thy soul, lay open and confess thy sin; and as it will ease thee, as vomiting useth to do, so also it will move God to pity, and to give thee cordials and comforts to restore thee again. Thus David, Ps. xxxviii. 18, (being in great distress, ver. 2-5,) 'I will declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for my sin;' and he makes it an argument to God to pardon him, when his bones were broken, Ps. li., 'Cleanse me from my sin,' ver. 2, 'for I acknowledge my transgressions,' ver. 3; and when he had confessed, ver. 4-6, then he cries, 'Make me to hear of joy and gladness,' ver. 8; and 'restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,' ver. 12. And what was the chief ingredient, the main and principal motive, which wrought most kindly with him to confess and mourn, and brought up all? 'Against thee, thee only:' he puts in twice as much of the consideration thereof as of any other ingredient, to make his heart mourn; that chiefly, if not only, melted, dissolved him. And in these thy confessions, let the same also mainly work with thee. Against thee, thee, have I sinned, thus oft, thus grievously, thus presumptuously; against thee, a God so great, and yet withal so good, so kind, so willing to receive and pardon, if my heart (say) were but as willing to turn unto thee. And when thy case is as Job's was, chap. x. 15-17, that 'thou art full of confusion,' as he speaks there; so full as thou thinkest thy heart could hold no more; and yet 'it increaseth,' as it is there, and he fills thee fuller yet;—then do thou pour out thy complaints to him, as he pours in confusion into thee; and when he 'hunts' thee, as Job there complains, 'like a fierce lion,' fall thou down and humble thyself like a poor and silly lamb; if thou diest, die at

his feet, mourning, bleeding out thy soul in tears. And when he hunts thee up and do•wn, and pursues thee with blow after blow, 'follow thou hard after him' wherever he goes, Ps. lxiii. 8, with complaint after complaint. And when yet he leaves thee not, but again and again returns, as some read it, after some intermission, and shews himself terrible to thee day after day, night after night, yet do thou look in like manner 'again and again towards his holy temple,' as Jonah did, chap. ii. 4. And when he begins to bring in new sins, new indictments against thee, as it is in the 17th verse, 'Thou renewest thy witnesses;' and when thou thoughtest he had done with thee, he fetcheth new rods forth, and enters into new quarrels and reckonings long since past and forgotten, as it is in the same verse, 'changes and war against me,' vicissitudes and armies of disquietments; and when one army is overcome, new appear in the field;—then fall thou down upon thy knees, and say as Job at last doth, chap. vii. 20, 'I have sinned,' I have sinned, 'what shall I do unto thee?' what shall I do unto thee? 'O thou preserver'—and not the destroyer—'of men :?' these and these abominations I have done, and I cannot now undo them; and what shall I do to obtain thy favour? Alas! nothing that can satisfy him; only 'confess thy sins, accept thy punishment,' Lev. xxvi. 41. Go and strip thyself therefore, and with all submission present a naked back to him; and though every stroke fetcheth not blood only, but well-nigh thy soul away, yet complain thou not one whit of him; 'put thy mouth in the dust,' Lam. iii. 29, 30. Be still, not a word; but only such as whereby thou utterest thy complaints, and dost acknowledge thine own deservedness of ten thousand times more; and say, as Mic. vii. 9, 'I will bear thine indignation patiently, for I have sinned against thee.' Bear witness still to every stroke, that it is not only just, but also 'less than thou hast deserved,' Ezra ix. 13; and that it is 'his mercy thou art not consumed' and cut off by every blow; and the heavier he lays on, struggle thou not, he will let thee down the sooner. The higher he lifts up his hand to strike, the lower let thy soul fall down: 'humble yourselves under his mighty hand;' and still kiss the rod when he hath done.

And then 'take up words' of pleading for thyself,—it is for thy life,—desiring him to remember what he hath been ever thinking of, even from everlasting, 'thoughts of peace' and mercy to us-ward, and 'the number of them cannot be told,' as David says, Ps. xl. 5; which he hath been ever thinking of, and with the greatest of delights, as one that was in his bosom, and was his counsellor, (his Son,) tells us, Prov. viii. 31. And plead thou as David and other saints of God have done. What are now become of all these thy thoughts of mercy? Are they restrained? Isa. lxiii. 16. What! are all now on the sudden forgotten, Ps. lxxvii. 9, laid aside, which thou hast been thinking on so long? Hast thou forgotten thine old and ancient delights? Ask him if he hath forgotten his own name,—to be gracious and abundant in kindness,—it is his name. Say, Did the very intent of shewing mercy so infinitely beforehand possess thee with delights, and now, when thou shouldst come to put it in execution, and hast so fair an opportunity of doing it, to a soul as full of misery, the object of mercy, as ever, hast thou now no heart, no mind to it? And withal, say that thou hast notice given thee of an infinite and all-sufficient righteousness in his Son, laid up in him, and that by his own procurement, whereof his Son never had, nor can have any need himself, being God blessed for ever; and for whom was it then appointed but for the sons of man, those who are weary, wounded, sick, broken, lost? These his Son hath put into his will, Heb. ix. 16, who still lives to be his own executor. And say further also to him that it is come to thine

ears that his Spirit is the 'Comforter,' a 'God of comforts,' and that his Son hath bought them all, his whole shop, and all his cordials, and all his skill, 'and is anointed with this Spirit,' Isa. lxi. 1-3, on purpose to pour him forth into the hearts of those that are wounded and sick and broken; and 'the whole they have no need of them.'

If it be said unto thee, Yea, but thou art most unworthy; answer, But he professeth to 'love freely,' Hos. xiv. 4. If the greatness of thy sins be objected against thee, plead thou again that 'plenteous redemption is with him,' Psalm cxxx. 7; and if thou hast not enough to pardon me, say, I am content to go without. If thou art ungodly, say that thou believest 'on him that justifieth the ungodly,' Rom. iv. 5. If he puts thee off, as Christ a while did the woman of Canaan, and says he hath no need of thee; say, that thou hast need of him, and canst no longer live without him; for 'in his favour is thy life,' and that without it thou art undone. If he seems to rebuke thee, that how darest thou press thus to him who is 'the high and lofty One,' a sinful man to him 'whose name is Holy,' say, thou hast heard himself say, 'Thus saith that high and lofty One, whose name is Holy, that he dwells with him that is of a contrite spirit, to revive the heart of the humble,' Isa. lvii. 15. And be further bold to tell him that there are but a few in the world that do seek him, and if he should turn any away that do, he would have fewer; for who would fear him, if there were not 'mercy in him and plenteous redemption?' Psalm cxxx. 7.

If still he doth pursue thee, and his wrath lies heavy on thee, ask him what it is he aims at? Is it to have the victory, and 'overcome when he judgeth?' as Rom. iii. 4: which David also knew when he humbled himself, Psalm li. 4. Freely tell him that thou art willing to give it him, to yield to him, to stand out with him in nothing; but art content to submit to his commanding will in all things, and to his condemning will also, if so he pleaseth: and that it shall be just, as David there acknowledgeth, if he doth condemn thee; and justify thou him, whilst he is condemning thee; and say that at the latter day he shall need no other judge against thee than thyself. Only beseech him to consider what honour it will be to him to 'pursue dry stubble,' and to 'break a poor dried leaf,' Job xiii. 25, that crumbleth under his fingers, if he doth but touch it, as Job pleads; to 'break a reed' that is broken already, Matt. xii. 20. Say, thou art not a fit match for him; and he hath said, 'He will not contend for ever,' Isa. lvii. 16, especially when he sees any to lay down the weapons, as thou art content to do.

Or is it, ask him, that he aims to have glory out of thy eternal condemnation in hell? Tell him it is true, he may; and that this is some comfort to thee, that he may have glory out of thy death and destruction, who never yet had it out of thy life: but yet desire him to consider this before he thrusts his sword into thee, that he did first sheathe it in his Son's bowels, and that he may shew as much power in overcoming his wrath as in venting of it; yea, and have also greater glory thereby. For, plead that thou art never able to satisfy him, though he should throw thee down to hell. He may cast thee into prison, but thou canst never pay the debt: and 'what profit therefore will be in my blood?' Psalm xxx. 9; and therefore, if satisfaction to his justice be his end, he might better accept that which his Son made him, and so he shall be sure to be no loser by thee: and thereby not only receive the glory of his justice, but shew the riches of his grace and mercy also, and so double the revenue of his glory in thee.

Or is it, Lord, that thou aimest to have more obedience from me than

heretofore thou hast had? Plead, that this is the way at present to disable thee for service, for that, while thou sufferest his terrors, thou art as 'one among the dead,' listless not to his business only, but to all things else; 'distracted with terrors,' as Heiman pleads, Psalm lxxxviii. 15, so as the powers and forces of thy soul are scattered and dissolved, and cannot intend and attend upon their duty. And besides this distraction in thy spirit, plead, that it 'consumes thy strength' also, 'dries up thy bones and moisture,' as David also often complaineth, and makes an argument of it, as Psalm xxxix. 10-13, 'Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand. When thou rebukest man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away as a moth: O therefore spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more seen.' And withal put him in mind, that if he should go on thus to deal with thee, as thou shouldst not be able to do him *much* service, so nor to do it *long*. For it will cut short my days, say. This David pleadeth, Psalm lxxxix. 46, 47, compared with the 39th Psalm, ver. 12, 'How long, Lord? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is.' As if he should have said, I have but a little time here allotted me in the world, though none of it be shortened. And further tell him, that for that little time thou hast to live, the more joy thou hast, the more service thou shalt be able for to do him; and to go about his work more lively, and more strongly,—for 'the joy of the Lord is our strength,' Neh. viii. 10,—and more acceptably also, for 'thou lovest a cheerful giver,' 2 Cor. ix. 7. And therefore entreat him to restore thee to the joy of his salvation, so shalt thou be able to do him more service in a week than in a year now; long trouble of mind being as long sicknesses, which make all thy performances weak; and it is for his disadvantage to have his servants lie long sick upon his hands.

And if it be objected against thee, that if thou shouldst be trusted with much assurance thou wouldst abuse it, and turn it into wantonness; reply, that if he pleaseth he can prevent it, by preparing thy heart aforehand for these cordials, so as they shall work most kindly on thee; by writing a law of love towards him in thy heart, which when his love shed abroad shall join with, will work most strongly; and one grain of it hath more force to purge out sin, to constrain and strengthen to obedience, than a pound of terrors. And say, that though thou hast indeed a stubborn and self-loving heart, yet he can make his loving-kindness overcome it, for it is 'stronger than death,' Cant. viii. 6. Say thou hast love in thee, (which runs out enough to other things,) if he would be pleased to win it to himself. Suggest how that that soul mentioned Isa. lvii. had as stout and stubborn a heart as thou, and 'went on frowardly,' notwithstanding all thy terrors: and yet (O Lord!) thou tookest another course with him, and didst 'heal him' again, and that by 'comforts,' ('I will heal him,' says God there, 'and restore comforts unto him,' ver. 18,) and that so, if he please, he may deal with thee.

And if light and mercy yet comes not, but still God seems as it were to cast thee off; then call to mind if ever thou hast had any true communion with him, and thereupon begin to challenge him. So doth the church, Isa. lxiii. 16, when in thy case; when 'his mercies were restrained' to her, she says, yet 'doubtless thou art my father;' she saw God was angry, 'her heart hard,' ver. 17, yet she thought she should know him: 'doubtless he is my father; and where is thy zeal, the sounding of thy bowels?' So challenge him thou, upon that old acquaintance thou hast had and held with him in former times. Say, 'doubtless thou art my father and my husband,' how

strange soever thou carriest thyself now towards me ; for dost thou not remember what hath been between me and thee in prayer, in such a chamber, at such a time ? Hast thou never a piece of a broken ring between him and thee, no love-passage, no love-token, that could not pass between him and any whom he had not ' betrothed himself unto in kindness ?' Hosea ii. 19. Produce it at such a time as this. And if thou shouldest discern no grace in thee thyself, yet desire him to look into thy heart ; and be bold to inquire of him if he can see nothing there which himself wrote, never to be blotted out ; if there be not some spark of love to him and his fear which himself put there ; and ask him if he knows his own hand. And for thy comfort know, that when thou canst not read it, thy graces being much blurred, yet he can read his own hand at any time, and will not deny it.

Thou mayest be yet bolder. Yea, desire him to look into his own heart, and therein to view the idea he had of thee, and those secret ancient thoughts he bore towards thee, from all eternity. And if at first he seems yet silent at it, then desire him to look upon thee again, and ask him if he doth not know thee, and if he hath not known and taken thee for his from everlasting, and engraven thee on the palms of his hands and table of his heart, with such deep and lasting letters of loving-kindness as are not as yet, yea, which will not for ever be blotted out. Tell him thou dardest refer thyself wholly to what passed between him and his Son concerning thee, and let his own heart cast it. Appeal to Christ as thy surety, and a witness thereof for thee, who was privy to all his counsel, whether thou art not one of those he gave unto him, with a charge to redeem and save. And desire him to look into Christ's heart also, if thy name be not written there with his own hand ; and if that Christ did not bear thy name written upon his heart, as the high priest did the names of all the tribes, when he hung upon the cross, and when he ascended into the holy of holies. Thus Habakkuk, putting up a prayer in the name of the church, hath taught us to plead, chap. i. 12, O Lord, ' art not thou from everlasting my God, and mine Holy One ?' It was a bold question ; yet God dislikes it not, but approves it, and presently assents to it in a gracious answer to their hearts ere they went any further ; for their next words, and those abruptly spoken, by reason of a sudden answer, are an assurance of this, ' We shall not die.' God being put thus to it, and his own thoughts being spoken, could not deny it ; he acknowledgeth it was true. And thus whilst thou mayest be a-speaking blindfold, as it were, casting anchor in the dark, yet speaking his very heart, he haply may own thee, and fall upon thy neck and kiss thee.

And if yet, after continual praying thus thou findest still no comfort, no answer from him, but he seems rather even to shut thy very prayers out, as Ps. xxii. 2, 3, then expostulate, as David doth, Ps. lxxx. 4, ' Why shuttest thou out our prayers, and wilt not hear us pray ?' For, alas ! thought he, we have nothing else to help us in the time of need but prayer ; and if prayer will do no good, I am undone, say.

And if through all these discouragements thy condition prove worse and worse, so as thou canst not pray, but art struck dumb when thou comest into his presence, as David, Ps. lxxvii. 4, ' I am so troubled I cannot speak,' then fall a-making signs when thou canst not speak ; groan, sigh, sob, ' chatter,' as Hezekiah did ; bemoan thyself for thine own unworthiness, and desire Christ to speak thy requests for thee, and God to hear him for thee. Christ be is ' an advocate with the Father,' 1 John ii. 2, and pleads no bad case, nor was ever cast in any suit he pleaded.

And if still, haply, after many years, he owns thee not, but it grows darker

and darker, suppose even till thy death approacheth, or to such extremities that he seems to thee to cast thee off for ever, so as thy distress boils up to such thoughts as these, that there is no other remedy but thou and he must part ; then in the midst and depths of such sad fears and apprehensions, down upon thy knees once more ; and notwithstanding fall thou a-blessing him for all those glorious excellencies of holiness, kindness, grace, wisdom, &c., which are in him, the beauty of which first took thy heart and made thee enamoured with him, though thou shouldst be never like to be the better for them. Bless him for all the mercy he shews to others, by which they have occasion to magnify him, though thou shouldst be found unworthy. Bless him and those who shall for ever live with him, who do stand about him, and see his face, and enjoy him ever. What sins thou thinkest thou shalt be condemned for by him, condemn thyself for first, and still ask forgiveness of them. What service thou hast any way done him, which he had any glory by, get thy heart to say thou repentest not of it, but art glad of all done for him, and wishest it had been better. What mercies thou hast tasted of from him, confess thyself unworthy of, and thank him though thou shouldst never partake of any more. Such dispositions as these, in such extremities, do often appear in the hearts of God's children. And desire him that he would but preserve good thoughts of him in thee, that thou mayest not blaspheme him. And when thou art a-going, a-sinking into hell in thine own apprehensions, see if he calls thee not back again.

See what himself saith, Jer. xxxi. 18-20, 'Ephraim is my son,' my dear son, 'my pleasant son,' as he says there, and yet he began to 'speak against him' as bitter sharp words as ever he hath done against thee, and took him up severely, and looked sternly on him, as if he had meant never to have had mercy on him : upon which Ephraim falls a-crying, being thus snibbed, and 'a-bemoaning himself,' as I have taught thee to do ; and being yoked as thou art, to tame him, he acknowledgeth it was justly done, having been 'a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke ;' and Ephraim began to be ashamed, confounded, not able to look up, for sinning against him, and seeks after repentance, and that from him without whose help he was not able to turn to him, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned ;' and to challenge him and his eternal love, 'Thou art the Lord my God.' Well, says God, though it be 'long' since 'I spake against him,' and I have suffered him long to lie thus plunged in misery, 'yet I remember him still ;' his tears, his sighs, will never out of my mind ; and though he thinks that I had forgotten him, yet I remember him, and 'my bowels are troubled for him,' as much and more than he is for himself ; and I can forbear no longer, 'I will surely have mercy on him.' And should he have damned him, his bowels would have been troubled for him indeed, all his days.

DIRECTION X.

The tenth and last direction is, that having done all this, you would not rest in ease, but healing : not in ease of conscience, but in healing of conscience. This I ground upon Isa. lvii. 17, 18. What was the true issue of that his trouble there, whom God contended with ? It was healing and guiding : 'I will guide him, and I will heal him.'

You that are troubled in mind, think not your estates to be good simply because you begin to cease to be troubled, but only then when the issue of your trouble is healing your spirits, by some sound ground of comfort ; and when guidance in God's ways, and more close walking with God, is the issue of it. For God may slack the cords and take you off the rack when yet he

hath not pardoned you. A traitor who was cast into the dungeon, and had many irons on him, may be let out of the dungeon, and have his irons taken off, and have the liberty of the Tower, and walk abroad again, with his keeper with him, and yet not have his pardon : nay, usually before execution they use to take the irons off, and let them have more freedom. Thus it is with many. I thank God, says one, I have had much trouble of mind, distress of conscience, such and such sins terrified me, and I could not sleep for them : but now I am well again, and now they do not trouble me. Yea, but is this all ? Thou hast cause to fear that thy irons are but taken off against execution. It is with men in point of trouble of mind in the guilt of sin, as in the power of it ; in justification as in sanctification. A man who hath had a strong lust stirring in him, if he hath gone a year or two, and findeth it not to stir, he therefore thinks he is utterly freed from it, which yet may be but a restraint of it, not killing of it ; a cessation, not mortification. So it is often in this trouble of mind, which ariseth from the guilt of sin : because a man finds not those doubts, and fears, and terrors in his heart which he had wont, therefore presently he thinks all is well, whenas it may be but merely a truce, not a peace ; a laying down of arms only for a while, to make greater preparation against the soul afterwards ; a reprieve and a little enlargement in prison, not a pardon, if this be all the issue of it.

That you may further conceive the meaning of this : in one that is God's child, and in a wicked man, though both may be and are troubled in mind and conscience, yet there is a main difference, both in the main cause of their trouble, and also in the issue and removal of their trouble. A wicked man's trouble is for the anguish and present smart he feels in sin, and in God's wrath lashing his conscience, and out of fears that his sin will not be pardoned, but that he shall endure these tortures for ever in hell. So it was in Judas, Cain, and many others. But a godly man's trouble, though it hath often all this in it, yet the chiefest of his trouble is a further thing : it is not only the smart, the sting of sin, but also the filth, the foulness, the offence of it done to God, that wounds him ; for he hath a heart after God's heart, and therefore looks on sin with the same kind of eye that God doth ; and as God accounts the offence done to him the greatest evil in sin, so doth a godly heart also. It is not the sting of this serpent only, but the poison of it that disquiets him ; neither is it only the want of pardon of sin, and the fear of God's everlasting wrath, which mainly troubleth him, but the want of God's favour, the parting with him whom he sees so excellent and glorious, the want of seeing his face. His desire is to live in his sight, and to have God to be his God. Now such as the wound is, such also is the remedy. Therefore the one being but troubled with the sting, the smart of sin, pull but that sting out, take that lead off, and he is well enough, as jocund, as pleasant as ever ; it being present ease that he seeks, and to that end confesseth his sin, and doth anything for the present to come out of it ; as Pharaoh, Exod. x. 17, 'Take away this death only : ' or at the utmost, his aim is but pardon of sin and peace with God, that he may be free from the fears of undergoing that for ever, the earnest whereof he feels in his conscience now. And hence therefore the remedies they often have recourse unto are suitable ; they are but like rattles to still children with : they run to merry company and to music, &c., as Cain fell a-building cities, and so they put off the terrors of their consciences. It is ease they seek, and no more. Or they run to a formal performance of duties ; even as poor souls under Popery, when they were stung by the friars' sermons, they set them penances and good deeds to be done, which stilled them a while ; and for

them they thought they should have pardon. So men run now to holy duties, but with the same opinion that they did then, as bribes for a pardon. 'What shall I give,' says he in Micah, 'for the sin of my soul?' chap. vi. 7.

But now the wound of God's child being deeper,—not the sting of sin only, but the poison of it; not the smart, but the offence done to God; nor the fear of his wrath, but want of his favour,—therefore accordingly ease from those terrors pacifies not him. No; not simply peace with God will content him, or a pardon. He says not only, 'Oh, miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from this death' only? but 'who shall deliver me from this body of death?' If news were brought him that God would pardon him, and not call him to reckoning for any sin, and no more were spoken to his conscience, he would still be troubled till he had assurance of his good-will also. If it were said, God will indeed pardon thee, but he will never love thee as he did, he will not look on thee, thou must not come into his sight; this would grieve the soul more than the other would content it, and he would be everlastingly troubled. I may allude to that which Absalom said in compliment of his father, when he was banished from him, to express the true desire and greatest trouble of a soul in this case, as you have it, 2 Sam. xiv. 32. Absalom was pardoned the fault, but it contented him not: 'Let me see his face, or let him kill me.' So it is with a poor soul. Ease, pardon, knocking off his bolts, content him not till he enjoys communion with God, till he sees his face in his ordinances. Ps. xxiv. 6, 'This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face'—that is, this is the mark, the *genius*, the disposition of that generation. This you may see in David, when his conscience was wounded for that great sin. What was it troubled him? Not the want of pardon of sins, for the prophet told him God had pardoned him; not the mere stings of conscience and ache of his broken bones; but that 'against thee, thee, have I sinned,' so as ease could not satisfy him. But further, ver. 10, 'Create in me a clean spirit,'—which he speaks because, having chewed the cud of that unclean act, he had left a soil in his fancy,—'and renew a right spirit within me:' Oh, give me grace and truth of heart to thee; and, oh, let me live in thy presence, and see thee, and have acquaintance with thee, ver. 11. The want of this was it that troubled him, which till he had obtained, he could never be at quiet; for he sought not ease or pardon only, but healing of his conscience by the favour of God, and his love shed abroad. So as take heed of resting in ease; as, if your hearts be right, you will not,—you will wait till the 'Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings,' Mal. iv. 2. Are you now in darkness, full of terrors and God's wrath? You will not rest till that darkness be expelled by the arising of the light of the Sun of righteousness on you, and revealing God's face in the face of Jesus Christ, till his righteousness be conveyed to your hearts by some of his wings,—by some promise, by some ordinance of his. For the wound being the unrighteousness of sin, nothing but Christ's righteousness will heal it: the wound being the want of God's favour, and of the evidence of his being your God, the want of his face and good-will, nothing but the revealing and arising of this in your hearts will heal you. For look what the wound is, such is the plaster. And, indeed, this only heals; for though by other means the sore may be skinned over, and ease gotten, yet it will break forth again. So Isa. lvii. 17, 18, 'I will heal him.' And how? 'By restoring comforts to him.' 'Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,' says David, 'that the bones that thou hast broken may rejoice.' And how heals he him? 'I create the fruit of the lips, Peace.' He doth it by some promise or other. If the want of the sense of communion with God,

and absence from him, disquiets a man, then the heart rests not till it hath found its well-beloved, Cant. iii. 1-5. If you have doubts that no grace is in thy heart, then the heart rests not till some grace in truth be evidenced, and some such promise made to some grace brought home. Still look what the trouble is, such also must the plaster be, and then it is healing. Wert ever in the dungeon? What was it freed thee? Was it Christ's righteousness laid hold on, God's face revealed, thine own grace with some promise brought home to thy heart, that came with a commission to deliver thee? Then it is right; otherwise thy bolts may be knocked off, and this but against thy execution.

SECTION II.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, &c.—ISA. L. 10.

SOME gleanings there yet remain of this text, which I thought good to bind up into one sheaf, and thresh out at this time.

The *second** doctrine is: That though it may befall one that fears God to walk in darkness, yet but to a few. He says, 'Who is among you?' he singleth such out of a crowd. If simply he had spoken of those that fear God and obey him, without this limitation added, 'and walk in darkness,' he might well have spoken thus sparingly, 'Who is among you?' For to the wicked he says, 'All you that kindle a fire,' &c.; for there are but a few that fear God in comparison of them. If he had spoken of those that fear God, and have 'been in darkness' for some little while, haply some few days among many, there are yet fewer; for there are that walk in the light of God's countenance to their death, and never knew what terror of conscience means. But when he shall speak of those that 'fear God and walk in darkness,' and suffer terrors from their youth, as Heman did, such a one is one of a thousand. Of such a one he says, 'Who is among you?' Few have experience of such a condition. Job had friends who certainly were godly,—for Job was to pray for them, and God said he would hear Job for them, and they, as is likely, knew many godly men besides Job,—yet when this condition of darkness befell Job, it was so strange a trial to them, that they thought him therefore a hypocrite, as never having themselves felt or heard of the like in others. When Christ was to go into his agony, he would not have many of his apostles so much as be by him to be witnesses of it, much less to feel the like; he takes but two or three. The reasons are:—

Reason 1.—Because, though all God's people are *fighting men* and men of valour, yet he hath but a few *champions*,—as David, though he had many soldiers, yet but few worthies,—and therefore calls but a few out to fight single combats with Satan and his wrath; though he exerciseth them all in lighter skirmishes, yet not to fight such bloody battles. 'Seest thou not my servant Job? there is none like him.' Him God will venture into the field; but others his friends he will not.

Reason 2.—As he hath few champions able and fit for such an encounter, so he hath variety of other temptations to exercise his withal. He hath poverty and ill report, imprisonment and cruel mockings, loss of goods, crosses in friends; and some have enough to struggle under one of these; and there is no temptation but must befall some, and seldom all befall one

* The first being that stated in p. 237, and discussed in the former Part.—ED.

Some spirits are so weak, as they would faint and not be able to sustain themselves; and God never suffers any to be 'tempted above what they are able,' 1 Cor. x. 13. Some men's bodies are weak, and if God should 'rebuke them long for sin,' they would be brought to nothing; and he 'remembers they are flesh, and stirs not up all his wrath,' as David says: 'Oh, suffer me to recover strength!' Some men God hath present use of in their callings and employments, which if they were distracted, as Heman was, with terrors continually, they were unfit for.

Reason 3.—God afflicts in this kind but in case of extremity usually; when he meets with a very froward heart, and stout, proud spirit, a knotty piece, Isa. lvii. 17. If lesser crosses would do it, he would not fetch out the great rod. If a rod will 'thresh out the cummin,' he useth not to 'turn the wheel over it,' nor take a flail to do it, Isa. xxviii. 27. Now lesser afflictions work with the most of his, through his blessing; mercies work, disgrace works, poverty works, and 'he doth not willingly afflict,' Lam. iii. 33, and therefore not unnecessarily; he puts not men into the dungeon for every fault, and therefore there are few long exercised this way.

Use 1.—Think not therefore thou hast not true grace, because thou wert never terrified as some have been. As some have true faith and sound peace who yet never tasted of 'joy unspeakable and glorious,' so some have sound humiliation who never knew terrors of conscience. If thou seest sin the greatest misery, Christ the greatest good, thou art humbled.

Use 2.—You see we may often preach such things which do yet concern but a few in a congregation, and yet we are to preach them. There are but a few walk long in darkness, yet to such Christ doth preach. Yea, and for such doth God 'give gifts, the tongue of the learned.' God often gives a pastor after his own heart for a few: Jer. iii. 15, 'Take one or two of a city,' &c., 'and I will give them pastors after my heart;' much more are many sermons often preached but to a few. So even by Christ himself, as he says, Luke iv. 26, 'There were many widows,' &c., 'but unto none was Elias sent but unto her at Sarepta;' and many lepers, but 'unto none was Elias sent but unto Naaman.' So says Christ, 'I am sent but to a few;' and therefore, as we must not defraud one poor soul of its portion because none else partake of it, so the rest are not to think much, but, as in a dole, stay till their portion come; and if any one poor soul hath had its estate discovered, all the rest are to be thankful.

Use 3.—See some reason why some in distress of mind complain that none ever were in the like condition; thus they are apt to do. So the church, Lam. i. 12. The reason is because few are so troubled, and haply they never knew any: but yet some are and have been in the like; for, 1 Cor. x. 13, 'no temptation befalls but is common to man.'

Doct. 3.—That those few in congregations that walk in darkness, and yet fear and obey him, God and Christ hath an especial eye unto and care of; you see he singles them out, as it were, from all the rest, 'Who is among you?' Isa. lxvi. 2, 'All these things have my hand made; but to this man will I look, that is poor and broken, and trembleth at my word;' that is, though all things and persons else in the world be my creatures, and so I have a care of them all, yet he seems to overlook all else, and 'to him will I look,' &c., as if there were none else in the church.

Reason 1.—The first reason is, because it is the office of Christ so to do. The Spirit is upon him on purpose, Isa. lxi. 1-3, 'to open the prison to them that are bound,' shut up in this dungeon; 'to appoint to them that mourn beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, garments of praise for

the spirit of heaviness.' He is the physician, and hath undertaken the cure, Matt. ix. 12. And whom should the physician have an eye to but the sick, and the most sick, as those are that cannot find their sins forgiven? Isa. xxxiii. 14. He is the shepherd, Isa. xl. 11, and will take care of all his sheep, 'knows them by name.' But of whom especially? The lambs that are weak, young Christians. 'He will gather them with his arms, and gently lead the ewes with young;' that are travailing and bringing forth, as those under terrors are. He will not over-drive them; for God hath given him charge 'he should lose none of them.' He is 'that good shepherd' that will, as he hath promised, Ezek. xxxiv. 16, 'seek out that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which was sick.' He names all casualties that befall them, because he helps in all miseries; yea, and, ver. 12, after they have been wildered 'in a cloudy and dark day,' and walked in darkness long, he will 'find them out and deliver them,' as his promise there is.

Reason 2.—If his office did not move him to it, his love would; for he is a merciful and a pitiful high priest, Heb. iv. 15, and was 'in all points tempted as we are;' and especially in agony of spirit. Therein he drank deepest of any, and therefore is fitted to pity us therein most; and the greater any is troubled, the more he is touched. Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all your afflictions he is afflicted;' and, Jer. xxxi. 20, 'Since I spake against him, I remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him.' When a child is sick, the mother is more troubled and careful about it, and her eye and mind more upon it, than on all the house besides.

Use 1.—The use is, to meet with that conceit that befalls all that are in darkness: they think that of all men else, God regards not them. Sion said, 'God hath forgotten me,' Isa. xlix. 14. So David, 'God hath forgotten to be merciful.' Because they find their hearts hard to God, they think that his is so to them: because they can find no love in their hearts to God, they think he bears none to them. But you see Christ especially inquires for such, and overlooks all others else. God hath 'graven thee on the palms of his hands;' every sigh of thine goes to his bowels. Isa. lvii. 15, 'I dwell with him that is broken, to revive his spirit.' God is nigh him.

Use 2.—Are God's eyes upon us more when we are in trouble of spirit than on any other? Then let our eyes be upon him: 'We cannot tell what to do, but our eyes are towards thee.' Let our eyes be towards him for help, as of those that looked on the brazen serpent: let our eyes be towards him for service, 'as the eyes of handmaidens are on their mistress;' to look not to men, not to credit, but to have our eyes on God in all we do, as if there were none else in the world to approve ourselves unto.

Doct. 4.—In that when he speaks of those his children that are in darkness, he chooseth rather to describe them by fear and obedience, than by any other grace; observe, That when the children of God are under terrors, the most eminent grace that doth appear in them is fearfulness to offend God, and willingness to obey him. Other graces may be stirred, but these are most eminent, and therefore he mentioneth these for their comfort.

Explication.—First, for explication. Know that several occasions draw out several graces. When the sunshine of God's favour melts the heart, then love and obedience, thence proceeding, are most eminent, and also godly sorrow. So Mary wept much, loved much, for 'much was forgiven her;' her heart was full of assurance. On the contrary, when the sense of God's love is withdrawn, and fears and terrors shed abroad in the heart, then fear and obedience shew and discover themselves. Therefore, Isa. lxvi. 2, 'He that

is poor and contrite, and trembleth at the word,' are joined ; trembleth at every command and threatening, is fearful to transgress : and so those in that estate do find. The reason is :—

Reason.—Because graces, and affections in which graces are seated, stir more or less in us according as their objects are, and our apprehensions of them. Now therefore, when the soul is possessed most with displeasure for sin, and apprehensions of wrath, then it feareth most, and then fear works accordingly, against that which may displease. Hence the Apostle : seeing 'our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29, 'let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;' therefore when we see him so, we are to suspect our hearts most, if we be not more fearful of offending him, and obey him.

Use 1.—The first use is of trial, whether thou art a child under wrath : if thou fearest more, and if that fear produceth obedience. As 'Christ learned obedience by what he suffered,' so wilt also thou, if thou hast his spirit.

Use 2.—The second use is, to exercise graces still in their seasons : 'When thou art afflicted, pray ; when joyful, sing psalms,' James v. 13 ; when filled with assurance, then 'mourn and be confounded,' Ezek. xvi. 63.

A CHILD OF DARKNESS WALKING IN LIGHT.

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks : walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.—ISA. L. 11.

LET us now come to the opposite state, of wicked men, who are said here to 'walk in the light of their own fire,' &c.

All the difficulty lies in opening what is meant by their *own fire*, and what is meant by *walking in the light of it*; which is opposed here to *walking in darkness*, and to *trusting on the name of the Lord*—namely, Christ's righteousness, as I said before. To this purpose you must remember, that his scope is to shew the differing props and stays for justification and comfort, which a godly man hath, and a natural man.

The stay and comfort of a godly man's soul lies in the light of God's countenance, which when he wanteth, he is in darkness, though he hath never so many outward comforts. The stay, comfort, and prop of his faith for justification in that estate, when he sees no righteousness in himself, is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ our righteousness.

Oppositely therefore, by the *fire*, and the *light of their fire* which wicked men are said to walk in, two things must be meant :—

I. Their *own natural righteousness* which they have by nature, and in the state of nature, and the sparks and acts thereof; this they trust to, and neglect the name of the Lord, and the righteousness of justification and of the new creature.

II. The *light of outward comforts* from the creatures, which in this world they enjoy, and the sparkling pleasures thereof which they walk in, and content themselves with, neglecting communion with God, being estranged from the life of God, and living without him in the world. So as the opposition strongly carries it, that both these should be meant by their fire here; and all interpreters give the first interpretation of it, and I have added this second to make the sense complete.

I. How that by fire of their own kindling, their own righteousness without Christ, such as the Pharisees had, and Paul had before conversion, should be meant, we must consider that he, speaking here to the Jews, alludeth to the types of the old law, which they were acquainted with. Wherein—

1. *Fire*, you know, was it they offered their sacrifices with, typifying out, as Mark ix. 49, our inward habitual grace and righteousness, whereby we offer up ourselves and our service as a 'living sacrifice to God,' Rom. xii. 1.

2. When they offered incense or sacrifice acceptable to God, they were not to offer it with common fire, which is ordinary in the world in their chimneys and kitchens, which was kindled by themselves by sparks out of stones, or from things here below ; but it was to be fire from heaven, and taken from the altar, (so Lev. ix. 24,) which was kept continually burning, and therefore when a new altar was made, 'fire came from heaven, 2 Chron. vii. 3 ; and the high priest was to take fire off the altar, whenever he offered incense, Lev. xvi. 12. And therefore when Nadab and Abihu offered 'common fire of their own kindling,' Lev. x. 1, they were consumed for thinking to please God with it. Now all these things fell out in types to them. For answerably by fire of their own kindling is meant the common righteousness of civility and natural devotion, which was by nature in some of the heathen, Rom. ii. 14, found even in their chimneys ; which also the Jews performed, both by the common help of nature, custom, and education, by the strength of natural principles, of conscience enlightened by the law, and self-love improved ; all which, thus coming but from nature not renewed by grace, is said to be of their own kindling : whereby yet they thought to please God, and rested in it, as a sacrifice well-pleasing to him ; as Nadab and Abihu did. Whereas the righteousness they should have offered up to God should have been that from heaven, the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith, and a new work of grace, as fire from off that altar Christ, changing their hearts, and making them new creatures, renewing them into the same image of holiness which was in him ; which as it adds to what is in nature, and grows not there, so differs as much from that goodness of nature you bring into the world, or which hath been wrought in you by education, as the fire and light of the sun in heaven doth from common fire ; or the light of a glow-worm from that of the sun.

Now because the Jews rested in such an outward conformity to the law of their own working, therefore they are said, Rom. x. 3, 'to establish their own righteousness,' being ignorant of both these righteousnesses—Christ's righteousness, which is the fire from heaven, and the righteousness of regeneration, to change their natures, which is the fire off the altar. Nicodemus was ignorant of both, and so had lain down in sorrow as his forefathers did, if Christ had not changed him and begotten him again.

To this end you may further consider, that in men's hearts there are, (to use the language of the metaphor here,) though they be stony unto God, yet *some sparks of fire*, which may be struck out of them by the word, by education, by enlightening of the conscience, and by working upon self-love in men : and the sparks of this fire are those outward acts of righteousness which arise and spring from self-love and natural conscience, which die as sparks and remain not ; which the true righteousness of regeneration is said to do, 2 Cor. xii. 9, and John iii. 6. And the light of this fire, which carnal men, not born again, content themselves with, is that 'excusing' which natural conscience, upon the performing any outward act of just dealing, hath in such men's hearts, mentioned Rom. ii. 15.

And the walking in the light of this fire is resting therein all their days, not endeavouring to have their hearts changed, and to get a new principle of grace, and of love to God fetched from Christ, as the spring of all.

USES.

Use 1.—The first use is, seeing so many offer up but common fire to God, it is good you examine whether that righteousness you think to please God with be any more than fire of your own kindling.

First, That righteousness which is kindled in thy heart, and blazeth in thy life, whence was it first enkindled? examine the original of it. Was it kindled in thee by fire from heaven? that is, by the Holy Ghost coming down in God's ordinances on thee as fire, burning up thy lusts, melting thy heart, dissolving the works of the devil, enkindling sparks of true love to God, zeal for his glory, which are above the reach of man's natural ability. Or is it no more than that, whereas every man hath some sparks of ingenuity and honesty towards others, and of sobriety, and of devotion to a deity, raked up in the ashes of corrupt nature,—for even the heathen had 'the law written in their hearts,' Rom. ii. 14,—which sparks thou, living in the church, where civility and religion is professed, civil education, natural wisdom, and the accusing of natural conscience enlightened, have blown up to some blaze, to some just dealing, common care of serving God? Yet know that if there be no other principle, nor no more, it is but fire of your own kindling, and you will lie down in sorrow.

Secondly, Examine what duties are especially the fuel of that fire in thee. In what duties is that righteousness thou thinkest thou pleasest God with chiefly spent and exercised? Are they principally the duties of the second table, of just dealing with men, and sobriety? And it may be thou bringest withal a stick or two of the first table to this fire; that is, some duties thereof, such as for thy credit thou must not omit, as coming to God's ordinances of public worship. This fuel, if there be no more, argues it is but common fire: for look into the chimneys of the heathen, thou shalt find the most of all this practised. And in that thou dost put the chiefest of thy religion in them, it is argued to be but a fire kindled of those sparks which are raked up in nature; for those common sparks which are in all men's hearts are especially those of the second table. But now, if it were a fire from heaven, then though those would not be left undone, yet the chiefest heat of thy heart would be to the duties of heaven, of the worship of God, public and private. When men practise but so much righteousness as is necessary for them to do if they will live in the world in any comfort or credit, as to be just and sober is necessary, as also to frequent God's ordinances, for the state we live in enjoins them; but when men's zeal and fervour contends also, and lives upon such duties which the world regards not, as mourning for sin, taking pains with the heart in private, between God and a man's own soul, and feeds upon heavenly things and thoughts, and is such fire as the world queneth, it is a sign it is more than common fire.

Thirdly, In these duties common fire warms but the outward man, as that fire doth which you feel daily; it heats you not within: so common righteousness contents itself with 'bodily exercise,' a formal performance of duties, public and private; but fire from heaven heats first within, heats the heart within, as at the hearing the word: 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' say they; so it heats the heart in prayer, makes a man 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

Fourthly, Examine what bellows cherish and keep alive that fire of righteousness that is in thee, and make it flame; that is, what motives set thee a-work to do what thou dost. If worldly ends make thee abstain from sin

and to be just in thy dealings, as credit with the world and fear of disgrace, or the accusings of conscience only, or fear of hell, or hope of heaven; this is but common fire. But if love to God, the consideration of his mercies, his eternal love, and the love of Christ, zeal for his glory; if these be the bellows, the fire is heavenly. But if when thou art to be moved with such as these, they stir not thy heart, it is but common fire.

Use 2.—The second use is, to take heed of walking in the light of such fire; that is, resting in it for salvation, and contenting yourselves with it, as most in the world do, and as the Jews here did, for you will lie down in sorrow if you do.

But you will say, We do not trust in this our own righteousness, for we profess Christ, and believe in him, which, added to this, is enough.

I answer: That though you profess Christ, yet, (1.) unless you have had a light that hath discovered to you that all the righteousness you have by nature, and improved in nature, is a false righteousness, you do then as yet rest in your own righteousness, and rely not wholly on Christ. So, Phil. iii., Paul first saw all to be dross and dung, counted it loss, that he might win Christ; it implies he could not have him else. Men though they seem to take Christ's title, as many will procure the king's title for a living to make all sure, yet they keep, and stick to, and plead their own; but you must give up that first, and rely wholly on Christ, or he will not save you.

(2.) He that doth not daily, above all things, directly and immediately aim at and seek out for Christ's righteousness, and maketh it not the chiefest of his thoughts, prayers, and business, and is restless without it, rests in his own; for so when he had given up his title in his own, he mainly endeavoured after this 'to be found in Christ,' Phil. iii.

(3.) You still seek from Christ a new righteousness of sanctification also: for you will see that the common righteousness of nature and education will not please him; and Christ must be 'made sanctification to you,' 1 Cor. i. 30, as well as righteousness. Thus Nicodemus, though a civil man before, yet when he came to Christ, his old civility would not serve, without being born again and becoming a new creature. So as you must not think to make a supply or addition unto Christ with fire of your own kindling; you must have all off the altar: your moral virtues must be turned into graces, by having a new end put into them, carrying your hearts in them unto God.

II. The other interpretation which I add is, that the fire of outward comforts is also meant; which, whilst men enjoy, they go on merrily, neglecting God and Christ, and communion with him. But the soul of a believer, wanting this communion with God, is in darkness, and till he enjoys God again, can take comfort in nothing. Thus, Eccles. vii. 6, 'the laughter of the wicked' is compared to 'the crackling of thorns.'

Fire is a comfortable creature, having both heat and light in it, which serve and help against both cold and darkness, which are two of the greatest evils to the senses.

Heat is comfortable; therefore, Isa. xlv. 16, 'he warmeth himself,' saith the prophet, 'and cries, Aha!'

Light also is comfortable; for, saith Solomon, 'it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun.' Hence, therefore, fire here is put for outward comforts.

But yet what fire are they? But kitchen-fire—*ignis focalis*, as the philosopher calls it; for it is fire of their own kindling, says the text; not that purest element of fire above. God is said to be light and fire, whom the saints enjoy, and are refreshed with his light, and 'in it see light.'

And the resemblance this way also will strongly hold; for a kindled fire hath two things common which go to the making of it, both which together are called fire:—

First, fuel, as wood or coals, &c.; *secondly*, that element that preys upon these.

Answerably, unto those carnal pleasures and delights, which wicked men enjoy and rest in, two things are also concurrent:—

First, the object, which is as the fuel: things earthly, and of this world; *secondly*, their fiery hot and burning lusts, which prey upon, and live upon this fuel. Both which make this fire here spoken of: in both which this resemblance will hold in many regards.

(1.) Because the fuel of these fires of their lusts and comforts is base: things only here below. What is the fuel of your kitchen fires? Things digged out of the earth, dung, wood, coal; so things on earth are fuel to their desires. Their lusts are therefore called ‘members upon earth,’ Col. iii. 5; for all their comforts consist in, and their desires are after, earthly things, as their fair wives, children, houses, meat, drink: ‘their god is their belly, and they mind earthly things,’ Phil. iii. 19.

(2.) Because when this fuel is taken away the fire goes out, so do men’s hearts die when outward things are taken from them. When Nabal thought David might yet come and take his goods, ‘his heart died within him.’ For men live in the creatures, and out of them they die.

(3.) As fire is a consuming thing, Heb. xii. 29, it leaves nothing but ashes; so are men’s lusts, James iv. 3. They ask to ‘consume all upon their lusts.’ All the pleasures they have, nothing comes of them, nothing of the strength they get by them; they do all for themselves, and with themselves all dies.

(4.) Fire is a devouring thing; a whole world would not satisfy it, if it were let alone to burn on. And one day this whole world you see shall be burnt up by fire, as a witch for enticing men. Even such are men’s desires after pleasures; unsatisfied they are: and the more fuel is laid on, the more ye may lay on; they ‘enlarge their desire as the fire of hell,’ Hab. ii. 5.

(5.) The pleasures which arise from the meeting and conjunction of this fuel and their lusts are but as sparks. Job calls sparks ‘the sons of fire,’ being engendered by it upon fuel; as pleasures are the sons of your lusts, when the object and they lie and couple together. And they are not long-lived, they are but as sparks, they die as soon as begotten; Col. ii. 22, ‘perish in the using;’ and are but as ‘the crackling of thorns,’ they soon go out.

(6.) Smoke accompanies such fires, the fuel being muddy things: so doth much sorrow their comforts, Prov. xiv. 13, and they go out and end in smoke; as in the text, ‘lie down in sorrow.’

So that, put these together, both that strange fire of their own righteousness, which is from and in nature, unchanged; and the kitchen-fire of outward comforts: these are the two main hindrances that keep all wicked men from Christ, and justification through him.

That whereas the covenant of grace hath these two main promises in it:—

First, That God himself, who is the ‘God of comfort,’ will be an ‘abundant reward,’ Gen. xv. 1; and so by faith we take him to be, and are divorced from all comforts else in comparison of him. And—

Secondly, That Jesus Christ his Son is made ‘the Lord our righteousness,’ Jer. xxiii. 6; and therefore ere we take him to be so to us, we must be emptied of all our own righteousness by nature, that so God and Christ

might be all in all to us. And therefore, as the first and main work of grace consists both in emptying the heart, and bringing it to nothing in its own righteousness, as also in regard of all outward comforts, that so 'no flesh might rejoice in his sight;' answerably unto these two there are found two main impediments in men by nature :—

First, Because in nature they find some sparks of civil goodness, they rest in them, and take them for grace, and neglect Christ. And—

Secondly, Finding also in this world themselves to be warmed with many outward comforts, being encompassed about with sparks, they content themselves with these. Thus so long as that young man had righteousness of his own, and possessions of his own, he cared not for Christ, nor communion with him, nor righteousness from him. Well, but (says Christ here) flatter yourselves with your own righteousness, and cheer yourselves with your own sparks, and walk on; but know, 'you will lie down in sorrow,' when 'the godly shall rest in their beds,' Isa. lvii. 2. You will lie bedrid in hell; or as a woman in travail, never to rise again.

THE RETURN OF PRAYERS:

A TREATISE

WHEREIN

‘HOW TO DISCERN GOD’S ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS’
IS BRIEFLY RESOLVED.

WITH

OBSERVATIONS UPON PSALM LXXXV. 8, CONCERNING
GOD’S SPEAKING PEACE, &c.

‘I WILL WATCH TO SEE WHAT HE WILL SAY UNTO ME.’---HAB. 2. 1.

TO THE MUCH-HONOURED KNIGHT,

SIR NATHANIEL RICH.

SIR,

God, who from all eternity hath had an infinite mass of grace and glory lying by him to bestow upon his church, and did accordingly provide a treasury and magazine sufficient wherein to store up all, the bosom of his Son ; in whom are hid riches so unsearchable, Eph. iii. 8, as cannot be told over, much less spent to all eternity.

He hath as richly (πλουσίως, Tit. iii. 6) shed his Holy Spirit on us ; that we, who could never have known of anything bequeathed us, nor what to pray for as we ought, might both fully from him know all that God hath given us, and through him lay claim thereto, who maketh intercession for us, and so doth furnish us with a privy key to all that treasury, which otherwise is fast shut up to all the world.

Through which spirit of prayer and supplications thus poured forth, believers come to be at once anointed to the fellowship and execution of those three glorious offices of Christ their head. Not only of priests, by offering up their prayers as spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, but of kings, to rule with God, Hos. xi. 12 ; being hereby made of privy council to the King of kings, so as their counsels and desires expressed in their petitions are said to be fulfilled, Ps. xx. 4, 5, and their decrees in their prayers made, ratified, and established, Job xxii. 27, 28. Nay, further by virtue of this privilege, advanced to such height of favour, as, by their strength in prayer alone, to have power with God himself, Hos. xii. 3, 4 ; and not only with him, but also over him, and in their wrestlings to prevail. Yea, to command : himself hath said it, ' Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask of me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me,' Isa. xlv. 11 ; which so transcendent privilege of power is, by the express words of this great charter, universally extended unto all transactions of this lower part of his dominions, whether ecclesiastical, which do concern his sons,—that is, his church,—or whatever other, the more ordinary works of his hands, that belong to common providence, Matt. vi. 10.

And forasmuch as these grand affairs of this his kingdom, as future and to come, are commended to their prayers as their most proper subject about which they are to treat,—‘Ask of me of things to come,’—in this respect they do become as truly prophets also, though not in so full and complete, yet in some kind of true resemblance; not by foretelling, yet by forespeaking in their prayers, things that come to pass. God, who made and upholds this world, and all things in it, by the word of his power, doth likewise rule and govern it by the precedents and prescript rules of the word of his will, Ps. xxv. 10, exactly dispensing unto men both rewards and punishments, according to the tenor of some or other of his promises and threatenings, and former like proceedings therein recorded; though with such various liberty, in respect of the particulars, that his ways remain ‘unsearchable and past finding out:’ that look, as he appointed in the heavens those ordinances of the sun, moon, and stars, by their light, heat, and motion, ‘to rule the day and night,’ to divide and cause the several seasons of the year, and all the changes and alterations that do pass over the animal and natural world; in like manner hath he stretched out that so exceeding broad expanse of his word and law, Ps. cxix. 96—to which the Psalmist doth assimilate it, Ps. xix. 1, 2, compared with Rom. x. 18—over this rational world of angels and men, and therein set his statutes and his judgments, that by the light of precepts, and their influences in rewards and punishments, they might order and direct these his creatures reasonable, and all their actions; also dispose and set out all the issues of them. And seeing his saints they are ‘a people in whose hearts is his law,’ and their delight is to ‘meditate therein both day and night;’ they daily calculating and observing the various aspects, conjunctions, and mixed influences of those innumerable precepts, promises, and threatenings which themselves and others, nations or men, stand under; and by a judgment thence resulting, Jer. viii. 7, so far as they have attained, endeavouring to frame their supplications and petitions according to God’s will: hence their prayers oft full happily succeed, and beforehand do accord to those issues and events that afterwards fall out. That like as the earth comes to be just under the sun and moon in some of their conjunctions, so their desires and prayers sometimes in a direct line fall under, and subordnately concur with, God’s secret purposes, and some revealed promise met in conjunction, to produce such and such effects. ‘The Spirit’ also herein ‘helping their infirmities,’ sometimes so guiding and directing them by a gracious preinstinct, though unbeknown to them, to pitch their requests upon such particulars as God hath fully purposed to bring to pass; becoming thereby, as it were, the spirit of prophecy unto them, respectively in some measure and degree.

Thus doth that great King employ his nearest servants as his under-officers and sheriffs, to serve his writs and executions upon his enemies, to execute the judgment written in his threatenings, Ps. cxlix. 9, and to accomplish his mercies written also, by suing out all the promises; to be as man-midwives, (as Hezekiah’s allusion, when he sent a-visiting to the prophet Isaiah for his voice and suffrage, seemeth to import, Isa. xxxvii. 2-4,) to help and assist

his promises and decrees in their travail with mercies and deliverance, Zeph. ii. 2, when these their children do come unto the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth.

In all which they shall therefore have the honour to be accounted co-workers together with God in his greatest works of wonder. And at the latter day, when that great and last edition, both of all God's works and likewise ours, then complete and finished, shall be published to all the world, they shall find their names put to them, together with his own; and the same by him acknowledged to be as truly the works of their hearts and prayers as that they are the sole work of his hands and power. Such honour have all his saints.

And if all the works of God are so exceeding great, Ps. xcii. 5, and his thoughts therein so very deep that every iota of them doth deserve our deepest studies and intentions, and thereunto require a proper skill and wisdom, to read his hand, peculiar unto the saints, ver. 6; whereunto there must be adjoined the most diligent search and attentive observation, to find out his meaning in them, Ps. lxxvii. 6; and withal a special inclination and delight to be conversant therein, 'Thy works are very great, sought out of them that have pleasure in them,' Ps. cxi. 2; and if, of all the rest, those choicer pieces, his works of mercy, may challenge our best regard, in which his heart and delights are most, on which his wisdom hath laid on the richest workmanship, in the most curious contrivements of his love, Mic. vii. 18: then surely that selected volume of more special mercies, his epistles, vouchsafed in answer to our prayers, is above all other most exactly to be studied, and most diligently to be perused by us; wherein God doth unbosom himself, and lay open his heart more sweetly, more familiarly unto us, which are directed, and in a manner dedicated more particularly unto ourselves alone: many of them written with his own hand, in a more immediate manner discovered and appearing in them; and all of them come sealed with the impress of everlasting love, and down-laden with the enclosure of the most precious tokens of his special favour. Whoso is wise will observe these things, and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, Ps. cvii. 43.

Neither have such favours only more of mercy in the things themselves bestowed, but are further endeared to us by being made our own mercies, by a more peculiar title to them; by which the kindness in them is rendered double. For therein we have that royal liberty to become our own choosers, and contrivers of our own condition, having all the promises thrown down to us, with blanks for us to write our names in which of them we please, which is the greatest liberty. And we have withal his Spirit secretly directing and fixing the needle of our desires to the same point, wherein his great intentions towards us do meet with our best good; which is indeed the truest liberty. And to be made ourselves, whom we love so well, and therefore delight to do good unto, the chiefest instruments under him of our own greatest happiness, is a privilege than which the creature is not made capable of a more transcendent royalty. And when the greatest love, thus rectified,

which possibly we can bear ourselves, hath opened its mouth widest, and stretched our desires in praying to the utmost compass, then will God's infinite vast love not only fit them, but do for us above all that we are able to ask, yea, to think; exceeding abundantly above all; as far above as his thoughts are above our thoughts, which is far more than the heavens are higher than the earth.

All which, when put together, if well considered, how would it provoke us to call in all that precious stock of our time, thoughts, and intentions which we cast away on trifles, to lay out the choicest portion of them in this thriving trade of intercourse with God; the returns whereof are better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. It is the praying Christian that alone employs the riches of the promises, which we usually let lie by us, like dead stock, unimproved: whilst he, like a wise and diligent merchant, looks abroad upon all the affairs of Jesus Christ that are afloat here in this world, and adventures in them all; is watchful to spy out all advantages, and with a holy *πρόνοια* intermeddleth in every business that may bring in glory unto God, good unto the church, grace and comfort to his own soul. And how infinitely rich must that man needs become that puts even God's riches out to use, with the increase of ten talents for one, yea, a hundred-fold!

The due estimate whereof would no less quicken us to as diligent an inquiry, what becomes of all those goodly adventures, the prayers we make; to listen what haven they arrive at,—how, and when, and with what fraught they do return.

In which great duty, and most necessary property of all true merchants, many of the best and greatest dealers, that are diligent enough in praying, are yet found failing and deficient; that omit no gainful opportunity of adventure, but are careless and unobservant of their returns.

Some, through ignorance, it may be, that this is at all a duty, or of any such importance, are careful only how to lade in prayers enough, not expecting to find any of this bread cast upon the waters, until that great and general return of themselves and all the world with joy bringing their sheaves with them. Others, though at present many of their prayers come home after a few days, and richly laden, yet through want of skill to read those bills of exchange which God often writes in an obscurer character, they lie unregarded by them. Many, when voyages prove long, though to their greater advantage when once they do return, yet in the meantime, through discouragement, they give all for lost, as we do ships at sea we cannot hear of. The most are commonly complaining that their adventures still miscarry, and that little or nothing comes of all their prayers. And all are negligent of keeping their books of accounts, to cast up their comings in and goings out the one with the other. By which they lose the chiefest portion of that comfort which for the present God hath here allotted to us to live upon, the revenues of their prayers. And God also is not only robbed of that custom of his glory which should thence accrue, but wronged also by standing still

as debtor in their accounts to many prayers, in the return of which he hath been creditor long ago.

I have endeavoured in this small treatise to convince believers of the grand importance of this duty, which is so full of gain ; to discover likewise the causes of the neglect herein, and remove the temptations and discouragements which do occasion it ; and have briefly resolved such cases as do more usually occur in the practice of it. But principally my desire was to give in some few experiments and observations which may help to teach the weaker sort, though not perfectly to read, yet here and there to spell, and especially out of the impressions in their own hearts, God's meaning towards them in his answers. I have cast in some scattered calculations of broken prayers cast up, which though they will not amount to make general and perfect tables out of, yet may serve as instances and examples for young beginners, to direct them in the exercise of this most useful skill and wisdom, how to compute and balance their accounts by comparing their prayers and their returns together.

This small and imperfect embryo I have presumed to send forth into the world ; and directed it first of all to present its service unto you, and make an honourable and thankful mention of your name. Your worth deserves a more costly, large, and lasting monument for this inscription. Your own abilities of learning, eloquence, and depth of wisdom in human affairs, would you be persuaded to lay them out as you are able, would erect such a remembrance and sumptuous memorial of you when you are gathered to your fathers, as would bear some proportion to your great worth. But that which emboldened me was the near affinity which meditations of this nature do hold with those other your more retired thoughts you think to none but God and your own soul. You have been long a frequent and constant dealer in this blessed way of intercourse with God in private. Those that know you, know your strict observance of those exchange hours you have devoted to meet with God and enjoy communion with him. But, above all, it was that personal obligation under which a great and special favour from you long since brought me, upon which I devoted (with myself) the first of my labours unto your service. And it became one great relief unto my thoughts, weighing the many inconveniences of appearing thus in public, that it gave so full occasion to pay my vows thus openly before all the world ; which having now done, God, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him, fill you with all grace, and fulfil all your petitions !—So prays,

Your worship's obliged to love and serve you,

THOMAS GOODWIN.

THE RETURN OF PRAYERS.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.—
PSALM LXXXV. 8.

The coherence of the words.

THIS psalm was penned in the name and for the comfort of the whole church of the Jews, both as a prophecy of, and a prayer for, their return out of the Babylonish captivity, and the flowing in again of that ancient glory, peace, administration of justice, liberty of God's ordinances, plenty and increase, which formerly they enjoyed, but had now suffered an ebb of seventy years' continuance. And first he beginneth with prayer, from the first verse to this we have in hand, putting the Lord in mind of, and urging him with his gracious dealings in former times unto his church. This is not the first time, saith he, that the church hath been in captivity, and that thou hast returned it, (as out of Egypt, &c.,) and therefore we hope that thou wilt do so again: 'Thou hast been favourable unto thy land,' &c. His prayer being finished, and he having spoke, he now stands and listens, as you use to do when you expect an echo, what echo he should have, what answer would be returned from heaven, whither his prayer had already come: 'I will hear what the Lord will speak;' or, as some read it, 'I hear what the Lord doth speak:' for sometimes there is a present echo, a speedy answer returned to a man's heart, even ere the prayer is half finished; as unto Daniel, chap. ix. 20, 21. And in brief it is this, 'The Lord will speak peace unto his people:' this answer he finds written at the bottom of the petition, but with this clause of admonition for time to come added, 'But let them not return again to folly;'—a good use to be made of so gracious an answer.

CHAPTER I.

The main observation and subject of this discourse thence deduced : That God's people are diligently to observe the answers to their prayers.—The reasons of it.

THESE words being especially spoken in relation to God's returning answer to his prayer made, therefore in that relation I mean principally to handle them.

The observation is this : That when a man hath put up prayers to God, he is to rest assured that God will in mercy answer his prayers ; and to listen diligently, and observe how his prayers are answered : both are here to be observed. 'I will hear what God will speak ;' that is, how he will accomplish them : and withal he confidently expresseth an assurance that 'God will speak peace.' Thus doth the church, Mic. vii. 7, 'I will look to the Lord ; I will wait ; my God will hear me : ' she was both sure of gracious audience with him,—'my God will hear me,'—and she will wait till he answers her ; and observe how he doth it, 'I will look to the Lord ;' and, ver. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord till he plead my cause.' So Habakkuk, he having made a prayer against the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar, in the first chapter, having ended it, he begins the second chapter thus, 'I will stand upon my watch tower, and see what he will answer me : ' and in the end an answer comes, ver. 2 ; and as he thus waited for a vision, for sometimes their prophecies were in answer to their prayers, so should we for an answer unto ours.

Reason 1.—Because otherwise you take an ordinance of God in vain in your hearts, which is to take God's name, with whom in that ordinance you deal, in vain ; for it is a sign you think your prayer not an effectual means to attain that end it is ordained for, and say secretly in your hearts, as they, Job xxi. 15, 'What profit have we if we pray to him ? ' For if we use any means, and expect not the end, it is a sign we think the means vain to accomplish that end. Whereas every faithful prayer is ordained of God to be a means to obtain what we desire and pray for, and is not put up in vain, but shall have answer : 1 John v. 14, 15, 'This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.' It is true God heareth an enemy, but to hear with favour is the hearing there meant ; and is so used in our ordinary speech, as we say of a favourite that he hath the king's ear ; and if a man be obstinate to a man's counsel, we say he would not hear, though he give the hearing : so here, to hear is a word of gracious inclination to do the thing required ; and thus God's ears are said to be open to their prayers ; and so it follows there, that 'if he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' As soon as we have prayed, we are said to have our petitions,—that is, they are then granted,—and we may be confident they are assented unto by God ; although in regard to outward dispensation, the com-

mand for accomplishment is not yet come forth : even as a petitioner is said to have his suit when the word of the king is gone forth that it shall be done, though it passeth not the seal, or be not signed a good while after. And like as when a wicked man sinneth, as soon as the act is committed, so soon doth sentence from God go forth against the sinner, but the execution overtakes him not, it may be, a good while after, according to that of Solomon, Eccles. viii. 11, ‘sentence against an evil-doer is not presently executed;’ it is presently sentenced, as the words imply, but not executed : so in like manner falleth it out when a godly man prays, that as soon as the prayer arrives in heaven, which is in an instant, so soon is the petition granted,—so Dan. ix. 23, ‘At the beginning of his prayer the command came forth,’ though the angel, who brought the answer, arrived not at him till towards the end in the evening, ver. 21,—but the real accomplishment of it may be deferred. So as no prayer in respect of an answer to it is in vain ; but where God hath given a heart to speak, he hath an ear to hear : which not to regard, is to take an ordinance in vain, which is God’s name.

Reason 2.—And, secondly, not simply God’s name, as in an ordinance made known, but also his name, that is, his attributes, are taken in vain. For it is a sign you think of that God you pray to, that either ‘his ear is heavy, that he cannot hear, or his hand shortened, that he cannot save,’ or his heart straitened, and his bowels restrained, that he will not : and thus you rob him, and despoil him of one of his most royal titles, whereby he styles himself, Ps. lxxv. 2, ‘a God that heareth prayers;’ who is so regardful of them, that, in 1 Kings viii. 59, they are said to be ‘nigh the Lord day and night;’ they are all before him, and he sets them in his view, as we do letters of friends, which we stick in our windows, that we may remember to answer them, or lay them not out of our bosoms, that we might be sure not to forget them : so the petitions of his people pass not out of his sight, till he sends an answer, which is called ‘speaking’ here; God speaking as well in his works as in his word. But you, by your neglect herein, make an idol god of him, such as were the vanities of the heathen, as if he ‘had ears and heard not, eyes and saw not’ your need, &c. Such a god as Elias mocked; ‘You must speak aloud,’ says he, ‘he may be in a journey,’ &c. Even such a god do you make the God of heaven and earth to be, whilst you put no more confidence in him, or make no more reckoning of your prayers to him than the heathens did of their sacrifices to their gods. Petitioners do not only put up their requests, but use to wait at great men’s doors, and inquire, and listen what answer is given unto them ; and it is part of an honour to great men that we do so : and for the same end are we also to wait on God, to shew his greatness, and our distance from him, and dependence upon him. ‘As the eyes of the servants look to the hand of their masters, so do we,’ saith David, ‘on thee, till thou hast mercy on us,’ Ps. cxxiii. 2. And, Ps. cxxx., after he had prayed, ver. 2, he says he ‘waited more than they that watch for the morning :’ like those that having some great business to do on the morrow, long for the daylight, and look often out to spy the day ; so he for a glimmering and dawning of an answer. The like we have Psalm v. 3, ‘In the morning will I direct my prayer to thee, and look,’ that is, for an answer.

Reason 3.—Again, if God doth give you an answer, if you mind it not, you let God speak to you in vain, when you do not listen to what he answers. If two men walk together, and the one, when himself hath said and spoke what he would, listens not, but is regardless of what the other answers, he exceedingly slights the man. As, *non respondere pro convitio est*, not to

answer again is contempt ; so, *non attendere*, not to attend to what one says. Now our speaking to God by prayers, and his speaking to us by answers thereunto, is one great part of our walking with God ; and to study out his dealings with us, to compare our prayers and his answers together, which are as dialogues between us and him. It is said of Samuel's prophecy, that not a word of it fell to the ground, 1 Sam. iii. 19 : and so it may be said of our prayers ; and so it ought to be of God's answers, not a word of them should fall to the ground ; as there doth, if you by your observation and listening thereunto catch them not, (as Benhadad's servants are said to do Ahab's words,) apprehend and observe them not. And by the same reason that you are to observe the fulfilling of God's promises, you are of your prayers also. Now, 1 Kings viii. 56, it is said, 'not one word failed of all he promised.' Solomon had observed this by a particular survey and register made of all that God had spoken and done for them, and found not a promise unperformed. And there is the like reason both of answers to prayers and for our observing of them, for prayers are but putting promises into suit ; and therefore Solomon brings those words in there to this very purpose, to confirm their faith in this, that no prayers made would fail, being grounded on a promise ; thereby to encourage others and his own heart to diligence herein, as also as a motive unto God to hear him ; for, ver. 59, he infers upon it, 'Let my words be nigh thee,' &c., seeing thou always thus performest thy good word unto thy people.

Reason 4.—Yea, you will provoke the Lord not to answer at all ; he will forbear to answer, because he sees it will be thus in vain. When a man is talking to one that listens not to him, he will cease to answer, and leave off speaking ; and so will God. So as that which the Apostle says of faith, Heb. x. 36, that it is not enough to believe, but 'when you have done the will of God, you have need of patience' to eke out faith, 'that you may inherit the promises,' may be also said, and is alike true, of praying. It is not enough to pray, but after you have prayed, you have need to listen for an answer, that you may receive your prayers ; God will not fulfil them else. As he said, the sermon was not *done* when yet the preacher had done, because it is not done till practised ; so our prayers are not done when yet made, but you must further wait for and attend the accomplishment.

Reason 5.—If you observe not his answers, how shall you bless God and return thanks to him for hearing your prayers ? Ps. cxvi. 1, 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication ;' and therefore he goes on to thank him throughout the whole psalm. You are to 'watch unto prayer with thanksgiving,' Col. iv. 2 ; and therefore, as to watch, to observe, and recollect your own wants, which you are to pray for, that you may have matter of requests to put up, so also to observe God's answers for matter of thanksgiving ; and many fill that commonplace head full of matter to furnish them for petitioning, but as for this other of thanksgiving, they watch not unto it against they come to pray, nor study matter for that head also. And if any study will furnish you this way, it is the studying out of God's answers to your prayers. The reason you pray so much, and give thanks so little is, that you observe not God's answers ; you do not study them. When we have put up a faithful prayer, God is made our debtor by promise, and we are to take notice of his payment, and give him an acknowledgment of the receipt of it ; he loseth of his glory else.

Reason 6.—As God loseth, so yourselves also the experience which you might get thereby. (1.) Both experience of God and his faithfulness, which will cause in you hope and confidence in God another time, when you have

found him again and again answering your prayers. It was a speech of one eminent in holiness, upon occasion of the accomplishment of a great request made to God by him, that God having never denied him any request, 'I have tried God often, now,' says he, 'henceforth I will trust him.' If the hearing the prayers of another will encourage us to go to God,—as Ps. xxxii. 6, 'For this cause shall every one that is godly pray unto thee,'—much more when we observe and have experience that our own are heard; therefore, says David, Ps. cxvi. 2, 'The Lord hath heard me, and I will call upon him as long as I live;' as if he had said, Now that God hath heard me, I know whither to go: this experiment, if I had no more, is enough to encourage me for ever to pray unto God; I have learned by it to call upon him as long as I live. And also, (2.) by observing God's answers to your prayers, you will gain much insight into your own hearts, and ways, and prayers, and may thereby learn how to judge of them. So, Ps. lxvi. 18, 19, David's assurance that he did not regard iniquity in his heart was strengthened by God's having heard his prayers; for thus he reasons, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me; but God hath heard me.' For, [1.] if God doth not grant your petitions, it will put you to study a reason of that his dealing; and so you will come to search into your prayers and the carriage of your hearts, therein to see whether you did not pray amiss: according to that, 'Ye lust and have not, . . . because ye ask amiss,' James iv. 3. As if you send to a friend, who is punctual in that point of friendship of returning answers, and useth not to fail, and you receive no answer from him, you will begin to think there is something in it. And so also here, when a petition is denied, you will be jealous of yourselves, and inquisitive what should be the matter; and so by that search come to see that in your prayers which you will learn to mend the next time. Or, [2.] if they be answered, yet because that therein usually God deals in a proportion with you to your prayers,—as you might perceive if you would observe his dealings with you,—you would by this means come to have much insight into God's acceptation and opinion of your ways: for you should see his dealings with you, and yours with him, to be exceeding parallel and correspondent, and hold proportion each with other. So, Ps. xviii. 6, 'In my distress I called upon the Lord;' and so, ver. 7, 8, &c., he goes on to describe his deliverance, which was the fruit of those prayers, and then, at ver. 20, 21, &c., he adds his observation upon both, 'According to the cleanness of my hands hath he dealt with me,' &c. 'For with the pure thou shalt shew thyself pure.'

Reason 7.—You will lose much of your comfort. There is no greater joy than to see prayers answered, or to see souls converted by us: John xvi. 24, 'Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.' The receiving answers makes joy to abound and overflow. Yea, even when we pray for others, if our prayers be answered for them, our joys are exceeding great; much more when in our own behalf. And therein, even in the smallest things which a Christian doth enjoy, doth his comfort exceed another's, that he hath them by virtue of prayers and promises. he knows how he came by them. If 'stolen waters be sweet, and bread eaten in secret,' &c., (as Solomon says, Prov. ix. 17,) to wicked men, begged meat is much more sweet to godly men; yea, in the very praying for outward mercies, there is more sweetness than they have in enjoying them. As it is joy to a good heart to see any one converted, but much more to him that is the means of it,—'I have no greater joy,' says St John, 'than that my children walk in truth,' 3 Epist. 4,—so to see God do good to his church, and hear others' prayers, is a comfort, but much more to see him do it at a man's own prayers. Therefore, when

God restores comfort to a drooping soul, he is said, Isa. lvii. 18, to 'restore comfort also to his mourners,' that is, to those that prayed and mourned for him, as well as unto that soul itself; it being a comfort to them to see their prayers answered. Comfort it is many ways: (1.) To hear from God, as to hear from a friend, though it be but two or three words, and that about a small matter; if there be at the bottom this subscription, 'your loving father,' or, 'your assured friend,' it satisfies abundantly; so also, (2.) to know that God is mindful of us, accepts our works, fulfils his promises. (3.) How doth it rejoice one to find another of his mind in a controversy; but that God and we should be of one mind, and concur in the desire of the same things,—not two in the earth only agree, Matt. xviii. 19, but God who is in heaven and we to agree,—this rejoiceth the heart exceedingly. And thus it is when a man perceives his prayer answered. Therefore you lose much of your comfort in blessings when you do not observe answers to your prayers.

CHAPTER II

Three cases propounded : the first concerning prayers for the church, and for the accomplishment of such promises as may fall out in ages to come.

Now as for rules and helps to find out God's meaning towards you in your prayers, and to spy out answers, and how to know when God doth anything in answer to your prayers, this is the next thing to be handled : wherein, first, I will answer some cases and queries which may fall out in several sorts of prayers, about the answering of them.

1. As, first, concerning prayers put up for the church, for the accomplishment of such things as fall out in ages to come.

2. Concerning prayers made for others, of your friends, kindred, &c.

3. Concerning those prayers, whether for yourselves or others, wherein others join with you.

1. For the first :—

(1.) There may be some prayers which you must be content never yourselves to see answered in this world, the accomplishment of them not falling out in your time : such as are those you haply make for the calling of the Jews, the utter downfall of God's enemies, the flourishing of the gospel, the full purity and liberty of God's ordinances, the particular flourishing and good of the society and place you live in. All you whose hearts are right do treasure up many such prayers as these, and sow much of such precious seed, which you must be content to have the church, it may be, in after ages to reap ; all which prayers are not yet lost, but will have answers : for as God is an eternal God, and Christ's righteousness an 'everlasting righteousness,' and therefore of eternal efficacy, Dan. ix. 24, 'being offered up by the eternal Spirit,' Heb. ix. 14, so are prayers also, which are the work of the eternal Spirit of Christ, made to that God in his name, and in him are eternally accepted, and of eternal force, and therefore may take place in after ages. So the prayer that St Stephen made for his persecutors took place in Saul when St Stephen was dead. So David's prayer against Judas, Ps. cix. 8, 9, took effect above a thousand years after, as appears, Acts i. 20. So the prayers of the church, for three hundred years, in the primitive times, that kings might come to the knowledge of the truth, and they 'lead peaceable and quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty,' (which St Paul, in Nero's time, exhorted unto, 1 Tim. ii. 2,) were not answered and accomplished till Constantine's time, when the church brought forth a man-child, Rev. xii. 5. So, Isa. lviii., after he had exhorted to, and given directions for fasting and prayer in a right manner, he adjoineth this promise, 'Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations ; thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach ;' namely, for this, because his fasting and prayers might have influence into many ages yet to come, in the accomplishment of what was prayed for. And that which Christ says of the apostles' reaping the fruit of St John the Baptist's ministry, and the seed he had sown, is in like manner

herein verified, John iv. 37, 'One soweth and another reapeth.' And in this sense, that which the Papists say is true, that there is a common treasury of the church, not of their merits, but of their prayers. There are bottles of tears a-filling, vials a-filling to be poured out for the destruction of God's enemies. What a collection of prayers hath there been these many ages towards it! And that may be one reason why God will do such great things towards the end of the world, even because there hath been so great a stock of prayers going for so many ages, which is now to be returned. And herein it falls out to us in our prayers as in their prophecies to the prophets of old: 1 Pet. i. 11, 'The Spirit in them did signify the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things that are now revealed.' And thus is it in the spirit of prayer, which is instead of the spirit of prophecy; for we pray through the guidance of the Spirit, 'who teacheth us what to ask,' for many things that come to pass in after ages.

(2.) Only at present in prayer it may be that thou hast revealed unto thee, by a secret impression made on thy spirit, that these things shall come to pass, and so hast thy faith confirmed in them, and withal an evidence, that even for thy prayers, among others, God will perform them; and that the contribution of thy prayers doth help to make up the sum. And upon such prayers God usually for the present also testifies the acceptation of a man's person, and reveals himself most to him that he is his, as he did to Moses: he never revealed his love to Moses more than when he prayed most for God's people. And haply thou hast that as one of thy best evidences of the uprightness of thy heart, that thou canst pray for the church's good, though for a long time to come, which thou mayest never behold with thine eyes, even as David also did, and rejoiced in it.

(3.) And when they are accomplished, and thou in heaven, thy joy will surely be the more full for these thy prayers: as at the conversion of those thou hast prayed for, so at the ruin of the church's enemies, &c., whom thou didst pray against; for if there be joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, as at the birth of a new prince and heir of heaven, then haply in a proportion he shall rejoice most whose prayers had most hand in it, and a special interest therein. And so as thy other works, so thy prayers follow thee, and 'the fruit of them,' as Jeremiah speaks, chap. xvii. 10; and, however, yet at the day of judgment thou shalt rejoice, as well as they that enjoyed the fruit of thy prayers in their times, thou having sown the seed of their happiness: 'Both he that sows and he that reaps shall then rejoice together,' as Christ says, John iv. 36.

CHAPTER III.

*The second case, concerning prayers made for others, of our friends, &c.
—How they are answered.*

2. THE second case is concerning answers to our prayers for others, for particular men, as friends and kindred, &c., and likewise for temporal blessings.

Pray for others you know we must ; so the elders of the church for those that are sick, James v. 15, 16 : ‘Pray one for another,’ says St James. As in case a man is troubled with a lust, tell some private friend of it : ‘Confess your sins one to another,’ that when a man’s own prayers are not strong enough to cast it out, it may be done by the help of another’s prayers joined with his. So it follows, ‘that ye may be healed,’ ver. 16, for in that sense I understand healing in ver. 16. So also, 1 John v. 16, ‘If a man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death,’—that is, not against the Holy Ghost,—‘he shall ask life for him, and God shall give him life that sins not unto death.’

Concerning this case, I give these considerations, how such prayers are answered :—

First consideration.—Such prayers God often heareth ; why else are any such promises made ? As, ‘that they shall be healed in their bodies,’ James v. 15, ‘healed of their lusts,’ ver. 16 ; ‘converted to life,’ 1 John v. 16. God hath made these to encourage us to pray, and to testify his abundant love to us ; that it so overflows and runs over, that he will hear us, not only for ourselves, but for others also ; which is a sign we are in extraordinary favour. So God intimates concerning Abraham to Abimelech, Gen. xx. 7, ‘He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live.’ And as he was a prophet, so we are priests, as for ourselves, so for others also, to God our Father ; and it is a prerogative we have through the fellowship we have, and communion of Christ’s priestly office, ‘who hath made us kings and priests,’ Rev. i. 6, to prevail and intercede for others, and a special token and pledge of extraordinary love ; for if God hears a man’s prayers for others, much more for himself in his own behalf. So when Christ healed the man sick of the palsy, it was, as it is said, for the faith of the standers-by, Matt. ix. 2 : ‘He, seeing their faith, said, Thy sins are forgiven thee.’ The meaning is not as if for their faith’s sake he forgave that man his sins, for, Hab. ii. 4, ‘the just doth live by’ his own ‘faith ;’ but to encourage them who out of faith brought that sick man to him, and us all in like manner to bring others and their complaints by prayer before him, he therefore then took occasion to declare and pronounce forgiveness to that poor man ; he therefore then said, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee.’

Second consideration.—Yet, secondly, prayers for others may often also not obtain the particular thing prayed for them. So Samuel’s prayer for Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 35 ; so David for his enemies, Ps. xxxv. 13.

For it is in this as it is in the use of other means and ordinances for the

good of others ; God making such like kind of promises to our prayers herein as he hath made to our endeavours to convert when we preach to men : that look, as we preach to many, and yet but few believe,—for ‘who hath believed our report?’ Rom. x. 16, even ‘as many as are ordained to eternal life ;’ we ‘become all to all, and win but some,’—so we pray for many, not knowing who are ordained to eternal life, which whilst we know not, we are yet to pray for them, 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. Only as where God hath set his ordinance of preaching, it is more than a probable sign he hath some to convert, and usually the word takes among some, though often but a few ; so when he hath stirred up our hearts to pray for others, it is a sign God will hear us for some of those we pray for, yet so as we may be denied. For God doth require it as a duty on our parts, because it is an outward means ordained by God, by which sometimes he useth to bring things to pass ; but yet not as such a certain and infallible means, as he hath tied himself universally unto, to bring the thing to pass on his part.

And though indeed his promise to hear and accept the prayer is general and universal, yet the promise to hear it, by granting the very thing itself prayed for, is but an indefinite promise, such as he makes to other means of doing men good ; as to our admonitions and reproofs, and to our preaching, &c. He makes such promises because sometimes he doth hear and convert by them. For instance, that promise, James v. 15, of healing the sick, cannot be universal ; for it might then be supposed, as a truth implied in it, that sick men might never die, whereas ‘it is appointed for all men once to die,’ Heb. ix. 27, seeing it may be supposed that the elders may at all such times of danger of death still come and pray with them. But the meaning is, that it is an ordinance which God hath made a gracious promise unto, because he often doth restore the sick at their prayers : and therefore upon every such particular occasion, we are to rely upon God for the performance of it by an act of recumbency, though with an act of full assurance that we shall obtain it we cannot ; the promise being not universal, but indefinite.

Of the like nature are all other promises of things temporal and outward, of which we herein speak, as when God promiseth to give long life to them that honour their parents, riches and honours to them that fear him ; the tenor and purport of which promises is not, as if absolutely, infallibly, and universally God doth always perform these to those that are yet truly qualified with the conditions specified in those promises ; the contrary both Scripture instances and common experience shews : they are therefore indefinitely meant, and so to be understood by us. For, because whenever God doth dispense any such mercies to any of his, he would do it by promise ; all his ways to his being truth, that is, the fulfilling of some truth promised ; and also God having purposed in his outward dispensation of things here in this world, to bestow riches and honours upon some that fear him, though not upon all, for how then should ‘all things fall alike to all,’ Eccles. ix. 2, poverty and contempt upon them that fear God, even as well as those that fear him not ? He hath therefore indefinitely expressed his gracious dispensation herein : requiring answerably an act of faith—which principle in us is suited to a promise, as a faculty is to its proper object—suitable to that his meaning in the promise ; that as he intended not in such promises an absolute, infallible, universal obligation of himself to the performance of them to all that fear him, so the act of faith which a man is to put forth toward this promise, in the application of it for his own particular, is not required to be an absolute, infallible persuasion and assurance that God will bestow these outward things upon him, having these qualifications

in him ; but only an indefinite act, as I may so call it, of recumbency and submission, casting and adventuring ourselves upon him for the performance of it to us, not knowing but he may in his outward dispensations make it good to us, yet with submission to his good pleasure, if otherwise he disposeth it.

It is true, indeed, that that act of general assent which faith is to give to this promise, in the general abstract truth of it, is to be an assured certain persuasion and belief that God hath made this promise, and that he certainly will and doth perform it unto some according to his purpose expressed therein ; which act of general assent is that believing without wavering,—namely, of the truth of the promise in general,—which St James calls for in prayer, chap. i. 6. But yet that special act of application, as divines call it, required in this faith, whereby I am to rest upon it for my own particular, is not required to be such an undoubted persuasion as to think that I shall certainly have this particular promise in kind fulfilled to me ; for the truth, purpose, and intent of the promise is not universal, but indefinite. So as it is but an *it may be*, as God elsewhere expresseth such promises, as Zeph. ii. 3, that it shall be performed to me ; and yet because it may be God will perform it unto me, therefore my duty is to cast myself upon God, and put in for it, with submission to his good pleasure for the performance of it to me. So that so far as the truth and intent of it is revealed to be infallible and certain, so far a man is bound to have an answerable act of faith, of certain and infallible persuasion towards it, as to believe without wavering that God hath made such a promise, and will perform it according to his intent in making it, which is unto some. But yet withal, because the tenor of it is but indefinite, and in that respect whether it shall be performed to me or no is not therein certainly revealed ; therefore God requires not of me, in the application of such a promise, an absolute full persuasion that he will perform it to me in such or such a manner, &c. ; but only an act of dependence and adherence, with referring it to his wise and righteous good pleasure towards me.

And yet again, if God should at any time give a man such a special faith concerning any such particular temporal blessing for himself or another, then he is bound to believe it thus in particular : as when he gave power to any to work miracles, as to his apostles he did, with a commission to work them, then they were bound to believe that such and such a miracle should infallibly be wrought by them, as that the devils should be cast out by them, &c. And therefore in this case Christ rebukes his disciples for not believing thus upon such particular occasions, Matt. xvii. 20.

And then it is also true that if God give such a faith, he will infallibly perform it ; and thus those his words are to be understood, Matt. xxi. 22, ‘ Whatsoever ye ask in faith, believing, ye shall receive : ’ he speaks it of the faith of miracles ; for, ver. 21, he had said, ‘ If ye believe and doubt not, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove into the sea, and it shall be removed.’ So that when God works such a faith, and we are called to it, we are bound to believe with a certain persuasion that such a thing will be done, and it shall be done ; but unto such a kind of special faith in temporal promises for ourselves or others, God doth not now always call us. If indeed at any time we did believe and doubted not, by reason of a special faith wrought by God, that God would remove a mountain into the sea, or bestow any outward mercy, it should be done ; for he that stirred up such a faith would accomplish the thing. But it is not that which God requires of believers, that they should without doubting thus believe concerning outward things ;

the promises thereof being not universal but indefinite ; and therefore answerably a man is not absolutely bound to believe that God will certainly bestow such a temporal blessing on him, no, not though he should have the qualification which the promise is made unto, the promise being not universal, made to all so qualified, but indefinite, to some of such so qualified. The case is the same of believing promises made to our praying for others, which is the thing in hand.

Third consideration.—When the prayers are thus made out of conscience of our duty for such whom yet God doth not intend that mercy unto, then they are returned again into our own bosoms, to our advantage ; even as St Paul saith, that his rejoicing that others preached, though they lost their labour, should turn to his salvation, Phil. i. 19. So prayers for others, though to the parties themselves we prayed for they prove in vain, yet they turn to our good. So, Ps. xxxv. 12, 13, when his enemies were sick, David prayed and humbled himself ; ‘and my prayers,’ says he, ‘returned into my bosom.’ David did by this his prayer in secret for his enemies testify the sincerity of his heart to God, and his true forgiveness of them,—for it is the usual disposition of God’s children to pray for them that are the greatest enemies to them,—and this prayer, though it did not profit them, yet it turned to David’s own good ; it came back, and home again to him, with blessings to himself ; God delighting in and rewarding such a disposition in his child, as much as any other, because therein we resemble Christ so truly, and shew that God is our Father, and ourselves to have his bowels in us. And God stirreth up this praying disposition in his children for their enemies, not always that he means to hear them for them, but because he means to draw forth, and so have an occasion to reward, those holy dispositions which are the noblest parts of his image in them, and wherewith he is so much delighted ; and so their prayers return into their own bosom, and it is taken as if they had prayed for themselves all that while. Thus in like manner, when Moses prayed so earnestly for the people of Israel, God offered to return his prayer into his own bosom, and do as much for him alone as he had desired that God would do for them. ‘I will make thee a great nation,’ says God to him, for whom I will do as much for thy sake as thou hast prayed I should do for these. As in preaching the gospel, Christ told the disciples, that if in any house they came to preach peace, there were not a ‘son of peace,’ Luke x. 6, on whom the message might take place, and their peace rest, ‘your peace,’ says he, ‘shall return unto you again.’ So is it if your prayers take not place.

Fourth consideration.—If we have prayed long for those whom God intends not mercy unto, he will in the end cast them out of our prayers and hearts, and take our hearts off from praying for them. That which he did by a revelation from heaven to some prophets of old, as to Samuel and Jeremiah, the same he doth by a more undiscerned work ; that is, by withdrawing assistance to pray for such by withdrawing the spirit of supplication from a man, for some men, and in some businesses. Now thus he did with Samuel : ‘Why dost thou mourn for Saul ?’ 1 Sam. xvi. 1. So with Jeremiah, chap. vii. 16, ‘Pray not for this people.’ And this he doth because he is loath when his people do pray but to hear them, and would not that such precious breath as that of prayer is should be without its full and direct success, or be in vain ; therefore when he means not to hear, he lays the key of prayer out of the way, so desirous is he to give answers to every prayer. It falls out in this case of praying for another as in reproving another. One whom God intends not good unto, God will lock up a man’s heart towards

such a man, that he shall not be able to reprove him ; when towards another God doth enlarge it as much, where he intends good. Thus it is sometimes in praying for another ; so as in praying a man shall not be able to pray for, as not to reprove such a man, though his heart was to do both : but it fareth with him as God threateneth concerning Ezekiel towards that people, that he 'makes his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth,' Ezek. iii. 26.

Fifth consideration.—God will hear those prayers for, and answer them in, some others, in whom we shall have as much comfort as in those we prayed for ; and so it often proves and falls out. God, to shew 'he looks not as man looks,' nor chooseth as he chooseth, lets our hearts be set on work to pray for the conversion or good of one he intends not mercy to ; and then answers them in some other, whom he makes as dear unto us. When God had cast off Saul, still Samuel's heart lingered after him, and he mourned for him ; but God, at the same time, when he bids him cease mourning for Saul, 1 Sam. xvi., to shew that yet he accepted that his mourning as it came from him, 'Go,' says he, 'and anoint one of the sons of Jesse,' 1 Sam. xvi. 1. Samuel desired to see a good successor in that government, and he having been their ruler it was his special care ; he having anointed Saul, it exceedingly grieved him that he should prove so wicked : and God saw and answered the ground of his desires ; and therefore immediately upon his prayers, sent him to anoint the best king that ever was upon that throne, who was the issue and man-child of those his prayers. And again, when Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, when he saw Eliab, ver. 6, 'Surely,' says he, 'the Lord's anointed is before me.' If Samuel had been to choose, he would have chosen him, and would have prayed for and desired him ; but 'God seeth not as man seeth,' ver. 7, and chooseth not as man chooseth ; but in David was his prayer fully heard and answered, and that better. So Abraham, he had prayed for Ishmael, and 'O let Ishmael live in thy sight !' Gen. xvii. 18 ; but God gave him Isaac instead of him. So perhaps thou prayest for one child more than for another, out of thy natural affection, looking on his countenance and stature, as Samuel did on Eliab's ; but yet thy prayers being sincere in the ground of them, in that thou desirest a child of promise, God therefore answers thee, though in another, for whom yet haply thy heart was not so much stirred ; who yet, when he is converted, proves to thee as great a comfort : and it is as much as if that other thou didst most pray for had been wrought upon.

CHAPTER IV.

The third case, about such prayers wherein others join with us.—How therein to discern the influence of our own prayers.

3. THE third case to be considered is, when a man prays for something with others, or which others likewise pray for with him, so as he is not alone in it; how then should he know that his prayers have a hand in obtaining it, as well as theirs? For in such cases Satan is apt to object, Though the thing is granted indeed, yet not for thy prayers, but for the prayers of those others joined in it with thee.

(1.) If thy heart did sympathise and accord in the same holy affections with those others in praying, then it is certain thy voice hath helped to carry it: 'If two agree on earth,' says Christ, Matt. xviii. 19, the word is *συμφωνήσωσιν*; that is, if they harmonially agree to play the same tune; for prayers are music in God's ears, and so called 'melody to God,' Eph. v. 19. It is not simply their agreeing in the thing prayed for, but in the affections; for it is the affections that make the concert and the melody. Now if the same holy affections were touched and struck by God's Spirit in thy heart that in theirs, then thou doest help to make up the concert, and without thee it would have been imperfect; yea, without thee the thing might not have been done, for God stands sometimes upon such a number of voices, and one voice casts it; as when he named ten righteous persons to save Sodom. When therefore the same holy motives and affections affected thee in thy prayer which did them in theirs, it was the work of the same Spirit both in them and thee, and God hath heard thee.

Especially if God did stir up the same secret instinct in thee to sympathise with another in praying for such a thing unbeknown one to another, as sometimes it falls out; then surely thy prayers are in it as well as his. You shall observe sometimes a general instinct of the Spirit put into God's people's hearts, generally to pray for or against a thing, without each other's stirring up one another; even as Ezekiel by the river Chebar prophesied the same things Jeremiah did at home at Jerusalem. Thus against the time that Christ the Messiah came in the flesh, there was a great expectation raised up in the hearts of the godly people to look and pray for him, Luke ii. 27, 38.

(2.) God doth usually and often evidence to a man, that his prayers contributed and went among the rest towards the obtaining of it; as—

[1.] By some circumstance: as, for example, sometimes by ordering it so that that man that prayed most for a thing of concernment, should have the first news of it when it comes to be accomplished; which God doth, as knowing it will be most welcome news to him. God doth herein as we do with a friend, who we know is cordial in, and wisheth well to a business; he sends him the first word of it who was most hearty in it, and prayed most about it. Good old Simeon had surely been earnest in seeking the Lord, as well

as the rest in Jerusalem, to send the Messiah into the world, to restore and raise up the ruins of Israel; for God did reveal to him that he should see him before he died: and therefore to evidence to him his respect to his prayers, God carried the good old man into the temple just at the time when the child was brought into the temple, for to 'be presented to the Lord,' Luke ii. 27, 28. And in like manner good Anna, 'who had served God with fasting and prayer, night and day,' God ordereth it so that she must also come in at the same instant, Luke ii. 38. By some such like peculiar circumstance or other doth God often use to witness to a man's heart that he hath heard him in businesses prayed for in common with others.

[2.] By filling the heart with much joy in the accomplishment of what a man prayed for: which is an evident argument that his prayers did move the Lord to effect it, as well as the prayers of others. Thus that good old Simeon, seeing his prayers now answered, he was even willing to die through joy; and thought he could not die in a better time: 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace.' For when the desires have vented and laid out much of themselves, then when the return comes home, they have an answerable part and share in the comfort of it: and as desires abounded in praying, so will joy and comfort also in the accomplishment. As when a ship comes home, not only the chief owners, but every one that ventured shall have a share out of the return, in a proportion to the adventure; so here, though some one whom it mainly concerns hath especial interest in the mercy obtained, yet thou shalt have thy prayers out in joy from God that the thing is granted. St Paul had planted a church at Thessalonica, but he could not stay to water it with his own preaching, yet when absent he waters those plants which he had set, with prayers, night and day: 1 Thess. iii. 10, 'Night and day praying exceedingly for you,' says he. And as his prayers were exceeding abundant for them, so was his joy as abundant in them, when he had heard that they stood steadfast, and fell not back again: 'Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord,' ver. 8. 'And what thanks can we render to God for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before the Lord?' ver. 9.

[3.] If God give you a heart thankful for a blessing vouchsafed to another, prayed for by you with others, it is another sign your prayers have some hand in it. St Paul knew not what thanks to give for the answering of his prayers, as in that forementioned place. Old Eli had put up but one short ejaculatory petition, that we read of, for Hannah; and that was, 'The Lord grant thy petition!' 1 Sam. i. 17; and for the return of that one prayer, when Hannah related how God had answered her, ver. 26, 27, he returned solemn thanks: 'and he worshipped the Lord there,' ver. 28.

(3.) And, lastly, in case the thing concerned thyself, which was prayed for by others helping thee therein, what cause hast thou but to think that it was granted for thy own prayers, and not for theirs only? seeing God stirred up their hearts to pray for thee, and gave thee a heart to pray for thyself, and besides gave thee the thing which thou desiredst. Which argues thou art beloved as well as they, and accepted as well as they. 'I know this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers,' saith St Paul, Phil. i. 19. Though their prayers went to the business, yet had not St Paul been accepted himself, the prayers of all the men in the world would have done him but little good. God may hear the prayers of the godly for wicked men, when they do not pray themselves, in temporal things: so he did hear

Moses for Pharaoh, Abraham for Abimelech : and he may hear godly men the sooner for others' prayers ; so he heard Aaron and Miriam the sooner for Moses's sake, Num. xii. 13. But if God stirs up thy heart to pray for thyself, as well as others for thee, then God that gave thee a heart to pray hath heard thy prayers also, and hath had a respect to them more in it than to theirs, because it concerned thyself, as a more special mercy unto thee.

CHAPTER V.

Common directions helpful in all cases and prayers.—First, from such observations as may be taken from before, and in praying.

HAVING premised these cases, I come now to more general and common directions to help you in discerning and observing the mind of God, and his answers to you in your prayers. All which directions are such as may be helpful in all the forementioned cases, and in all sorts of prayers whatever. And they are taken from observations to be made upon your prayers, &c., both *before, in, and after* praying.

First, *before* praying ; when God bespeaks a prayer, as I may so speak,—that is, when God secretly speaks to the heart to pray much about a thing. I express it thus according to that phrase of David, Ps. xxvii. 8, ‘Thou saidst, Seek my face, and I said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.’ Now God then speaks to the heart to pray when not only he puts upon the duty by saying to the conscience, This thou oughtest to do ; but God’s speaking to pray is such as his speech at first was, when he made the world, when he said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light :’ so he says, Let there be a prayer, and there is a prayer ; that is, he pours upon a man a spirit of grace and supplication, a praying disposition ; he puts in motives, suggests arguments and pleas to God ; all which you shall find come in readily, and of themselves, and that likewise with a quickening heat and enlargement of affections, and with a lingering, and longing, and restlessness of spirit to be alone, to pour out the soul to God, and to vent and form those motions and suggestions into a prayer, till you have laid them together and made a prayer of them. And this is a speaking to the heart. And observe such times when God doth thus, and neglect them not, then to strike whilst the iron is hot ; thou hast then his ear ; it is a special opportunity for that business, such a one as thou mayest never have the like. Suitors at court observe *mollissima jandi tempora*, their times of begging when they have kings in a good mood, which they will be sure to take the advantage of ; but especially if they should find that the king himself should begin of himself to speak of the business which they would have of him : and thus that phrase of Ps. x. 17 is understood by some, that God prepares the heart, and causeth the ear to hear ; that is, he fashions it, and composeth it into a praying frame. And sure it is a great sign that God means to hear us when himself shall thus indite the petition.

And by the way let me give this note of difference between these speakings to the heart and those whereby Satan puts us upon such duties at unseasonable hours and times ; as when we are otherwise necessarily to be employed in our callings, to eat, or to sleep, &c. ; then to put upon praying is a device of his he useth to tire out new converts with. The difference will appear in this : the devil comes in a violent imperious manner upon the conscience, but enlargeth not the heart a whit unto the duty ; but whenso-

ever God at such extraordinary by-times doth call upon us, he fits and prepares the heart, and fills the soul with holy suggestions, as materials for the duty; for whatsoever he calls to, he gives abilities withal to the thing he calls for.

And thus usually, when he will have any great matters done and effected, he sets men's hearts a-work to pray by a kind of gracious preinstinct; he stirs them up and toucheth the strings of their hearts by his Spirit sent down upon them. Thus against the return of the captivity he stirred up Daniel's heart, chap. ix. 1; he knowing by books the time to be near expiring, was stirred up to seek God. And so he that made this psalm, 'salvation being then nigh,' Ps. lxxxv. 9, 10; then God stirred him up to pray, and pen this prayer for their return; which God had foretold he would do, Jer. xxix. 10-12. For having promised, ver. 10, I will cause you to return after seventy years; 'then,' says he, ver. 12, 'shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.' He speaks it not only by way of command, what it was they ought to do, but as prophesying also what they should do; for then he meant to stir up their hearts, as then he did, as appears by those forementioned instances. Therefore observe what things God thus, by an instinct, doth enlarge thy heart to pray for at times, and sometimes at extraordinary by-times, when haply thou didst not think to pray about any such thing; yet he then stirred thee up most, it may be, as thou wert walking, &c., and having spare time, he draws thee into his presence, and moves thee in that manner specified.

Now, secondly, as God thus speaks to the heart to pray, so also *in* praying; and his speaking to the heart in prayer may be discerned by these particulars:—

1. When God quiets, and calms, and contents the heart in prayer, which is done by speaking something to the heart, though what is spoken be not always discerned. If you should see one who was an earnest and importunate suitor, and exceeding anxious when he went in to a great man, but beheld him after coming out from him contented, and quieted, and cheerful in his spirit, you would conceive that certainly something had been said to him which gave him encouragement, satisfaction, and contentment in his suit. Thus when thou goest to God, and hast been importunate in a business,—as suppose for Christ: O give me Christ, or else I die!—and thy desires were exceedingly up for it; but thou risest up with thy mind calmed and satisfied, and feelest the anxiousness, the solicitude of thy heart about the thing taken off and dispelled: this is a good sign: that God hath heard thy prayer, and hath spoken something to thy heart which makes it thus composed. When Hannah, out of much bitterness and with strong desires, which by a long delay had been made more violent, so as her heart was much disquieted,—for, Prov. xiii. 12, 'hope,' and by the same reason desire also, 'deferred makes the soul sick,'—when out of the abundance of her grief she had poured her soul out before the Lord, 1 Sam. i. 16, Eli the priest joining in prayer also for her, 'The Lord grant thy petition;' after that prayer she found her heart so quieted, that 'she looked no more sad,' as the text says there, she arose quieted and calmed, and it was that prayer that did both fill Eli's mouth with that word of prophecy and her heart with quietness, and a secret word from God accompanying it that did still those waves: and accordingly God gave her a son, a son of her desires.

And the like God doth now, by speaking, as I said, something to the heart: as by dropping in some promise or other into the heart, or some like consideration; saying, as it were, to the heart, even as Eli from God did to

her, 'The Lord grants thy petition.' As to St Paul, when he was earnest with God about removing his buffetings by Satan, which whether they were the stirring up a lust, or temptations of blasphemy, I do not now dispute; 'I besought God thrice,' that is, earnestly, says he, 'that it might depart;' and to this he had an answer in the meantime given him, till it should be taken away, enough to still and quiet him: so 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. 'And he said,—that is, in prayer the Lord did put in this consideration and promise into his thoughts,—'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, and my power is made perfect in weakness.' This answer thus coming in, this promise thus seasonably suggested, stayed and quieted Paul's heart. In like manner, thou hast, it may be, been long praying against poverty or the like distress, and God lets fall this or the like promise into thy heart, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' Heb. xiii. 5, which quiets and contents thy mind. This is an answer; and observe such answers, for they are precious.

2. If whilst thou art a-praying God doth draw nigh to thy soul, and revealeth himself to it in and upon such or such a particular petition: as in case thou didst mainly intend, when thou didst begin to pray, to set thyself to beg some temporal mercy at his hands, some great matter for the good and prosperity of the church,—as Daniel, chap. ix., did set himself to seek God for the return of the captivity,—and even before thou comest to ask it, or in asking it, God smiles upon thee, welcomes thee, falleth about thy neck and kisseth thee; this thou art to observe as a sign he hears thy prayer, and accepteth both thee and it. When there is such a strong sense of God's favour and presence whilst thou art upon such a suit and request, more than at other times or than in other passages of the same prayer, this is a token God hears thee in that particular, and thou art to observe this his speaking to thy heart; when thus thou shalt no sooner come into his presence to inquire of him, but he says, 'Here I am,' as the promise is, Isa. lviii. 9. Therefore, Ps. lxi. 17, 18, 'Hear me speedily,' says David; 'and,' that I may know thou hearest me, 'draw nigh to me.' Therefore when God draws nigh to thee, it is a sign he hears thee. Daniel having fasted and prayed for three weeks together, chap. x. 2, 3, then an angel came, and one of the three Persons came and told him he was 'a man greatly beloved,' ver. 11, 19. When, in like manner, God by his Spirit comes down, and meets thee, and tells thy heart in secret that thou art his beloved and he is thine, then thy prayers are certainly heard; for if he accepts thy person, much more thy prayers, 1 John v. 13, 14. Men, false men,—false upon the balance, as David speaks, when they come to be tried and weighed,—they will, out of cunning, use suitors most kindly then when they mean to put them off, and deny them their requests; but God, who is truth and faithfulness itself, doth not use so to deal, but when he means to answer the prayer, he withal sometimes reveals his free grace most, to the end they may see and acknowledge the fountain of all to be his everlasting love, and so take the thing granted as a fruit of it, and thereby come to be the more abundantly thankful.

Only let me add this caution, which may be of great use to you: That it is not always infallibly true that when God draws nigh to you in a particular request, that that request in particular shall be granted in that manner you desired; but it is a certain evidence that thy prayer is heard, and that the thing thou askest is agreeable to his will, and that he approves of thee and thy request exceedingly, and thinketh the better of thee for it, and he will give thee it, or something that is better. There may be herein, and sometimes is, a mistake of God's meaning, to think that always then the thing

shall be granted when God draws nigh to a man : experience sometimes shews the contrary.

Quest.—But you will say, Why doth God draw so nigh if he means not to grant it ?

Ans. 1.—He shews thereby his approving will of the thing prayed for. Now God approves many things he decrees not. There is his approving will and his decreeing will. God may shew his approving will of the thing thou askest,—as suppose it be in view a matter which is of great consequence to the church,—which he doth for thy encouragement ; but yet it follows not that his decreeing will is for the accomplishment of that very thing in particular.

Ans. 2.—God may accept the person and the prayer when he doth not grant the thing prayed for ; and by that drawing nigh witness his acceptance of thy person and thy prayer. Yea—

Ans. 3.—That revealing of himself is oftentimes all the answer he intended to such a prayer ; and it is answer enough, too, to enjoy in the stead of a particular mercy the assurance of God's love. As suppose thou didst pray against some evil coming upon his church, which he yet intends to bring, which he did set thy heart a-work to pray against, thereby to manifest the sincerity thereof, and then he, seeing thee thus sincere, draws nigh to thee, and tells thee, however, it shall go well with thee, and that thou art greatly beloved of him ; thou art sometimes to take this for all the answer he means to give. And this he doth sometimes also to content the heart, and prepare it for a denial in the thing ; whereas otherwise the denial of what a Christian hath been earnest in might occasion, as in many it doth, a questioning and doubting of God's love.

3. When God stirs up in the heart a particular faith in a business, as sometimes he doth, and upholds the heart to wait for it, maugre all discouragements. So he did in David, Ps. xxvii. 3. David was then in great hazards by reason of Saul, or Absalom, and those such and so often, as that to sense and outward probabilities he was like never to live quietly again at Jerusalem, and enjoy God's ordinances there in peace ; but for this David had prayed, and had made it as the grand request of his whole life,—as every man hath some one great request of all other, even as he hath some special grace above all other, or gift, &c., so request to God, next to his salvation, as haply for his ministry, or the like, therefore says David, ver. 4, 'This one thing have I desired,'—and accordingly God gave him a special faith in this thing above all other, because it was his great request ; 'In this will I be confident,' ver. 3. And though a host of men should again and again encompass me, says he, yet in this I will be confident, that I shall still escape, and see Jerusalem again, and enjoy the ordinances and live in peace. And though his faith failed him often, as in the persecution of Saul it did, for he said he should 'one day perish by the hand of Saul,' 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, yet at other times his faith was marvellously upheld, and he was confident in this. He used not to be so in other requests thus absolutely, particularly, and distinctly ; and therefore he says, 'In this,' &c. As there is a witness of the Holy Ghost immediate to the heart, sealing up adoption to a man's person, so in some cases there is the like testimony for the obtaining of some eminent thing we have asked. Which particular special faith doth in a kind of similitude answer to the faith of miracles of old, whereby a man had a particular confidence that God would do such a miracle by him. So in and by means of prayer, in some things there may be a particular strengthening and assuring the heart, that God will do such a thing for a man : which I confess

is rare and extraordinary, as also that immediate testimony concerning our persons is, which many want that go to heaven. And haply this other, concerning the accomplishment of special mercies, is much more rare, and but in some businesses, and is a thing which some men are not acquainted with, but yet may be in some cases existent to some men's spirits, as it was to David's in the thing mentioned.

And concerning this also I will also add a caution, as about the former: That it doth not always fall out upon all such kind of evidences made to a man's spirit, and that by God, that the thing prayed for doth come to pass. For these very persuasions stirred up by God, may be and are often but conditional, though thus immediately made to a man's spirit, and are so to be understood, and not peremptory and absolute. It cannot be imagined that all these should always be of greater absoluteness and peremptoriness than were many of those revelations made by God to the prophets, wherein he manifested his gracious purpose towards such a man or people, either to vouchsafe them such a mercy, or bring such a judgment; which forewarnings, though they were particular and express, yet limited and intended with a condition, according to the performance or not performance of which it fell out, either the judgment expressly threatened was diverted, or that good thing which was as directly and fully promised was not bestowed: as it was in the case of Jonah threatening the destruction of Nineveh; and so in the promise concerning Eli's house, 1 Sam. ii. 30, 'I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever:' but now the Lord says it shall not be so, for they had broken the condition which was implied in it, they had despised the Lord; 'and them that despise me,' says God there, 'I will despise.'

In like manner is God's meaning expressed towards us in such like persuasions wrought in us by prayer, to be understood: as that such mercies will surely come to pass, but still under a condition of obedience, and performing of those vows which a man joined with those his petitions, to move the Lord to grant the things; which if a man fail in, or ceaseth to go on to believe, it may and doth often come to pass that things fall out contrary to that persuasion; and then we are apt to question whether it was from God or no; which it might be, and truly wrought by his Spirit, and yet not always absolutely meant,—that was your mistake so to take it,—but conditionally only. For in such great requests of the soul unto God, there use to pass mutual covenants between God and us, and indentures are drawn and sealed unto by us—that is, we in prayer offer and promise to do thus and thus, if God will vouchsafe us such a mercy, and plead it to God to move him to bestow it; and God, he thereupon, it may be, seals a covenant on his part to grant the thing, and works such an undoubted persuasion; but if we, in that interim of waiting for that mercy, do deal falsely in that covenant which we have made, and this even whilst we are yet in dependence upon God for it, whereby it appears that we would have done so much more after we should have received it once,—in this case God denies the thing, and yet notwithstanding that persuasion and evidence was from God that heard the prayer. He said indeed he would do thus and thus for thee,—as he told David, 'I would have given thee much more,'—because thou saidst to him, thou wouldst walk thus and thus, or didst vow this or that to him; thou failest in thy word, upon which God uttered his; and thereupon, says God, as to Eli, 'Now it shall not be so,' and yet God had spoken it afore, and not Satan, nor thine own heart only.

4. When God doth put a restless importunity into the heart, maugre all

discouragements. So in that Psalm xxvii. 4, 'One thing I have desired, and I will seek after it,'—that is, as I have sought it, so I will not leave seeking to God for it. When God maintains this in the heart, it is a sign he hears and will answer; for you know the parable, that the unjust judge heard her for her importunity: therefore when God puts an importunity into the heart, he means to hear.

Only this likewise is to be added in this, there is a double importunity: one out of such an inordinate desire to a thing, as the heart knows not how to be without such a mercy, and so continues to ask, but 'asketh amiss, and so receives not,' James iv. 3. But there is an importunity joined with a subjection to God's will, which, when it runs along with it, then God hath stirred it up; and then look for something to come: otherwise you may be importunate, as 'they seek me daily,' when yet God heard not, Isa. lviii. 2.

CHAPTER VI.

Further observations to be made on the dispositions and carriage of our hearts after prayer, until the issue of the thing prayed for.

NEXT: *after thou hast prayed, observe what God doth towards thee.*

As, *first*, how he doth guide thy feet and heart after praying; there is much in that. That which was the spirit of supplication in a man when he prayed, rests upon him as the spirit of obedience in his course; so as that dependence he hath upon God for the mercy he seeks for, is a special motive and means to keep him fearful of offending, and diligent in duty; to look to his paths, to walk and behave himself as becomes a suitor, as well as to come and pray as a suitor. Thus David, he walked by this principle, Ps. lxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me;' that consideration still came in as a curb unto sin; and without this a man provokes God, and so casts himself behindhand again, and by sinning loseth what ground he had got by praying. Therefore David, Ps. cxliii. 8-10, when he was to pray, even as for his life, as then he did, it being a deliverance from his enemies he sought, he specially prays God to direct him and keep him, that he might not sin against him; for he knew by sinning he should enervate and spoil all his prayers: not only 'hear me speedily,' says he, but also 'cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; teach me to do thy will.' This he especially prays for, and more than for deliverance, for else he knew God would not hear him. Therefore when thou art in treaty with God for any mercy, observe, doth God still after praying keep thee in a more obedient frame of spirit? It is a sign he intends to answer thee; as in like manner, when he keeps thee from using ill means, &c. When he meant to give David the kingdom, he kept him innocent, and his heart tender, that it smote him but for 'cutting off the lap of Saul's garment:' he was not so tender after. Therefore, in Ps. xviii., when he was delivered from all his enemies, he says, 'God dealt with him according to his uprightness; for I kept myself from mine iniquity.' So also, Ps. xxvii. 11.

Secondly, When God after prayer strengtheneth the heart to wait for the mercy; so, Ps. xxvii. 14, David having prayed, says to his soul, 'Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart.' Honest men, when they nourish hopes in one that is in dependence on them, who waiteth and is obsequious upon the hopes he hath of a suit, use not to deny him: it were dishonesty in them to keep a man underhand, and then frustrate his expectations; therefore, when God keeps thy soul after praying in such a dependent frame, look for some good answer. And indeed when a man hath prayed long, in the end he begins to wait, as I may so say, rather than pray, though he pray still, because now he looks God should perform. Before,

and at first, he told the Lord he desired it, but now he can with some boldness tell him that he waits for it and expects it. The hope of a godly man and his expectation should make him ashamed if it were not answered, therefore in this case answers use to come.

Both these two last we have together joined, Ps. xxxvii. 34, ‘*Wait on the Lord, AND KEEP HIS WAYS, and he shall exalt thee.*’

CHAPTER VII.

Observations to be made after prayer, upon the issue of what was prayed for ; and, first, if accomplished, whether as the fruit of prayers, or out of common providence.—Helps herein.

WHEN a man hath thus waited, and kept his way, then let him observe the issue and conclusion of what he sought for, how things are cast by God. Now of necessity, one of these two must fall out, that either the thing desired is accomplished, or not accomplished ; and in either of these he may come to spy out answers to his prayers, for prayer may be answered though the thing be not done.

I mean to insist severally on these :—

I. If the thing thou prayest for doth come to pass, then what needest thou doubt of an answer, and whether God heard thee or no ? for thou beholdest it with thine eyes. And so often it falls out, that God doth grant according to the desires of a man's heart ; and not only so, but also fulfils his counsel therein, as it is Ps. xx. 4 ; that is, fulfils not only his desire and aim of his prayer, but in that very way, by that very means, which his judgment and counsel pitch upon in his own thoughts. The desire of the heart may be satisfied when God gives some other thing, but the counsel of the heart is then fulfilled when a man is answered in that particular which his own judgment pitched upon as best for him. For counsel is an act of the understanding, deliberating about means to an end, and directing to choose a particular means tending to an end : so that, as Eliphaz says to Job, chap. xxii. 27, 28, 'Thou shalt make thy prayer to God, and he shall hear thee : and decree a thing, and it shall be established to thee ;' that is, a man is guided to decree and pitch upon such mercies in his prayers as God makes good in particular : he says what he would have, and God performs it ; and this privilege thou shalt have, says Eliphaz there, if thou wilt turn to him, and be acquainted with him, and receive the law from his mouth. Thou shalt not err in praying ; but what thou settest upon to pray for, shall be accordingly granted to thee. Such a man shall have the privilege *ingere sibi fortunam* in a right sense, to be his own chooser, and carver of his own mercies ; and as Christ said, 'Be it according to thy faith,' so God says sometimes, 'Be it according to thy prayers.' And Eliphaz speaks of it as of a special favour, that whereas other prayers are answered obliquely, thine, says he, shall be answered directly, which is more comfortable, as direct beams are, and have more heat in them than collateral and oblique. Thus if a man will hear God and obey him, God will hear him : for if a man be subject to Christ's kingly office, his prophetic office shall guide him, and cause him not to err in his petitions ; but by an unerring providence and preinstinct infused by his Spirit, God will so guide him as to ask even that very thing which God intends to give : whereas of himself he knows not what nor how to ask.

So David asked long life, and God gave it him, Ps. xxi. 2-4. God not only gave him his heart's desire, but 'the request of his lips,' ver. 2. Hannah asked a son, and God answered her in the very thing she desired, and therefore she called him Samuel, 1 Sam. i. 20, 'Because,' says she, 'I asked him of the Lord;' and ver. 27, 'For this child I prayed, and the Lord' did not give another thing instead of it, but 'hath given me my petition I asked of him.' So, 1 Chron. iv. 10, 'Jabez called on God,' it is said, 'and God granted him the thing he requested.' And thus God often deals with his children. And to this end hath God given us his Spirit; and made Christ wisdom unto us, who knows what is good for us, though we do not; and hath, therefore, also commanded us to spy out mercies for ourselves, and then come to him for them: and to this end hath made such particular promises of particular mercies, which he would have us have an eye unto in our prayers; all which is because often he means to bestow the very things we ask.

And yet because although we have the very things we did ask and desire, such is the jealousy and infidelity of our hearts, that we often discern not nor acknowledge that it was our prayers that obtained them from God; but we are apt, when once we have them, either to look but to things below and the second causes of them, though before we did earnestly seek them of God, or else still distrustfully to question whether or no it was at our prayers that he granted them, or out of common providence. Thus Job, in his distemper, chap. ix. 16, 'As though I had called, and God had answered me; yet,' says he, 'I would not believe that he had hearkened to my voice,'—that is, not that he did it in respect to my prayer and request, because he now deals so severely with me,—'for he breaketh me with a tempest,' ver. 17. And thus do our distrustful hearts, which are apt to be unsatisfied with all the clearest pledges of God's favour, and still to misconstrue and pervert them; although God doth answer us upon our calling upon him, yet we will not believe that he hearkened to our prayer in it. Therefore that you may be further enabled to discern how and when things you have prayed for come in by prayer, I give you these further directions:—

Direct. 1.—When God doth a thing in answer to prayers, he often doth it in such a manner that his hand may be in a more than ordinary manner seen in it. There are few prayers, wherein a man hath sought God much, but in the answers of them God discovers himself much, and turns many great wheels in the accomplishment of them, and 'manifests,' as David desires, Ps. xvii. 7, 'his marvellous loving-kindness;' and indeed when God hears prayers that have been a long while a-making, he shews usually half a miracle one way or other.

Now God discovers his immediate hand in the answers of prayers many ways:—

(1.) When he carries a thing through many difficulties; when there were a great many cross wards in a business prayed for, the least whereof would have kept the key from turning, when God shall make, as it were, a key on purpose to unlock it; when God plots and contrives all the passages in a business thou didst pray for, and so accomplisheth it; this is a sign it is a fruit of prayer, and that prayer had been a-making that key all that while. So in bringing David to the kingdom; Joseph out of prison; Mordecai to honour; and likewise St Peter out of prison, which was done at the prayers of the church, Acts xii. He was sleeping between two soldiers, if they had waked he had been discovered; and he was in chains, but they fall off, ver. 6, 7; and the keepers stood before the door, but they mind him not, ver. 6; and when one watch is passed, he passeth quietly through another, ver. 10;

and when both these were passed, an iron gate flies open of its own accord, ver. 10. Now such difficulties are there in many businesses, which yet in the end are accomplished by prayer; iron chains fall off, iron gates, enemies' hearts fly open of their own accord; and though not in that miraculous manner, by the means of an angel, yet no less wonderfully.

(2.) Or, secondly, when God facilitates all means to accomplish the thing which was prayed for, so as all means do in view conspire and combine in it; that thou hast wind and tide, and a fair day, and all the way paved, or, as David says, hast thy 'way made plain before thee;' and there falls out a great conjunction and meeting of many circumstances together to effect it, which had influence into it, whereof if any one had been wanting, haply the thing had not been done: when the thing prayed for is thus granted, prayer then hath done it. Thus, when he delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt, which was the accomplishment of their long desires and prayers,—‘their cry came up,’ the text says,—how were all things facilitated! They that detained them do themselves come and entreat them to go out; yea, ‘are urgent,’ says the text, and that at midnight; nay, hire them to go out with their ear-rings, Exod. xii. 31, 33, 35; and Pharaoh himself then parts lovingly and fairly with them, and desires their prayers, ‘Bless me also,’ ver. 32. Yea, to shew there was no resistance, the text says, ‘a dog did not move his tongue:’ the brute creatures did not disturb them, though at midnight, when those creatures use to be most obstreperous through noises.

(3.) When he doth it suddenly, and accomplisheth the thing thou hast long prayed for, ere thou art aware of it; as the return of the captivity of Babylon, which was the conclusion of many prayers, was done in a trice, ‘they were as men in a dream,’ Ps. cxxvi. 1, they could scarce believe it was so when it was done: it was because they had sown many prayers, which came up on the sudden, ver. 5, 6. So Peter, he was fast asleep, and did not so much as dream of deliverance. So Joseph’s delivery out of prison, and advancement to be the greatest man in the kingdom, the suddenness of it shewed it was God’s remembering of him, and hearing his prayers.

(4.) When God grants the thing with an overplus above what we did ask, and casteth many other mercies in, together with that which we long prayed for; this also may be a sign God did hear our prayers in it; for when he doth hear indeed, he useth ‘to do above what we did ask or think,’ thereby the more to overcome the heart. So David asked ‘long life,’ and he gave him more than he asked, Ps. xxi. 2–5. So Solomon, he asked but wisdom, and he gave him more than he asked; ‘peace, riches, honour,’ and all, with it, 1 Kings iii. 12, 13. Hannah, she asked but ‘one male child,’ 1 Sam. i. 11, but God gave her three sons more, and two daughters, chap. ii. 21. When prayers are answered, usually mercies come thick, they come tumbling in; the thing we prayed for comes not alone: as when sins are punished, then miseries also they come like armies in troops upon us. As temptations likewise come together, and we fall into many of them at once, as St James speaks, chap. i. 2, thus do mercies also.

(5.) When the thing is granted by prayers, there is often some particular circumstance of providence concurrent with it, which is a token for good, and sealeth to us that it is from God; such often as a man himself takes notice of, and which others take notice of also. ‘Shew me a token for good,’ says David, Ps. lxxxvi. 17, ‘that others may see it and be ashamed.’ And such tokens doth God often make small circumstances to be. Things small in themselves may be *magna indicia*, great signs and tokens. For example, Moses and Aaron and the Israelites had long cried to God for the deliverance

of his people, and laid up many prayers; 'their cry came up,' as was said; and when God doth deliver them, what tokens were there of good, and of God's hand in it, and of his answer to their prayers? The text notes, as was observed before, that 'a dog did not bark at their going out,' *Exod. xi. 7*, which was a small circumstance, but it was *magnum indicium*, and so intended by God; for the text adds, 'that ye may know that God puts a difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians.' This was a token of God's hand, to overrule the tongues of rude brute creatures, that use to stir at such unusual noises and at travellers, especially in the night. So when Isaac and Abraham, and his servant also, had prayed for a wife for Isaac, see by what a token God shewed he had heard their prayers: Rebekah was the first that came out to the servant sent to bring a wife for him; and if she be the woman appointed for Isaac, says the servant, *Gen. xxiv. 13, 14*, 'let her offer me drink, and my camels also.' This was a small thing in appearance, but a great *indicium* of God's hand in it; and therefore the servant bowed at it, and worshipped. And the sign in itself was such as argued a good nature in her, and a kind, courteous disposition, which therefore, it may be, he singled out as a token of a meet wife, as a thing especially to be looked at in the marriage choice.

Direct. 2.—Again, the consideration of the time wherein the things we have asked are granted, may much help us to discern whether it be in answer to our prayers; for God, who doth all things in weight and measure, shews his wisdom and love as much in the season as in giving the thing itself. God considereth all times of thy life, and still chooseth the best and fittest to answer thy prayers in: 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee,' so *Isa. xlix. 8*. As David likewise says 'he prayed in an acceptable time,' *Ps. lxxix. 13*. So accordingly God answers in the best and most acceptable time to us; for 'he waits to be gracious, for he is a God of judgment,' *Isa. xxx. 18*; that is, he is a wise God, that knows the fittest times and seasons wherein to shew kindnesses, and to deal forth his favours in.

As, *first*, it may be that at that very time when thou hast been most instant and earnest, yea, even whilst thou art a-praying, or presently after, the thing is done and accomplished. To this purpose is that of *Isa. lxxv. 24*, that as sometimes 'he hears before they call,' which argues much love to give mercies unsought, so also 'whilst they are speaking I will hear,' and grant the thing, which argues no less love; and he culls out that time on purpose that they might rest assured that it was in answer to their prayer. Thus to assure Hezekiah his prayer was heard, God sent the prophet in unto him whilst he was a-praying and weeping, with his head turned towards the wall. So Isaac, going out to pray in the field, meets his Rebekah then a-coming, that blessing of a good wife being surely the great request temporal he was then in treaty with God for: this Rebekah was the fruit of many prayers. So when St Peter was in prison, the church being gathered together to pray for him, St Peter comes and knocks 'at the same hour,' *Acts xii. 12-17*. So as it often falls out herein, as to the ruler in the gospel, *John iv. 52*, who inquiring diligently, found that 'the same hour that Christ had said to him, Thy son liveth, his son recovered; and so he believed, and his whole household:' so also here, that sometimes the thing is done, or the news of it comes the same hour, or soon after, wherein a man was praying about it, and haply then when the heart was most stirred about it, more than at any time else. This is a sign it was an answer of prayers, and may help to confirm a man's faith in it, as that also did his.

Or, *secondly*, when it is the most acceptable and every way the fittest time

to have the thing granted : at that time when thou hadst most need, and when thy heart was most fit for it. For in answering prayers, God aims especially at two things : to shew his mercy, that a man might magnify and exalt that ; and to have the heart satisfied and filled with joy and contentment in his answer, and the thing made sweet, and a mercy indeed to him : in brief, that his goodness might be delighted in, and his mercy exalted. And for these two purposes he culls out such times when we have most need, and also when our hearts are most subdued and our lusts mortified. For then we are fittest to relish his goodness alone, and not to be drawn away with the carnal sweetness that is in the thing. The one you have expressed, Isa. xxx. 18, 'He waits to be gracious, to have his mercy exalted.' The second intimated, James iv., 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume upon your lusts.' Such prayers, whilst the heart is in this temper, the Lord denies, or defers in mercy till the heart be weaned.

For the *first* of these : As, suppose thou didst pray long for assurance of salvation, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and when thou hadst most need of it, either when 'thy spirit would have failed' without it, as Isa. lvii. 16, or against some great affliction approaching, or some great encounter with the world for the name of Christ, then God filled thy heart with it, &c., that was the fittest time : now hath God heard thy prayer. As St Peter, he was in prison, and had been so for many days ; as appears by the 4th and 5th verses, Acts xii. God could have delivered him all that while the church prayed for him, ver. 5. But God kept him in on purpose till that very night, when in the next morning Herod meant to bring him forth to execution, and then God delivered him at the prayers of the church ; then was the most fit time : as the Psalmist says, 'the full time to have mercy on him was come,' Ps. cii. 13. And then to receive an answer is a sign God did it out of special love, which love he 'would have exalted by thee,' as Isa. xxx. 18.

If, *secondly*, when thy heart was most fit for the mercy, it was granted, then art thou also heard in an acceptable time : for God doth not withhold mercies from those that are his out of want of love ; neither so much for what is past, as for the present evil disposition of their hearts, whereby they are unfit to receive them : and in this sense likewise may that be understood, that God prepareth the heart and heareth the prayer, Ps. x. 17.

As when thy heart is most weaned from that temporal mercy, supposing it such, granted thee upon seeking of it. So David, when had he the kingdom in possession given him ? Then when he was as a weaned child, and had his high thoughts, which haply at the first news of it had risen in his mind, purged out, Ps. cxxxi. 2, 'I have no high thoughts,' &c., says he then. Thus when thy heart had let all carnal ends go, and had betaken itself alone to God, for thy portion to be had alone out of him, then the thing prayed for comes to pass ; this was the fittest season.

Obj.—But you will be ready to say, To have a thing when my heart is taken off from it, and even contented not to have it, makes it to be as no mercy ; for where there is no desire there is no rejoicing.

Ans.—If thy desire be taken off the thing, then thou wilt rejoice the more in God now ; and though the thing of itself should now give thee less satisfaction, yet God by the thing will give thee more, and he will make it up : for thou wilt relish his love and sweetness in it now, which is better than life, and therefore much better than that thing enjoyed ; and indeed the violence of the desire before would have made it less sweet, for the thing alone would not have filled and contented that desire when it was an inordinate lust, and so thou wouldest have been vexed with it, rather than satis-

fied, and found a greater vanity in it : but now when it is become a subordinate desire unto God, that the desire is down, and the heart quieted and contented with God in the thing, the heart says, as she said, 'I have enough.' So likewise thou mayest have an affliction thou prayedst long against taken off then when thy heart was most willing to accept thy punishment, Lev. xxvi. 41, as Moses's phrase is, and to submit to God in it.

Direct. 3.—A third thing you are to observe concerning the accomplishment of the thing prayed for, whereby you may discern whether granted in answer to prayers, is, when thou seest God in his dealings with thee, and answering of thee, to deal in a kind of proportion with thy manner of praying and seeking of him, and of walking with him whilst thou wert dependent on him, for such or such a mercy. And as you may see a proportion between sins and punishments, which are the rewards of them, that you can say, Such a sin brought forth this affliction, it is so like the father ; so you might see the like proportion between your prayers and your walking with God, and God's answers to you, and his dealings with you. So did David, Ps. xviii. 24, 'According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me,' &c. His speech notes some similitude or likeness ; as, for example, the more by-ends or carnal desires you had in praying, and the more you mingled of these with your holy desires, and the more want of zeal, fervency, &c., were found in your prayers, the more you shall, it may be, find of bitterness mingled with the mercy, when it is granted, and so much imperfection and want of comfort in it. So says David in the same psalm, ver. 25, 26, 'With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure.' Pure prayers have pure blessings ; *et è contra*, 'With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.' And again, as you in praying sometimes slackened and grew cold, so you might see the business in like manner to cool, and cast backward : as 'when Moses's hands were down, Amalek prevailed ;' but when they were 'lifted up, Israel had the better,' Exod. xvii. 12. God let him see a proportion, which argued his prayer was the means of prevailing. A man finds in praying that his suit sometimes sticks, and goes not on as he expected ; this is because he gives not so good a fee as he was wont, and doth not ply God and solicit him ; but, on the contrary, when he was stirred up to pray, then still he found things to go well. By this a man may clearly see that it was the prayer which God did hear and regarded. Thus, likewise, when a man sees hills and dales in a business, fair hopes often, and then all dashed again, and the thing in the end brought to pass, let him look back upon his prayers. Didst not thou in like manner just thus deal with God ? When thou hadst prayed earnestly, and thought thou hadst even carried it, then dash all again by interposing some sin, and thus again and again ? Herein God would have you observe a proportion ; and it may help you to discern how and when they are answered and obtained by prayer, because God deals thus with you therein in such a proportion to your prayers.

CHAPTER VIII.

Seven observations more, from the effects which the accomplishment of the mercy hath upon the heart, &c.

Direct. 4.—FOURTHLY, Thou mayest discern whether they be in answer to thy prayers by the effects upon thy heart. As—

(1.) If the thing that is granted upon thy prayers draw thy heart more near unto God, it is then certain that it was granted as an answer to thy prayers. Things granted out of ordinary providence only do increase our lusts, and are snares to us, as Saul gave David his daughter Michal to be a snare to him ; so their full tables are made snares, Ps. lxi. 22 ; so God gave the Israelites their will, the things they desired, but withal gave them up to their lusts, Ps. cvi. 15 : he gave them their requests, but sent leanness into their souls. The quails might fat some of their bodies that survived, yet their souls grew lean ; there was a curse upon their spirits ; this new delicate food made their bodies more lustful, they did eat and drink, and rose up to play, Exod. xxxii. 6. But things obtained by prayer are sanctified to us, for every thing is sanctified by prayer, 1 Tim. iv. 5, so as it shall not ensnare nor entangle our hearts. A thing obtained by prayer, as it came from God, so a man will return it to God, and use it for his glory : so Hannah having obtained Samuel by prayer, she returns him unto God, 1 Sam. i. 27, 28, ‘ For this child I prayed ; and God gave me my petition : and therefore also I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth.’ If therefore thou findest this his dealing with thee in answering thee to be a kindly motive to cause thee to mourn for sin, and to be as a restraint against sin, it is a sign it was the fruit of prayer. Thus it wrought with David, Ps. vi. 8, ‘ Away from me, ye that work iniquity ; God hath heard the voice of my weeping.’

Also, if thou rejoicest in God more than in the thing obtained ;—so Hannah begins her song when she blesseth God for her child, ‘ My heart rejoiceth in the Lord,’ &c., 1 Sam. ii. 1 ; she rejoiceth not so much in the gift as in the giver and his favour ; more in this, that her prayer was answered, than in the thing obtained ;—this is a sign of having obtained the mercy through prayers, when it is thus sanctified unto a man’s spirit.

(2.) Prayers answered will enlarge thy heart with thankfulness, and thus usually they do. Self-love makes us more forward to pray than to give thanks, for nature is all of the craving and taking hand : but where grace is, there will be no eminent mercy gotten with much struggling but there will be a continued particular thankful remembrance of it a long while after, with much enlargement ; and as prayers abounded, so will thanksgiving abound also. Hannah she makes a song, 1 Sam. ii. 1. Great blessings that are won with prayer are worn with thankfulness : such a man will not ask new, but he will withal give thanks for old. Thankfulness, of all duties, proceeds from pure grace ; therefore, if the Spirit stirs thee unto it, it is a sign he made the prayer. ‘ What thanks shall I render to God for

the joy I have in you?' saith St Paul, 1 Thess. iii. 9, 10. So in all his other epistles, all those he writes to, as he prays for them, so he tells them he gives thanks for them, and for their graces which he had prayed for. And if answering prayers for others makes St Paul so thankful, what when for himself? Prayer and thanks are like the double motion of the lungs; the air that is sucked in by prayer is breathed forth again by thanks. Is thy heart afresh enlarged, as to mourn for past sins long since committed, so in like manner for past mercies won with long prayers, and this for a long while after? it is a sign that they were obtained by prayer.

(3.) If the mercy obtained doth encourage thee to go to God another time, to pray again the more confidently and fervently, it is a sign thou hast got the former that way; for the Holy Ghost having once shewed thee this way of procuring mercy, hence it is thou art thus ready to take the same course another time. Ps. cxvi. 2, 'The Lord hath heard me, and I will call on him as long as I live.' I know, says he, now what course to take, if I be in any want, even to call upon him; and he calls upon others to do so too.

(4.) When, God having heard thy prayers upon solemn vows made by thee, thy heart is made careful to pay those vows which thou didst make in the time of thy suing to God for that mercy; this may be an argument to thee, the thing being granted, that thy prayer was heard. For—

First, It argueth that thy heart itself doth secretly make such an account, that upon them God did grant the thing, and thou doest therefore make conscience to return all again to God in service, as the condition of thy indentures made with him, and as a homage due, and an acknowledgment for ever that such a mercy was won by prayer; and by this preservest the memory of the receipt of that mercy, vows being of the nature of homage. And—

Secondly, In this also it is an evidence that the thing was obtained by prayer: in that God calls for those vows from thee, by his Spirit in thy heart, and stirs thee up to perform them, it argues that, in relation to thy prayers answered, he takes them as dues from thee; that having despatched thy suit, he now calls for what was agreed to be given him when it should be performed. And—

Thirdly, In that also he doth accept the payment of these thy vows of thee, he acknowledgeth that those vows and prayers were heard; for as Manoah* said in another case, Judges xiii. 23, 'If he meant to have destroyed us, he would not have accepted a sacrifice,' so in this case it may be said, if God had not heard thy prayers, he would not have accepted thy vows after thy praying. Thus David, Psalm lxvi. 13, 14, 'I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in my trouble.' The reason follows, ver. 17, 19, because that 'verily God hath heard me when I cried to him.' And so Eliphaz in Job doth connect and hang these two together, chap. xxii. 27, 'Thou shalt make thy prayer to him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.' This which he speaks of paying his vows was not only as it was to be his duty, but also as a consequent that would follow the other,—that when his prayers should be heard, he thereupon would perform his vows; for his scope is to move Job to turn to God, shewing what benefit would accrue to him by it, and amongst others this, the hearing his prayers and performing his vows.

(5.) When thou art enabled by faith to see clearly God's hand shewed forth in the effecting of that mercy over and above the power of second causes, and to acknowledge it to his glory; for the truth is, one main cavil-

* Manoah's wife.—ED.

ling reason in our blind hearts, whereby we are usually hindered and put by from apprehending our prayers to be answered when yet the thing is done, we shall find to be, that our eyes are terminated and bounded in second causes, and not raised to see God's hand in the thing : therefore, on the contrary, when God enableth thee to see that he hath done thee this kindness, so as thy mind is clear in it, this is a fruit of his hearing thy prayers ; and this you will usually find to be true, that so much faith and dependence as you had upon God in prayer for the obtaining of a mercy, so much faith and acknowledgment you will have in the accomplishment of it. Parallel with this rule is that other, which in another case is usually given : that in performance of duties, so much as the soul did go out of itself to God for strength to perform them, so much, when they are performed, will the heart acknowledge God's assistance and be humbled. And this is a sign of prayer being heard upon this ground, because God's end of hearing prayers is that we 'might glorify him.' So, Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Therefore, when the heart hath prayed much for a mercy, with dependence before the obtaining of it, and then is enabled to exalt God when it is obtained, it is a sign that God did it in relation to those prayers. For there is that connexion made between these as between the cause and the effect : 'I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' David, when he was delivered out of all his troubles, as when he made that 18th Psalm he was, as appears by the title of it, then at the 6th verse he relates how he had prayed, and how he was heard : and see thereupon how his heart was enlarged to acknowledge God alone to have done all, in the rest of that psalm ; so from the 27th and also from the 31st verses. When we see angels from God, beyond the power of second causes, descending, it is a sign that prayers, as angels, first ascended, and obtained that mercy. Thus also the church, Isa. xxvi., having obtained those deliverances by prayer, ver. 17, (for which there she makes that song by way of thankfulness,) she ascribes all unto God : ver. 12, 'Thou hast wrought all our works for us ;' and, ver. 18, 'Verily we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth.'

(6.) When with the mercy there cometh the assurance of God's love, and an evidence of his favour ; when God sends not a bare token only, but a letter also with it, to bear witness of his love, in which the token is wrapt. I need not make that a sign, for when this comes with a mercy, it carries its own evidence ; you will then know well enough that it is the fruit of prayer.

(7.) Lastly, it will be evident by the event. Things obtained by prayer have few thorns in them, the curse is taken out ; but what comes but by ordinary providence comes as it were up of itself alone, and, like the earth untilld, is full of thorns and briars, and many vexations. The reason is, for what comes in by prayer comes as a blessing, and so no sorrow is added to it ; and also because prayer killeth those inordinate lusts which are the cause of that vanity and vexation which are in the things enjoyed. But when 'the blessing of God maketh rich, he addeth no sorrow with it,' Prov. x. 22. Things long deferred, at last obtained by prayer, prove most comfortable, and in a settled manner such ; they prove standing and stable blessings : and what trouble the heart was put to in the deferring, it is recompensed by the more settled, constant, unmixed sweetness in the enjoying ; prayer having long perfumed it, and the thing being steeped therein, it proves exceeding pleasant. So, Prov. xiii. 12, 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick ;' but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life, and heals that sickness, and abundantly

comforts the heart. Thus Isaac found Rebekah a great blessing, and a comfortable wife to him, Gen. xxiv. 67. Such a comfort also was Isaac to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 18, 19, 'a son indeed,' 'a son of laughter,' as his name signifies. And such was Samuel to Hannah; she had not only a son of him, but a good son, a blessed son, a prophet, and the judge of the people of God. Whereas Jacob getting the blessing, but without prayer, how embittered was it to him, though a blessing to him in the event, by twenty years' banishment from his mother's house! When Israel themselves set up a king, 'but not by me,' as God says, what a punishment was he to them! 'Given is wrath, and taken away in anger,' Hos. xiii. 11

CHAPTER IX.

Considerations to quiet the heart, and to help it to discern an answer to, and acceptance of, the prayer when the thing is not accomplished.

II. BUT now the next and more difficult question is, when the thing is not granted, how shall we then discern and know that God doth notwithstanding hear the prayer?

Concerning which I must premise this, that it is true that always the very thing itself desired is not granted, when yet the prayer is heard. Christ prayed 'the cup might pass from him,' which though some interpret the word *passing* for the short continuance of the brunt, and that therefore in that respect he was heard directly in what he asked; yet if so, why was that clause, 'if it be possible,' added? That argues his petition was for a total removal, yet with subjection to God's will, for he knew there was no great impossibility in a short removal of it; nay, it was impossible but that it should pass, Acts ii. 24. But, howsoever, it is plain in Moses, about his going into Canaan, Deut. iii. 26: 'I besought the Lord,' says he, ver. 23, 'and he was angry with me, and would not hear me,' ver. 26. Likewise, ere I come to resolve the case, an objection is also to be removed; which is—

Obj.—That if the Spirit of God doth make every faithful prayer in us,—as, Rom. viii. 26, it is said he doth, 'We know not what to pray for, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities,' &c.; and he 'searcheth the deep things of God,' as it is said, 1 Cor. ii. 10,—that therefore he knowing that God will not grant such a thing, you may think that he should not stir up the heart to pray for that which God means to deny, but always guide the heart aright, and not let us err or miss in the things we pray for. To this, in brief, by way of answer:—

Ans. 1.—The Spirit makes not prayers in us always according to what God's secret will and foreknowledge is, but according to his revealed will to us, both in his word and in his providence, as things therein are presented to us, and do lie before our view, and so not always according to what he means to do, but according to what it is our duty to pray most for. For he concurs to assist us to pray, as he doth in preaching or using other such like means and ordinances, wherein though the Spirit know whom God means to convert, whom not, yet he assists us ministers in our spirits oftentimes as much to preach to those he means not to convert, as to those he means to convert; he dealing with us therein according to what is our duty, not according to what is his decree.

Ans. 2.—Again, secondly, that phrase helps to answer this, when he is said to 'help our infirmities;' and therefore not according to his own vast knowledge doth he frame our prayers, but so as he applies his assistance to our infirm, weak, and narrow apprehensions, and stirs up desires in us to such things as according to our knowledge we are in duty to conceive, and which by all we can see, by what is before us revealed in his providence, we

think to be most for our good and his glory ; and God accepts such desires as from us, but yet doth for us according to the largeness of his own love.

And so now to come to the case propounded, and therein unto helps to pacify and direct the heart about those prayers at which the things are not granted.

1. And, first, how didst thou frame thy prayer for that thing which is denied thee ? Didst thou pray for it absolutely and peremptorily, as simply best for thee ? Thou must not then think much if such a prayer be denied, for therein thou wentest beyond thy commission. But if thou didst pray for it conditionally, and with an *if*, as Christ did,—‘ if it be possible,’ (which instance is a strong ground for such kind of prayers,) and ‘ not my will, but thy will be done,’—so as thou didst refer it unto, and trust God’s judgment in the thing, and not thine own, only didst put him in mind, as thy duty was, of what was represented to thee as best for thee in view, and so left it to him to cast, and didst refer it to his will and wisdom ; then thy prayer may be most fully answered and heard, and yet the thing denied, and thou art to interpret and take God’s meaning and mind revealed in the event in the best sense, which way soever it falls ; for otherwise Christ had not been heard, when yet the text says ‘ he was heard in all he feared,’ Heb. v. 7.

2. Observe if there were not a reservation in that denial, for some greater and further mercy, whereof that denial was the foundation. Thus—

(1.) Oftentimes some great cross is prevented by the denial of a thing which we were urgent for. If we had had many of our desires, we had been undone. So it was a mercy to David that his child was taken away, for whose life he was yet so earnest, who would have been but a living monument of his shame. It was also a mercy to David that Absalom was taken away, —whom surely he prayed much for, for he loved him much,—who, if he had lived, might have been the ruin of him and his house. As a wicked man’s deliverance and the granting his request lays a foundation, and is a reservation of him to a worse judgment ; so the denial of a godly man’s prayer is for his greater good, and is laid as a foundation of a greater mercy. And again—

(2.) Oftentimes the very denial breaks a man’s heart, and brings him nearer to God, puts him upon searching into his ways and estate, and in his prayers to see what should be amiss therein ; which alone is a great mercy, and better than the thing, seeing by the loss of that one thing he learns how to pray better, and so to obtain a hundred better things afterward. Christ desired the cup might pass ; it did not, and that was the foundation of our salvation, and the way to his glory, he being to pass through that suffering into his glory. The woman that had the bloody issue, though she used many means, and haply prayers among the rest, and all in vain, yet none took effect ; that in the end she might come to Christ, and have both body and soul healed at once.

3. Observe if there be not a transmutation and a translation or turning of the thing desired into some other greater blessing of the same kind ; for God, all whose ways are mercy and truth to his people, doth improve, husband, and lay out the precious stocks of their prayers to the best advantage, in things whereby the greatest returns and gains may accrue. As old Jacob laid not his hands of blessing as Joseph would have guided them, but laid the right hand upon the younger son, whom Joseph did set at his left ; so often doth God take off his hand of blessing from the thing we prayed for, and lays and discovers it in another more for our good. And as God giving Isaac the power and privilege to bless a son, though Isaac intended it for

Esau, yet God unbeknown to him transmitted it to Jacob, yet so as the blessing was not lost. Thus is it in our prayers for blessings both upon ourselves and others. There is often a transmutation, never a frustration of them ; which may as truly and directly be called an answer to the prayer, as if a factor beyond sea, when the owner sends for such and such commodities, supposing them more vendible and advantageous, but the factor knowing the state of things and the prices, sends him over, instead of them, such as shall sell better and bring in more profit, may be said to answer his letters, and that better than if he had sent those very commodities he writ for. Thus Abraham's prayers for Ishmael were turned for Isaac ; David's for the child to Solomon.

4. Observe if in the end God doth not answer thee still according to the ground of thy prayer ; that is, see if that holy end, intention, and affection which thou hadst in prayer be not in the end fully satisfied, though not in the thing thou didst desire ; for God answers *secundum cardinem*, according to the hinge which the prayer turns upon. As when a general is sent out with an army by a king or a state, who give him many particular directions how to order and dispose and manage the war, although in many particulars that fall out, wherein they could not foresee to give so punctual and particular directions, he swerves from the directions, yet if he keeps to the intent of their commission, and doth what is most advantageous for their ends, he may be said to keep to his commission. For as they say of the law, *mens legis est lex*,—the mind of the law is the law, not the bare words it is printed in,—so the meaning of the Spirit is the prayer, Rom. viii. 27, and not simply the things desired, wherein we express those our desires. And still the meaning, the intent, the ground of our prayers shall be answered.

To open this : the main ends and meanings of our hearts in our requests are God's glory, the church's good, and our own particular comfort and happiness. We can desire but comfort ; and a man looketh out and spieth out such a particular mercy, which he thinketh tends much to God's glory and his happiness, and yet that thing is denied ; yet notwithstanding God will answer him according to the meaning of his prayers : his glory shall certainly be advanced, even for that prayer of his, some other way, and his comfort made up, which is the common desire of all mankind. And thou canst have but comfort, let the thing be what it will that conveys it to thee. And God will take order that that comfort thy soul desired thou shalt have come in one way or other, which, when it doth, thou canst not but say thy prayers are heard. For as God fulfils his promises, so he hears prayers ; there is the same reason of both. Now God hath promised, 'He that leaves father and mother shall have a hundred-fold.' Not in specie, as we say : in kind this cannot always be fulfilled, for a hundred fathers he cannot have. God fulfils it not therefore always in the same kind, but in some other things, which shall be more than a hundred fathers would be.

Moses prays he might go into Canaan : God answers the ground of his prayer, though not in the matter in it expressed and desired, and that both for Moses's comfort and his own glory ; for he takes him up into heaven, the true Canaan, whereof that Canaan was but a type ; and he appoints Joshua, a fresh and a young man,* coming on in the world, and one whom Moses

* It is by a very common inadvertence supposed that Joshua was a young man when he was appointed to succeed Moses as leader of the hosts of Israel. Yet he was general of the army in fighting against Amalek, nearly forty years before this. At that time he could scarcely be under thirty-five years of age, and by many he is supposed to have been fifty-three at the Exodus. At the time of his appointment, then, he must have been at the least seventy-five, and may have been ninety-three.—ED.

himself had tutored and brought up, and was his pupil, servant, and attendant, Num. xi. 28. And this was more for God's glory, for Joshua was therein to be the type of Christ leading us to heaven, which the law, of which Moses was the type, could not bring us unto, by reason of the weakness of it; and he being young did it better; and it was not so much also for God's glory that one man should do all: and whereas Moses desired to have the honour of it, in that his servant that attended him, and had been brought up by him, and had all from him, that he was the man should do it, was well-nigh as great an honour to Moses as if he had been the leader himself. And so David, when he desired to build the temple and a house to God, for the like reasons God denied it, but yet honoured him to prepare the materials, and to draw the pattern, as also in that his son did it, who was therein also the like type of Christ, being a prince of peace, but David a man of blood and war; and likewise God accepted this of David, as if he had built it, and will recompense him as much.

5. Observe if in the thing which thou hast prayed much about, though it be denied thee, yet if God doth not endeavour to give thee (as I may so speak) all satisfaction that may be, even as if he were tender of denying thee, and therefore doth much in it for thy prayers' sake, though the conclusion proves otherwise, as being against some other purpose of his for some other ends: as when he denied Moses to go into the land of Canaan, he did it with much respect (as I may so speak with reverence) to Moses. He yielded as far as might be, for he let him lead them till he should come to the very borders; and he let him see that good land, carrying him up to a hill, and, as it is thought, by a miracle enabled his sight to view the whole land. And the man he chose to perform this work was his servant, which was a great honour to Moses, that one brought up by him should succeed him. So when Abraham prayed for Ishmael, 'O let Ishmael live in thy sight!' Gen. xvii. 18, God went as far in granting his request as might be; for, says he, ver. 20, 'I have heard thee; and I have blessed him, and I will make him fruitful, and multiply him exceedingly, and he shall beget twelve princes: but my covenant I will establish with Isaac.' So likewise, when in casting that thing thou didst seek at his hands, he shews an extraordinary hand in turning it, it is a sign he had a respect to thee, that he would vouchsafe to discover his hand so much in it. Let the thing fall which way it will, if God's hand appear much in it, thou mayest comfortably conclude that there is some great thing in it, and that prayer wrought that miracle in it to dispose it so; and that there is some great reason why he denies thee, and a great respect had to thy prayers, in that he is pleased to discover so extraordinary a providence about it.

6. Lastly, look into the effect of that denial upon thine own heart; as—

(1.) If thy heart be enlarged to acknowledge God to be holy and righteous in his dealings with thee, and thine own unworthiness the cause of his denying thee. Thus we often find the saints expressing themselves in their prayers. That Ps. xxii., though typically made of Christ, yet as it was penned by David, and as it may concern his person, it may serve for an instance for this: 'I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;' this might have made him jealous of God, but says he, 'Thou art holy,' &c., and dealest now with me in a holy manner, and art just in it. Others 'have called on thee,' and have been heard, though I now for my unworthiness am denied; 'but I am a worm.' It might have put a man off when he should think others are heard, but not I; but it puts not him off, but humbles him: 'I am a worm,' &c., and 'Thou art holy.'

(2.) If God fill thy heart with a holy contentment in the denial ; if he speak to thy heart, as he did to Moses when he denied him, Deut. iii. 28, ' Let it suffice thee ; ' if as to St Paul, when he was so earnest about removing that buffeting, if thou gettest but such an answer as that to him, ' My grace is sufficient,' or that some such like consideration is dropped in that stays thee. It was the effect of David's seven days' fasting that he did so contentedly bear the loss of the child, which his servants thought would have overwhelmed him, 2 Sam. xii. 19-21. But a consideration was dropped in, which was the fruit of his prayer, ' that he should go to him, not he return hither ; ' and his mind was comforted thereby, insomuch, as it is said, ver. 24, that ' he comforted Bathsheba also.'

(3.) If thou canst be thankful to God out of faith, that God hath cast and ordered all for the best, though he hath denied thee ; and although thou seest no reason but that the thing prayed for would have been for the best, yet art thankful upon the denial of it, out of faith resting in God's judgment in it, as David in all those forementioned places was : ' Thou art holy that inhabitest the praises of Israel ; ' he praises God for all this. David, before he did eat, after his seven days' fasting for the child, arose, ' and went first into the temple, and worshipped,' 2 Sam. xii. 20 ; and of what kind of worship it was appears by his anointing himself and changing his raiment, which was in token of rejoicing and thanksgiving ; and it fell out to him according to his faith, for presently after Solomon was begotten, ver. 24.

(4.) If thou canst pray still, and givest not over, although thou standest for mercies which thou missest ; if when thou hast mercies granted thou fearest most, and when denied lovest most, and art not discouraged, thy prayers are heard. Ps. lxxx. 4, though God seemed angry with their prayers, yet they pray, and expostulate with him, and give not over, for they made that psalm as a prayer, ' And how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people ? ' So, Ps. xliv. 17, ' Though we are cast among dragons, yet we have not been false in thy covenant.' So say thou, I will pray still, though I never have an answer in this life. It moves ingenuous natures to see men take repulses and denials well, which proud persons will not do : and so it moves God.

CHAPTER X.

Application: a reproof of those that pray, but look not after the return of their prayers.—The causes of this neglect.

THE use of all is to reprove those who put up prayers, and are earnest in begging, but look not after them when they have done, no more than if they had not prayed; who still venture, and have a great stock of prayers going, but look not after the returns that are made, cast not up their comings in and gainings by prayers; and when they have prayed, sit down discouraged, as not making account in earnest that ever they shall hear of their prayers again, even as if they had been but as words cast away, 'as beating the air,' as 'bread cast upon the waters,' which they think sinks or is carried away, and they shall find it no more. But herein you despise God's ordinance, and err, not knowing the power of prayers; and ye condemn the Lord. But you will say as they in the prophet said, 'Wherein do we condemn him?' If you asked a man a question, and when you had done did turn your back upon him, as scoffing Pilate asked in scorn of Christ, 'What is truth?' but would not stay for an answer, did you not condemn him? As not to answer when a question is asked you is contempt, so not to regard the answer made, when you have been earnest in begging, is no less contempt also. If you had written letters to a very friend about important business, and had earnestly solicited him for an answer, and he were careful in due time to send one, if you should make account to hear of him no more, should you not wrong him in your thoughts? Or if he did write, if you should not vouchsafe to read over his answer, were it not a contempt of him? So is it here, when you have been earnest with God for blessings, and regard not the answer. And because verily this is a fault among us, I will therefore endeavour to discover to you the causes and discouragements, which, though they keep you not from praying, yet from this earnest expectation, and real and true making account to hear of answers of your prayers. Only my scope is not to shew you so much the reasons why God denies you many requests, as why even in your own hearts you are discouraged after you have prayed, as if they would not be answered, although God doth answer them. These discouragements are partly temptations, partly sinful impediments, wherein we are more faulty.

1. Because your assurance that your persons are accepted is weak, therefore your confidence that your prayers are heard is weak also. For as God doth first accept the person, and then our prayers; so the belief that God doth accept our persons is that which also upholds our hearts in confidence that our prayers shall be granted. This you may find in 1 John v. 13–15: in the 13th verse he says, 'These things have I written to you, that ye may know you have eternal life;' and upon that assurance this will follow, ver. 14, 15, 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any-

thing according to his will, he hears us,' &c. ; 'and if we know he hears us, we know we have the petitions we desired of him.' Mark how he links these three together, as effects and consequences each of other. (1.) 'These things I write unto you, that you may be assured that life and heaven is yours,' as in the 12th and 13th verses. And upon that, (2.) this confidence will follow in your hearts, 'that God hears you,'—that is, that you have his ears open to you, and his heart enlarged towards you. And then, (3.) if you be assured that God hears you, then from this will follow an assurance that you shall have anything granted you desire. Yea, and he makes this one of the main and immediate effects of assurance of justification ; therefore he says, 'this is the confidence that we have in him,'—that is, this effect there is of this confidence. For whereas they might say, What benefit will accrue to us by this assurance ? Why this, says he, which is one of the great and main privileges of a Christian, even assurance that God will hear him ; and not only so, but grant him all his prayers. For when a man is assured God hath given him his Son, he will then easily be induced to believe and expect, 'How shall he not with him give me all things ?' Rom. viii. 32. If once he looks upon God as a father, he will then easily conceive that which Christ says, 'If fathers that are evil can give good things to their children, how much more shall not your Father give his Spirit and all good things to them that ask them ?' And if he gave his Son when we did not pray to him, how much more shall he not with him give us all things we pray for ? If a man comes to sue to any man whose mind he knew not, whether he loved him or not, he would have small hope or expectation of having his suit granted, though he came again and again ; but if he be assured he is in favour with him, according to that degree of favour he supposeth himself to stand in with him, he is assured and confident of obtaining his request.

2. Discouragement is the weakness of their prayers. Though a man thinks his person is accepted ; yet, Alas ! says he, my prayers are so poor and weak, as surely God will never regard them.

(1.) To remove which, let me first ask thee this question, Dost thou pray with all thy might ? Then though that thy might be weak in itself, and in thine own apprehension such, yet because it is all the might which thou hast, and which grace hath in thee, it shall be accepted. 'For God accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not,' 2 Cor viii. 12.

(2.) Thou art to consider that God doth not hear thee for thy prayers' sake, though not without them, but 'for his name's sake,' and his 'Son's sake,' and because thou art his child ; as the mother when her child cries, suppose it be a weak child, doth not neglect to hear and relieve it, but tenders it, not because it doth cry more loud, but because it cries, and pities it the more the weaker it is.

(3.) Again, though the performance in itself be weak, yet considered as a prayer, it may be strong, because a weak prayer may set the strong God a-work. As faith for the act of it, as produced by us, may be weak, yet because its object is Christ, therefore it justifies : so is it in prayer ; it prevails, not because of the performance itself, but because of the name which it is put up in, even Christ's name. And therefore, as a weak faith justifies, so a weak prayer prevails as well as a stronger ; and both for the like reason in both, for faith attributes all to God, and so doth prayer : for as faith is merely a receiving grace, so prayer a begging grace. And therefore dost thou think thy prayers are accepted at all, notwithstanding their weakness ? If that they are accepted, then they must be accepted as prayers. Now if

they be accepted as prayers, then as effectual motives to prevail with God to grant the thing you ask; for if he should not accept them to that end for which they were ordained, it is as if he accepted them not at all. As, therefore, when he approves of any man's faith as true and sincere, he approves and accepts of it to that purpose for which it was ordained, which is to save and justify, and to this end doth as fully accept the weakest act of faith as the strongest; so is it with their prayers, which being ordained as a means to obtain mercies from him, if he accepts them at all, it is with relation to the accomplishment of them, which is their end.

(4.) Men are mistaken in judging of the weakness of their prayers. They judge of the weakness of their prayers by their expressions, and gifts in performing them, or by the stirring and overflow of affections; whereas the strength and vigour of prayer should be estimated from the faith, the sincerity, the obedience, the desires expressed in it. As it is not the loudness of a preacher's voice, but the weight and holiness of the matter, and spirit of the preacher, that move a wise and an intelligent hearer; so not gifts, but graces in prayers are they that move the Lord. The strength of prayer lies not in words, but in that it is fitted to prevail with God. One prayer is not more strong than another, further than it is so framed as it hath power with God more or less; as of Jacob it is said, 'He had power with God,' Hos. xii. Now prayers move God, not as an orator moves his hearers, but as a child moves his father. Two words of a child humbled, and crying at his father's feet, will prevail more than penned orations, Rom. viii. : it is the meaning of the spirit that God looks unto, more than the expression; for the groans there are said to be unutterable. Hezekiah's expressions were so rude and broken, that he says, Isa. xxxviii. 14, that he did but 'chatter,' he being then sick, 'even as a crane;' yet God heard them.

3. A third discouragement is failings of answers : I have prayed often and long, and I have been seldom or never answered, and therefore I make little account of my prayers that they are heard; others have the revenues of their prayers coming in, but I do miss whatsoever almost I stand for. Therefore say they as those, 'Why have we fasted and thou regardedst it not?' Isa. lviii. 3.

To remove this, consider—

(1.) That thou hast the more reason to wait, for thou hast the more answers to come; for as wicked men treasure up wrath, so do godly men mercy, and especially by their prayers: and therefore mercies and answers do often come thick together, even as afflictions also do.

(2.) Suppose thou shouldst have few answers concerning the things thou seekest for here, either in praying for thyself or others, yet thy reward is with the Lord. It is in praying as in preaching, a man may preach faithfully many a year, and yet not convert a soul, and yet a man is not to give over waiting, but to observe after every sermon what good is done, and whether 'God will give men repentance,' as it is, 2 Tim. ii. 25. And if none be converted, yet, as Isa. xlix. 4, 'a man's reward is with the Lord.' 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour,' 1 Cor. iii. 8; and not according to the success of his labour only. So it is in praying: though thou missest again and again, and nothing succeeds thou prayest for, yet be not discouraged, for thy reward is with the Lord, which will come in one day.

(3.) God doth it, not that he hears thee not, but to try thee. For a man to say as David says, Ps. cxvi. 1, 2, 'God hath heard my prayer, therefore I

will call upon him as long as I live;' that is nothing so much as to be able to say, Well, I have prayed thus long, and for these many things, and never sped, and yet I will call upon him whilst I live, though I find no answer in this life. To find comings in in a trade, and yet to hold out trading still, argues not so much faithfulness in a man's calling, as when a man hath losses, and castings behindhand, and yet to follow it.

(4.) God usually stays so long that we have done expecting: Luke xviii. 8, 'The elect cry day and night,' but God stays so long, ver. 7, that when he comes he finds not faith, they have done expecting, have forgot their prayers, and then he doth things they looked not for, Isa. lxiv. 3.

Other discouragements there are wherein we ourselves are more faulty, and which are our sins more than our temptations, which yet weaken the expectation of having our prayers answered: as—

1. Slothfulness in prayer, when we do not put to all our might in praying; and then no wonder we do not only not obtain, but that our own hearts misgive us, that we look for little success and issue of such prayers: *qui frigide rogat, docet negare*,—he that shews himself cold in a suit, teaches him he sues to deny him. If we see one seeking to us faintly and slightly, we are not then solicitous to deny him, but think he will be easily put off, and not think much; so accordingly when we shall observe so much by ourselves, and see ourselves slothful in praying, and praying as if we prayed not, no wonder if by reason of that consciousness we look not after the success of such prayers, which in the performance we slighted, when we pray as if we were willing to be denied, we knowing that the Scripture says that the fervent prayer only prevails, that prayer which is *ἐνεργουμένη*, that sets all the faculties on work, James v. 16. How should we then expect that God should grant any good thing to us? For though God sells nothing to us for our prayers, but gives freely, yet he would have his gifts accepted; now without large desires and longings they would not be accepted. And what is fervent prayer but the expression of such fervent desires? Jacob wrestled when he obtained. 'Many seek to enter,' says Christ, 'but you must strive.'

Now when we know these things and yet are slothful, how can we expect any answers at all? Will not the consciousness of it quell all our expectations? And hence it comes to pass that God, proportioning his dealings with us to our prayers, because we seem to pray, and yet pray not to purpose; therefore God sometimes seems like one asleep, and then sometimes to wake, and make fair offers to help, and yet falls as it were asleep again, because we were thus drowsy in our prayers. Those prayers that awaken God must awaken us; those prayers that stir God must 'stir us to lay hold on God,' as Isaiah speaks. As obedience strengthens faith and assurance, so fervency in prayer begets confidence of being heard. In all other things slothfulness doth discourage and weaken expectation. Doth any man expect that riches should come upon him when he doth his business negligently? For 'it is the diligent hand that maketh rich.' Doth any man expect a crop and a harvest if he take not pains to plough and sow his corn? No more, if you do not take pains with your hearts in prayer, can you expect an answer, or indeed will you.

2. A second cause, or sinful discouragement herein, is looking at prayer only as a duty to be performed, and so performing it as a task, and not so much out of desires stirred up after the things to be obtained, nor out of faith that we shall obtain them; which is as if a physician having a sick

servant, to whom he prescribeth, and commandeth to take some physic to cure him, and his man should take it indeed because it is commanded and prescribed by his master, looking at it as an act of duty, as he obeys him in other businesses, but not as looking at it as a medicine or means that will have any work upon him to cure him, and therefore orders himself as if he had taken no such thing. Thus do most in the world pray to God; take prayer as a prescription only, but not as a means. They come to God daily, but as to a master only in this performance, not as to a father; and thus doing, no wonder if they look for little effect of prayers, for our expectation never exceeds nor reaches further than our end and intention which we had in any business. If I perform any ordinance but as a duty, then I rest therein and expect no further; as if a man preacheth for filthy lucre only, he performs his duty and then looks for his hire, but looks not after any other effect of his sermons: so nor will men do after their prayers for answers to them, when they perform them as duties only. Now, to help you in this, you are to look to two things in prayer: *first*, to a command from God; *secondly*, to the promise of God; and so to consider it in a double relation, first, as a duty, in respect to the command; *secondly*, as a means to obtain or procure blessings at God's hand, in relation to his promises. Therefore, in prayer, first an act of obedience, *secondly* an act of faith, is to be exercised: 'Ask in faith, nothing wavering,' James i. Now the most in the world perform it as an act of obedience only, and so rest in the present performance and acceptance of it; but if a man pray in faith, he will pray with an eye to the promises, and look on prayer as a means, for time to come, to obtain such or such a mercy at God's hands: and if so, then he is not satisfied till he hath an answer of his prayers, and till then will wait, as the church says, 'she would wait till he did arise and plead her cause.'

3. A third sinful discouragement is returning to sins after prayers. When a man hath prayed for some mercy, and riseth full of much confidence that his prayers are heard, and so a while he walks, yet falling into a sin, that sin doth dash all his hopes, undoes his prayers, as he thinks, and calls them back again—meets, as it were, with the answer, which is God's messenger, and causeth it to return to heaven again. How often when God had even granted a petition, and the decree was a-coming forth, and the grant newly written, and the seal a-setting to it, but an act of treason coming between, stops it in the seal and defers it, blots and blurreth all, both prayer and grant, when newly written, and leaves a guilt in the mind which quells our hopes, and then we look no more after our prayers. And this especially if, when we were a-sinning, such a thought came in, (as often it doth to restrain us,) Are you not in dependence upon God for such a mercy, and have prayed for it, and are fair for it? how then dare you do this, and sin against him? When in this case the heart goes on, this blots all the prayer, and discourageth a man; for, saith the conscience, will God hear sinners? as he said.

And thus far it is true that sinning thus between interrupts and hinders the obtaining our petitions: that answerably as we do thus dash and betray and undo our prayers, so in a proportion we find, in the way to our obtaining the thing we prayed for, so many rubs and difficulties do arise; for as we lay blocks in God's way coming towards us to do us good, so he in ours; therefore, often when a business goes prosperously on, and we think we shall carry it, comes some accident between the cup and the lip, that casts all behindhand again, because answerably we dealt with God. For when we had

prayed, and were encouraged and in good hopes, then by some sin or other we spoiled all, and bereaved ourselves of our expectation. But yet this you are to consider, that as in the end praying useth to overcome sin in God's children, so also God in the end overcomes difficulties, and brings the matter to pass. And know it is not sins past so much that hinder the prayers of God's people, as the present unfitness and indisposition of their hearts for mercy.

TIDINGS OF PEACE,

TO BE SPOKEN TO CONSCIENCES DISTRESSED.

God will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints, &c.—

PSALM LXXXV. 8.

THE main thing intended to be insisted upon out of these words is despatched; yet, that I may not leave so fair and fruitful a crop still standing upon the ground unreaped, I will go on more briefly to have in the rest of that harvest the text affords.

This psalm, as was said, was penned as a prophecy of, and prayer for, the return of God's people out of the captivity of Babylon, and the settling and establishment of that church and state upon its former basis; yet so as therein there is a further and more especial aim had to the peace and glory to be brought in by Christ, till when this prophecy otherwise had but a poor and slender accomplishment, in regard of much outward glory or peace that that church enjoyed.

And therefore the peace here spoken of and promised for the present is to be extended largelier than to outward prosperity, or a happy issue out of that calamity; even to speaking peace to drooping and weather-beaten consciences. And accordingly we find this kind of peace to have been specially promised by the prophet Isaiah to the people at their return out of the captivity, both in chap. xlviii. 20–22, and chap. lvii. 14–21; there being many broken hearts that had wanted the light of God's countenance long, having been during the captivity banished from the ordinances of the temple, hanging up their harps mourning, whose thoughts were as if God had meant to destroy them,—as appears Jer. xxix. 11,—who afterwards were refreshed with inward peace at the restoration of those ordinances, as well as with outward, as by those places doth appear. Therefore in relation to this kind of peace only I will at this time handle the words.

In the words you have a discovery of God's proceedings in treating of peace or proclaiming war with his people and subjects.

1. You see that sometimes God doth not speak peace to his own children. This was their state for the present, when this psalm was penned: 'He will speak peace;' therefore, at present he did not. Yea, it may incline us to think that God at present spake the contrary; for the prophet speaks this by faith, as contrary to sense and present experience: he believes God in-

tends to come again to a treaty of peace, though now he seems to have nothing but anger, and blood, and war in his looks, speeches, and actions; and to threaten and proclaim war and take up arms against them. And thus God often deals with his own children, whether a people or a particular man: so with a nation, Isa. lxiii. 10, 'They rebelled, and he fought against them;' so with a particular man, God frowned upon and rated his child Ephraim, 'and spake bitter things against him,'—it is the phrase used, Jer. xxxi. 20,—though yet 'Ephraim is my pleasant child,' says he. David had not a good word from him a long time: Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear again, of joy and gladness;' and, Ps. l. 7, 'Hear, O my people, and I will speak;' (but not against them, they might hope, because he owns them for his people;) 'Hear, O Israel, and I will testify against thee;' and yet it follows, 'I am the Lord thy God.' Job says he did not speak only against them, but also 'wrote bitter things;' he wrote, as it were, books against him, chap. xiii. 26, he writing over in his conscience the sins of his youth in letters of blood, and wrath and terrors for them.

2. There must needs be some great reason for this, they being his people; which is the second thing that is intimated, and may be observed out of these words: namely, the reason or moving cause provoking God thus to interrupt the peace of his people. They had fallen into some gross folly or other; some sinful, inordinate dispositions had been indulged unto and nourished in them; which is usually, though not always, the cause of this his dealing. This is evident by this, that the conclusion of their peace, when it is made up again, hath this clause, as the only article of reconciliation between them, that 'they return no more to folly;' implying they had formerly run out into some inordinacy, which to reduce them from, God had took up arms against them, and thereby taught them wisdom to take heed of losing, and then buying peace at so dear a rate again. And, indeed, all the quarrels that God hath against a nation, a particular place or person that belongs to him, do begin there: 'They rebelled, and he fought against them,' Isa. lxiii. 10; 'For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth,' Isa. lvii. 17.

Reason.—The reason is, for anger is out of love, as well as hatred; which therefore he expresseth, though with grief, he should be put to quarrel with those he hath set himself to love. And as wicked men, whom he always hates, may out of his patience have a truce; so, on the contrary, with his own, God may take up a quarrel; yet he loves them, and remembers them with everlasting kindness.

The uses of both are these:—

Use 1.—As peace with God is dear to you, so to take heed of turning unto folly. Only take this advertisement, that they are not mere follies or ignorances that do interrupt or break the peace. As it is not simply the outrage of some pirates that will cause two states at peace to enter into a war, unless that state consent to their act, and maintain them in their rapine; so it is not simply the rising of lusts that 'war in our members against the law of the mind,' that breaks the peace between God and us, unless they be approved of and consented unto, nourished and maintained with some presumption. Whilst we maintain and take up a constant fight against God's enemies in us, and disavow the outrageous risings of our lusts, the peace may hold, and often doth; for whilst we are not at peace with sin, God may be at peace with us and our spirits; but so much peace as we give them, so much war God takes up.

Use 2.—The second use is: Doth God take up quarrels against his own?

Then, upon any breach made, go forth to meet him. It is St Paul's exhortation, 'not to let the sun go down upon thy wrath,' but to reconcile thyself ere night with thy offended brother; but I turn the exhortation, 'Let not the sun go down upon God's wrath' towards thee; but every day make and renew thy peace with God, ere thou sleepest, that, as David says, 'thou mayest lie down and sleep in peace,' Ps. iv. 8.

Use 3.—The third use: If the peace of God's own people be thus often interrupted, who yet are 'the sons of peace,' Luke x. 6, what wrath is reserved for the 'children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2, and open rebels, that are children of wrath because of disobedience? 'There is no peace to the wicked, says my God,' Isa. lvii. God is a-preparing against thee, whoever thou art, that goest on in sin, 'if thou turn not,' Ps. vii. 12; thou art pressed for hell, and art thither bound, to encounter with the wrath of the great God, thither where no truce is to be had: 'There is no discharge in that war,' as Solomon says, Eccles. viii. 8. Think of this, you that sin, and will sin; whose peace is not struck up between God and you, who never yet so much as entered into any treaty of peace with God, who never apprehended God and yourselves at odds.

3. The third thing to be observed out of the text is this: That when the child of God wants peace, he can have no peace till God speak it. God must speak peace if ever his people have it; therefore, says he here, 'I will hear what God will speak.' He speaks in opposition to the voice of man and the help of second causes, and of all means whatever, which in time of distress of themselves can do no good.

Reason 1.—Because God is the king of all the world, the sovereign Lord of all. Now treaties of war and peace are the prerogative of kings, and of them alone: they may consult with their subjects about establishing good laws, as they use to do, &c.; but the proclaiming war and peace with foreign states they have ever held in their own hands; and so doth God, who is the King of kings.

Reason 2.—Because God is the judge of all the world, and the party offended, at whose suit all the arrests and controversies do come. Now when a condemned man stands at the bar, let all the standers-by say what they will, bid him be of good comfort, and tell him that his cause will go well, yet till he hear the judge himself speak as much, he cannot be at rest in his mind; the judge only can acquit him and absolve him. The king alone speaks pardons; and so doth God peace. All afflictions are his arrests; thou must therefore make thy peace with him, if thou wilt be at peace.

Reason 3.—Peace, especially of conscience, is a thing must be created, for our hearts of themselves are full of nothing but turmoil, as the raging sea, which cannot rest. 'I create the fruits of the lips, Peace,' Isa. lvii. 19; men may speak it, but I must create it. A word of power, such as went forth when light was created, must go forth from God, or else there is no peace; for otherwise our hearts are as the sea, that rests not.

Reason 4.—The wounds of conscience which are in God's people are of that quality that none but God can cure them; for the chief thing that wounds them is the loss of God's favour, not simply his wrath. For it is the glory of God and his favour, not self-love only, that makes them seek him; therefore nothing gives peace but the restoring of his favour and the light of his countenance; the same dart that wounded must heal again: Isa. lvii., 'I smote him, and I will heal him.' And as one that is sick with love, when love is the disease, no physic, no persuasion of friends can cure it, nothing but only the love of the party beloved; so when a soul is wounded

for the loss of God's love, not all the things in the world can cure the heart ; but one word from him, one good look, one promise from him that we are his, stills all, and only can give peace. Like to a poor child that cries for its mother ; let who will dandle it, and play with it, and use it never so kindly, yet it will not be stilled till the mother comes ; so it is with a poor soul that cries after God day and night.

Use 1.—In case thou art in distress, especially of spirit, and want of peace of conscience, wait upon God in the use of means for peace. Friends may come to thee, and say, Why shouldst thou be troubled ? Thou hast no such cause to be cast down. But all these are 'miserable comforters,' as Job said, unless God speaks peace. David heard by the prophet Nathan that his sin was pardoned, but yet his soul was not at quiet till God would second it immediately by his Spirit ; therefore, says he, when Nathan had been with him, Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear of joy and gladness.' Art thou baited with hellish blasphemies cast into thy soul ? God must speak peace, and rebuke Satan for thee, and take him off thee ; all thy friends, all the men in the world cannot do it ; they can only say, as the archangel said, 'The Lord rebuke thee.' And he can as easily do it as he did rebuke Laban, and forbade him speaking roughly to Jacob ; the same charge he can give in an instant to Satan : therefore wait upon God, and look up to him.

Use 2.—Consider this against the time you come to die : all your desire is to die in peace ; and, 'Oh, let thy servant depart in peace !' is the speech and desire of all. But who is it that must speak peace to you then ? God only. At death you will send for a good minister, or a good friend, to give you some comfort, as you call it ; but if God will not speak it, how can they ? If you could call all the angels out of heaven, and all the saints both in earth and heaven, and so could have all that whole college of physicians about you, and they should desire to comfort you with all their cordials ; yet if God will not speak it, who is able to do it ? Job xxxiv. 29, 'If he hides his face, who can behold him ?' None can shew his face, as the opposition in the next words shews. False daubers may come to you, and say 'Peace, peace,' as they in the prophet said ; but listen what God will speak, he only must and can do it ; and be sure you make sure of him before you come to die. Would any wise prince defer the treaty of peace with his enemy till he come into the field, and when the battle is begun ? How foolish then are those who neglect seeking after God till the assault of death comes, and the king of fears, with all his terrors, hath encompassed them round !

4. The fourth observation is : That let God's people be in never so great distress, yet it is an easy thing for God to give peace to them. Mark the expression here used : it is but 'speaking' peace ; that is, it is as easy for him to give peace as it is for you to speak a word ; it is no more to him. Then our comfort is, that as he only must do it, so he easily can do it, even with a word.

Reason 1.—Because his speaking is creating ; if he speaks, he makes things to be, even with a word. As at first he did but say, 'Let there be light, and there was light ;' so still, if he but say, 'Let there be peace,' there is peace ; he made all, and upholds all by the word of his power. As therefore, when the storm was at its height, and the waves most raging, yet at one word of Christ's they were all still,—'The sea and the winds obey him,'—so when temptations are most fierce, and the doubts of thine own mind most tumultuous and raging, a word from him can still them.

Reason 2.—Secondly, because the light which God gives to a man's spirit

when he speaks peace is a sure and infallible light, and therefore a satisfying light, so as when it comes it must needs give peace, and no objection, no temptation can darken or obscure it when it shines. 'If he give quietness, who can trouble?' says he, in Job xxxiv. 29. No creature is able to separate from his love, or the assurance of it.

(1.) It is a certain and infallible light which God gives when he speaks peace. 'The anointing from above, which enlighteneth a man's eyes, is truth, and is no lie,' 1 John ii. 27; that is, in teaching a man,—of which he there speaks, not only what he is in himself, but what he is in teaching us,—he doth it so as a man is not deluded by it, and therefore it is added, 'None else need teach him:' for did the Spirit, when he did speak peace, speak so as that that man to whom it is spoken did not infallibly apprehend it, he should speak in vain; for so the Apostle reasons in case of unknown tongues, that if a trumpet give an uncertain sound, or a man speak so as it shall not be known what he speaks, 'he beats the air,' 1 Cor. xiv. 9. Now therefore, surely God, when he speaks peace, speaks it so infallibly and distinctly that the soul knows the meaning of it; it is not a voice else, for, says the Apostle there, ver. 10, 'The end of all voices is to signify;' and therefore, 'If I know not the meaning of the voice, he shall be as a barbarian that speaks to me,' ver. 11, especially when the speaker undertakes to be a witness, as the Holy Ghost, in speaking peace, is, 1 John v. 6. Now to witness is such a testimony as is taken for infallible, for the end of it is to put an end to the controversy, and it ends the strife between man and man; now the Holy Ghost, when he speaks, speaks as a witness, and therefore puts an end to a man's doubts: he speaks infallibly.

(2.) And therefore, in the second place, it is a satisfying light also; it is such a light as dispels darkness, as answers all objections, and so speaks peace home. As in a question and controversy in divinity or logic, when some one bottom truth is understood, a man hath a light which goes through all the objections, and answers them all; such a light doth the Spirit give to a poor distressed soul, about the great controversy of his own salvation, when he doth speak peace: he gives such a light as satisfies the mind, as lets him see *that* in God's free grace, and in Christ, which doth answer to all he or all the devils can say against him, from what wants or objections are in himself. He openeth, and no man nor devil is able to shut. And therefore, when he doth speak peace, his testimony is taken and believed: 'If we receive the witness of men, and rest in it,' 1 John v. 9, 'the witness of God is greater;' that is, of more power and efficacy to persuade and satisfy the soul.

Use 1.—The first use is a use of comfort to poor souls that are in distress, and in such distress sometimes, as they think and say their case is desperate and past recovery; so far are their souls sometimes shot into despair. Consider how easy it is for you to have your condition altered and changed, even in a moment. I tell thee, though, it may be, thou hast been cast down this twenty years, and thy soul is battered, broken, hardened, settled, fixed in serious thoughts of thy ruin and reprobation, yet one good look, one good word from God, shall in an instant dispel all, alter thy conceit and apprehension clean. God can and doth often more with one word, in one moment, than Satan could do in many years, with all the objections he could muster up. The truth of this, in experience, we often find and observe in ourselves and others. Yea, and sometimes when he doth speak peace, he gives such satisfaction to a man's soul in that particular, that he would be content to be as many years more in his spiritual conflicts to enjoy but the like light

one half hour. Thus easy is it for God to speak peace. Though thou thinkest thyself never so far off from peace, yet he can speak peace to them that are afar off, as well as those who are near; as himself says, Isa. lvii. 19, for, says he, it is I that speak it. And when he doth it, then all thy doubts and distresses will be forgotten, as the pains of a woman in travail are when a man-child is born.

Use 2.—Secondly, is the church in any distress? (as the church here at this time was,) he can redeem it out of all with a word. A word spoken to Cyrus's heart did set them in their own land again; so you have it expressed, Isa. xlv. 26–28, 'The God that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built.' You see his manner of doing it, it is but with a word speaking; 'he says to Jerusalem, Be built.' And though there be never so great impediments in the way, he will say to the deep, Be dry, that his people may pass over; he dried up a whole nation, a sea of people, namely, the Babylonians, to make way for this deliverance. And when they are conquered, and Cyrus, a new king, comes to have the sway of things, God speaks to his heart also: 'That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and causeth him to say to Jerusalem, Be thou built.' Therefore go to him, and trust in him in all the distresses of the church, as the church also did, Ps. xlv. 4, 'Thou art my King, command deliverances;' a mandamus from God doth it, and will do it at any time.

5. Let God be never so angry, and his people's distress never so great, yet he will speak peace in the end to his people. You heard before, that if we have peace, he only must give it; and then, that he could and was able with ease to do it: and now you shall hear that he will certainly do it in the end.

The reasons the text suggests are these:—

Reason 1.—If we consider but who this God is that is to speak peace, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak;' he is the Lord, and therefore able to speak what pleaseth him; he is peculiarly 'the God of peace,' and therefore willing to speak peace. Now, (1.) when it is said he is the 'God of peace, and the God of comfort,' the meaning is, he is full of it, infinitely full of it, and 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.' Thoughts of peace and love to his do boil within him, as hatred or malice doth in a malicious man towards his enemy, so as he cannot contain and forbear expressing it towards him: that as David says his 'thoughts did burn within him,' and at last break forth; so in God, 'I know the thoughts I think towards you,' says he to them of the captivity, Jer. xxix. 11, 'they are thoughts of peace, and not of evil.' And, (2.) besides that these his thoughts of peace are taken up of himself, his Son also hath bespoken peace for us; and therefore God will speak it: even as Joseph, though he spake roughly a while to his brethren, yet could not in the end contain, Gen. xiv. 1; so nor God.

Reason 2.—Secondly, let us consider who they are to whom he is to speak it. They are his people, as the text hath it; and to them there is no question but he will speak peace, though he seems angry for a while. They are his people, that is the reason given, 1 Sam. xii. 22, 'He will not cast off his people;' as also Isa. lxiii. 8, 10, 'When they rebelled, he was wroth; yet he said, Surely they are my people: so I was their Saviour.' *They?* why they are the 'sons of peace,' Luke x. 6, ordained for peace, and therefore shall be sure to have it; and although some differences may arise betwixt God and them, yet there is a natural *συναγῆ* in the Lord, that moves him to speak peace in the end to them. As the dumb son of Croesus, when he saw his

father like to be killed, though he had never spake before, yet then, out of an impetus of spirit, the strings of his tongue were unloosed, and he cried out to the murderer, 'Kill not King Cræsus;' so, when the enemies of his church are ready to devour his people, and Satan is ready to swallow his child up in despair, then God's bowels work within him, and he can hold no longer, but cries, 'Save my child, save my church.' 'Is Ephraim my pleasant child?' says God, Jer. xxxi. 20. Well, says God, 'though I spake against him,' and took him up, and chid him soundly, yet I cannot forget my child, says he, nor my fatherly affection to him, but 'my bowels are stirred, and I will surely have mercy on him.'

Reason 3.—Thirdly, otherwise if God did not in the end speak peace, they would indeed return to folly, which is the third thing in the text. For his end of speaking peace is, that they might not return to folly: Ps. cxxv. 3, 'The rod of the wicked shall not always lie upon the righteous, lest they put forth their hand to iniquity;' therefore, at the last verse, 'peace shall be upon Israel.' As for this cause he speaks outward peace, so also inward, and suffers not the rod of Satan, and of his own heavy displeasure, to lie upon their hearts, for else they would return to the pleasures of sin; for every creature must have some delight: their spirits would fail, and be tired out else, and wearied in good duties, if God should not in the end speak peace, Isa. lvii., 'The spirit would fail before me.' When the child swoonds in the whipping, God lets fall the rod, and falls a-kissing it, to fetch life into it again. As it is a rule in physic still to maintain nature, and therefore when that shall be in hazard to be destroyed, they leave giving purging physic, and give cordials; so doth God with his people: though with purging physic he often brings their spirits very weak and low, yet he will uphold and maintain their spirits, so as they shall not fail and be extinguished, but then he will give cordials to raise them up again.

Use 3.—What good heart that bears a childlike affection to God would offend such a God, that be thy distresses what they will be, will certainly speak peace? Then do not put him to it, spend not upon that precious stock of his free grace and love. It is true 'he is married to thee,' and therefore 'though thou hast gone a-whoring after many lovers,' Jer. iii. 1, 2, 14, still he says, 'Return, for I am married to thee.' As, therefore, when man and wife are fallen out, they consider, We must live together, and therefore they reconcile themselves again; so consider it must be between God and thee, and make it a means and motive to recover thee, as Samuel did to the Israelites, 1 Sam. xii. 22, 'You have committed this great sin; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, for God will not cast you off, you are his people.' Go home to him again, he will speak peace. Think thus, The time will come wherein God will be friends again with me, he and I cannot be strange long; though I would, he will not; Isa. lvii. 18, 19, though he went on stubbornly, yet God healed him, and would not lose his child, therefore I will return of myself.

THE FOLLY OF RELAPSING AFTER PEACE SPOKEN.

But let them turn no more to folly.—PSALM LXXXV. 8.

6. THE sixth observation is, That peace being spoken to their hearts by God, they should 'return no more to folly.' See this, Ezra ix. 13, 14, 'Thou having punished us less than we deserve, and given us such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments, wouldest thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us?'

Reason 1.—Because it will be a greater aggravation in sinning. It is made the aggravation of Solomon's sin, 1 Kings xi. 9, 'that God had appeared to him twice.' They were especial appearances and manifestations of mercy; and though such do now cease, yet we read of such as are analogical to them: as, John xiv. 21, Christ promiseth to manifest himself, which is by shedding abroad his love and his Father's love into the heart, which is evident by the former words, 'he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,' and after he saith, 'We will come to him, and make our abode with him,' ver. 23, and ver. 27, 'My peace I will give unto you.' Now such appearances will be set upon the score of every sin many years after, as they were upon Solomon's. And the reason is, because nothing wounds an ingenuous, loving nature more than matter of unkindness: 'If it had been my enemy,' says David, 'I could have borne it,' Ps. lv. 12, 14; 'but it was thou, O man, mine acquaintance; we took sweet counsel together:' a bosom friend, to whom I had committed my secrets, opened my heart. Thus, when God hath unbosomed himself, as it were, to a man, and told him what was in his heart towards him, this goes nigh him if he lifts up the heel against him. And the reason of that further also is—(1.) Because of all things else, a man cannot endure to have his love abused; you come nigh him when you do so, for his love is himself, and commands all in him; so that abuse his love, and you strike at his heart. It is less to abuse any excellency in a man, to reproach and extenuate his parts, learning, &c., though these are dear to him; but his love is his bowels. And therefore, when God hath opened his heart to a man, and set his love upon him, and revealed it to him, and he carries himself unworthily, it pains him at the heart. Besides, (2.) it is against the law of nature and of nations to seek out for a peace, and get it concluded, and then secretly to prepare for and enter into a war: nothing more hateful, or can exasperate two

nations one against another more than this. It was the aggravation of Absalom's sin that, being newly reconciled with his father, and taken into favour again, after two years' discountenance, he then began to rebel more closely.

Reason 2.—The second reason is intimated in the word 'folly:' as if the Lord should have said, Set aside the unkindness and wrong you do to me, yet therein you befool yourselves: you will have the worst of it. And indeed, when God doth afterwards draw nigh to a man again, upon that his recovery of his peace, it appears to be folly, even in that man's own apprehension. When he hath tasted how sweet God is, then come and ask him, What, will ye return to sin again? he will then say, Ask me if I will wound or cut my flesh. It is impossible, thinks he, I should any more be so besotted; if there were no other motives, he thinks it the greatest folly in the world. And therefore God on purpose chooseth out that expression, and placeth it here in this case, because it is indeed the greatest folly in God's sight, and is so apprehended by ourselves, looking upon sin after peace is spoken to us. It is folly to sin against God at any time, but especially then, and that will appear by these particulars:—

(1.) Because, before a man had that peace he felt the bitterness of sin, for God never speaks peace till that be felt. Now, that is an argument even to sense never to return to it again, which a fool will be warned by: a burnt child dreads the fire; even a child will take heed, being taught by sense. When a man shall be in great distress, and his conscience shall suggest to him, as Jer. iv. 18, 'Thy ways and thy doings have procured these things to thee: this is thy wickedness,'—a speech like that when you say to your children, when they have gotten any harm, or cold, or sickness, This is your playing, and gadding, and going in the snow, and your eating of fruit, &c.,—so doth God speak there to them when they were in distress, 'This is your wickedness, for it is bitter, it reacheth to the heart;' it woundeth the conscience, the wounding of which, of all else, is the greatest misery. When once a man after this hath peace restored to him, and he comes newly out of such a distress, ask him then how he likes turning to such a sin again, and he will tell you it is the greatest folly in the world: ask David if he will murder any more after his bones have been broken and set again.

(2.) Thou wilt easily acknowledge it is folly to return to sin again if thou considerest the terms upon which thou didst obtain thy peace. Reckon what pains it cost thee to wash out the guilt and stain which sin had made, what vows and resolutions thou madest, what bonds thou didst seal unto, what promises never to return, what prayers and tears, what raps and knocks at heaven's gates ere thou couldest get an answer, or God to speak one word, he making as if he had not been within: why, is it not folly now to lose that in an instant thou hast been a-getting so long, haply many years, and with so much pains and cost? You use it as an excuse to prodigals to say things lightly come by are lightly gone; and yet you count them and call them fools for it, as not knowing what it is to earn a penny: how much more folly is it when a man having before mortgaged his peace, and God restored it again after much suit, and waiting many a term, then to come home and venture to cast all away at one throw at dice? Such a fool art thou when thou returnest to sin. To drink that at one draught which thou hast been getting many a year, what madness is it! When thou hast taken much pains to wash thyself, then to wallow in the mire again, and make thyself new work, what folly is it! Who but children and fools will do thus? That

which the church said in another case may well be alluded to in this : Cant. v. 3, 'I have washed my feet ; how shall I defile them ?

(3.) Consider what it is thou dost hazard to lose by returning to folly—thy peace, (David lost it, as appears Ps. li. 12 ; therefore, says he, 'Restore to me the joy of thy salvation ;') in losing of which thou wilt be so much a loser, that if the sin thou choosest were able to give thee all the world, it could not recompense thee ; no, not the loss of one hour's communion with God, which in a moment will bring thee in more sweetness than all thy sins can do to eternity. If all the pleasures of sin were contracted, and the quintessence of them strained into one cup, they would not afford so much as one drop of true peace with God doth, being let fall into the heart. It is 'peace which passeth understanding.' Few pleasures here do exceed the senses ; nay, the senses are capable of more than the things can give ; but this passeth understanding. 'God's loving-kindness is better than life.' If it were propounded to thee, thou must lose thy life next moment if thou shouldst commit such a sin, wouldest thou venture, if thou didst believe it ? Now 'the loving-kindness of God is better than life,' and wilt thou lose the enjoying of it, though but for a moment ?

(4.) It is folly to return again, because the pleasures of sin will be much less to thee after thou hast had peace spoken. Take them at the best, when they are freshest, and when thy palate was most in relish and taste with them, when thou wert carnal, and ere thou knewest what sweetness was in God, and they then were but poor sorry pleasures. But now they will prove far more empty than before : they are empty vain pleasures even to him that hath them in their flower, and in his season of sinning ; and therefore all wicked men are weary, and do inwardly complain of their condition, only they cannot find sweetness in God, and so are fain to keep themselves to their husks ; but, alas ! to thee they are far less worth than to another man, who knows not God, and therefore thou art like to have a worse bargain of it. Another man can make more money of a sin, and get more pleasure out of it, than thou art able to do.

For, *first*, thy conscience having been scorched with sin,—as scalded flesh adheres more, and is more sensible in coming to the fire, than other parts of the body,—is become of a quicker sense ; whereas wicked men's is seared, and so they commit 'all uncleanness with greediness ;' but thine is tender and galled in the act, which allays much of the pleasure of thy sin, and minglcth the more bitterness with it.

And, *secondly*, besides this galling of conscience, which is common to thee with many an unregenerate man, thou hast a principle of grace, an inner man, which is dead to such pleasures, that tastes them not, that is like Bazzilai, who, through age, 2 Sam. xix. 35, could not taste either what he ate or drank, as young men do ; no more can that new man in thee, and therefore it can be but half as pleasant to thee as to another man. If one side of a man be taken all with a numb palsy, what pleasure is it to that man to exercise his limbs in the actions of life ? He is but half a man, and lives but half a life. So it is with thee when thou hast grace in thy heart : but half thy heart can take pleasure in sinning ; that new man, the other half, reluctates, grieves for it, hates what thou doest ; and all this must needs strike off much of the pleasure.

But, *thirdly*, if we add to this, that this new man in him, having once tasted what sweetness is in God, and how good the Lord is, is then like a man that hath eaten sweetmeats, other things are out of taste with him, and therefore

also it is folly to return. 'No man,' says Christ, Luke v. 39, 'having drunk old wine desireth new, for he saith the old is better;' a man used to high fare cannot agree so well with thin diet: so the soul having been used to taste of great pleasures in God, the impression and remembrance of them leaves his soul less satisfied than another man's. A stomach that hath been enlarged to full diet, looks for it, and riseth more hungry from a slender meal; now communion with God enlarges the faculties, and widens them, and makes them more capable of greater joys than other men have, and therefore the creature is less able to fill them; still he remembers with much grief, whilst he is eating his husks, what fare he had in his father's house; and oh, 'then it was better with me than now.' Call me not Naomi, but call me Marah, as she said, 'for I went out full, and am come home empty;' so doth he say when he comes from the act of sinning, he went with his heart full of peace, and meeting with a bargain of sinning, thought to eke out his joy, and make it fuller, but he comes home empty.

Use 1.—The first use is to those who have had peace spoken to them: Let them at such times fear themselves and God most, for then comes in this, as you see here, as the most seasonable admonition that can be given, to return no more to folly.

(1.) Fear God then most; for of all times else then sins provoke him most. To come and call him father, and the guide of your youth, and yet to fall to sin, this is to do as evil as you can, you cannot do worse, Jer. iii. 4, 5. So Ezra ix. 13, 14, 'After such an escaping should we again break thy commandments, wouldest thou not be angry till thou hadst consumed us?' In times of affliction it is the property of a good child to love God most: in times of speaking peace, to fear God most and his goodness, and to fear to offend him for his goodness' sake. Did I only say that God is provoked most then, if you return to folly? Nay, I add further, he is grieved, which is more than to be provoked; and therefore you shall mark that expression and admonition not to 'grieve God's Spirit,' then comes in when the 'Spirit hath sealed us up to the day of redemption,' Eph. iv. 30. Then by sinning we are said more properly to grieve him than before, when he hath so far engaged himself to love a man, and expressed himself to him, and set his seal upon him for his. God is angry with wicked men's sins, but he is grieved for yours. To grieve him is more than to anger him. Mere anger is an affection can ease itself by revenge, and by coming even again with the party; and when we can or intend to do so, our minds are not so much aggrieved, but please themselves rather to think of the revenge which we mean to execute: so when wicked men sin whom God means to meet with, he is said to be angry rather than grieved; and says, 'I will ease myself of mine adversaries,' Isa. i. 24, 'and avenge myself of mine enemies.' But here, as when a man's wife that lies in his bosom, or his child, shall wrong him; so is it when one sins whom God hath set himself to love, and done much for, and made known his everlasting kindness unto, and sealed to the day of redemption. This goes to his heart, grieves him rather than angers him; and such are the truest and deepest griefs. What should he do with you in this case? If afflict you, and by that means go about to turn you from your iniquity, therein he shall but afflict himself as it were; for 'though they rebelled, yet when they were afflicted he was afflicted,' Isa. lxiii. 9, 10. As when a father that is a magistrate, or as one that maintains a student in a college, if either punisheth a child or pupil in his purse, he punisheth himself; so must God afflict himself to afflict you. Put not the Lord into these straits if you have any love in you. And—

(2.) As thou art therefore to fear God most then, so thyself most, and to be more watchful over thy own heart; thou art then apt to return to folly, if thou takest not heed; as when a man hath been very hot, or sweat much, he is apt to take the greatest cold. Hezekiah, after God sealed peace to him and answered his prayers, and renewed the lease of his life, his heart got cold, he did return to folly. The reason is, because then the heart is apt to grow less watchful, and to think itself fortified enough against any temptation. As St Peter, having seen Christ transfigured in the mount, grew confident in his own strength. And know that the devil watcheth such an opportunity most, for he gets a great victory if he can foil thee then, after he hath been foiled himself, and when thou art most triumphing over him. How many battles have been lost through security of victory and recoiling of the enemy! And besides, our corrupt nature, so far as unrenewed, is apt to gather heart to itself, to slight sin, as thinking its pardon easily gotten.

Therefore when thou art tempted, labour often to renew those thoughts which thou hadst of thy sin at that time when thou wert suing for peace, before thy peace was gotten; when thou wouldest have given a world for God's favour; and also what thoughts thou hadst of it when God spake peace, how thou didst abhor it, yea, thyself. And look what sin was most bitter to thee and an enemy to thy peace,—as if uncleanness, idleness, neglect of prayer, ill company, &c.,—and preserve in thy heart those bitter apprehensions of it, and say of it, Thou hast 'been a bloody sin to me,' (as Moses's wife said of her husband :) and though I have got peace and my life saved, yet it was a bloody sin to Christ, his blood was shed to purchase this my peace; and shall I return to it?

And when tempted to it again, have recourse to the kindness God shewed thee in pardoning, and say, 'How shall I do this, and sin against God?' say as he said, 'Is this thy kindness to thy friend?' 2 Sam. xvi. 17; and what! shall I, Absalom-like, now I am new reconciled to my Father, fall a-plotting treason again? What! shall I make more work for prayer, more work for God, break my bones again, and lie roaring again? Think thus, I was burned in the hand before, I shall be racked surely now. 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee.'

Use 2.—The doctrine of assurance, if not abused, and of God speaking peace to men, is no dangerous doctrine to make men secure and presumptuous in sinning. When peace is preached in any man's heart, this use naturally flows from that doctrine, 'Return no more to folly.' The very scope of the whole epistle of St John is to help all believers to assurance, as appears by 1 John i. 4, v. 13, 'These things I write you, that ye might have communion with God, and that your joy might be full.' But this will open a way to all licentiousness. No, says St John, chap. ii. 1, 'These things I write unto you, that ye sin not.' Nothing guards the heart more against tentations than the peace of God: it is said to guard the heart, Phil. iv. 7. Yea, and if you do sin, the assurance of God's love is the speediest way to recover you; so it follows, 'If any one doth sin, we have an advocate with the Father,' &c. 'And he that hath this hope in him,'—that is, to live with Christ,—and 'knows what manner of love the Father bears us,' 'purifies himself as he is pure,' 1 John iii. 1–3.

If there were no more but self-love in a man, it were then no wonder if he doth abuse it. For self-love, where the love of God is wanting, is unthankful and ungrateful, willing to take all the love and kindness which is afforded, and abuse it, and work upon it for its own advantage. And it is true also that because we have too much of this principle unmortified in us, therefore

God trusteth so few with much assurance, because they would abuse it. But where true love to God is seated, and much of it implanted, there the love of God and the peace of God doth as kindly and naturally enkindle and inflame and set it a-work, even as arguments suitable to self-love do work upon and stir that principle. For grace is more for God than for ourselves, it being the image of God's holiness, whose holiness consists in this, to aim at himself in all; and therefore when God's free grace towards a man is revealed, it raiseth him up to higher strains of love to God and hatred of sin. And therefore it is observable, Ps. li. 12, that David, when he prays for 'the restoring of the joy of his salvation,' he prays not simply for it, or alone. but withal prays for a free spirit, 'Establish me with thy free spirit;' that is, a spirit of ingenuity, which is kindly, sweetly, and freely wrought upon. Therefore when we have a free spirit wrought in us, then that free love that is in God towards us will work most kindly upon it, and constrain us to love him that loved us first. 'The love of Christ constrains us,' 2 Cor. v. 14, 'because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them.' St Paul gives the reason why this love of Christ did thus constrain him, because he did thus judge; that is, this consideration of Christ's love, he having a principle of love in his heart to Christ, he found to be a powerful prevailing reason to persuade him to live to Christ. Having a new judgment, he saw force and strength in the argument. And so shall we if we thus judge; and it will have this natural consequence as naturally to follow upon it in our hearts, as any reason in any other kind hath, that is brought to enforce any other conclusion. And therefore as the mind is constrained, as it were, to assent to a truth proved by force of reason, that if you grant this, then this or that will follow; so because we judge this reasonable by an argument drawn out of love's topics, that if Christ died for all, who otherwise must themselves have died, that then they should live to him; this will constrain us to love him, and live to him. *Amor Dei est extaticus, nec se sinit esse sui juris.*

This text and admonition here gives a just occasion to consider a little of that so often questioned case of conscience concerning relapses of God's children into the same sins and folly again, and whether, after peace spoken, God's people may return again to folly. Some have held that a man after a second repentance could not fall into the same sin again; others, if he did, it excluded him from mercy for time to come. For the comfort of some poor souls, whose ease and temptation this may be, I will speak somewhat, though sparingly and with caution.

1. The Scripture nowhere excludeth those from the state of grace, or bars mercy from those that have relapsed into the same sin, especially so long as in regard of the manner of their sinning it be but folly, not wickedness or wilful sinning; that is, rather proceeding out of error of understanding, and heat and impetuousness of foolish affections, than obstinacy and malice in the will, and with 'despite of the Spirit of grace,' Heb. x. 29. Yea—

2. In Scripture we meet with such passages and promises as may undoubtedly uphold any soul that hath so fallen, after peace received, into the same sin, and preserve him from apprehending himself excluded therefore from mercy and the state of grace. As, Hosea xiv. 4, 'I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely.' Unless they had fallen after repenting and former healing, it could not have been called backsliding; and yet

this he promises to heal, and withal shews the ground that moves him to it, his loving them freely. For if in anything his free love is shewn to any of his children, and drawn out, it is in healing again such a backsliding soul after recovery and peace given; for the falling into the same sin which hath been repented of and healed, provokes God more than a thousand other acts of sins formerly committed, though of the same kind. And therein also to shew his free love, that he can pardon even the abuse of love itself, he leaves some thus to sin after his love shed abroad in their hearts. Some he shews his free love unto, in keeping them from sinning; others, in pardoning them, and giving them repentance. They are but several ways of drawing it forth; so that, if in anything, herein his free love is shewn, for if it were not free it would never endure itself to be abused.

And likewise the sure mercies of David are then shewn, when God ‘multiplies to pardon;’ so, Isa. lv. 3, having mentioned the promise of the ‘sure mercies of David,’ he promises to ‘multiply to pardon,’ as it is in the original, ver. 7; which are thus joined, both because the sureness of his covenant is therein shewn, and because we might haply multiply to sin; and at least it supposeth the possibility of it again. God likewise runs upon such a supposition in that expression of his to his own people, Jer. iii. 1, 2, ‘They say, If a man put away his wife, and she become another man’s, shall not the land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.’ He speaks to her as to one who had been his wife, who though she had not been put away by him, but had put away herself, and run away, not once, but often, and that with many lovers; and sometimes in the midst of her whoredoms, had come in and made challenge of his former love, and pleaded his former mercy to her, and yet fallen back again, ver. 4, 5, (where he adds, ‘Wilt thou not from this time cry, My father, and thou art the guide of my youth?’ that is, I know, says God, you will come now and cry, as heretofore you have done, and say, Oh, thou art my father and my husband, and confidently still claim an interest in me upon my former kindness, and yet do as evil as you can, for you cannot do worse than thus to abuse my love,) yet, for all this, at the 12th verse, ‘Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; for I am married to you,’ ver 14. That which he doth thus to a nation, he may do to a particular man who is his child. Again—

3. There are not altogether examples wanting for this :—

Examp. 1.—We find Samson, a godly man, (whom yet we would scarce have thought such, but that we find his name in the list of those worthies, Heb. xi.) ensnared with a Philistine woman, against the counsel of his parents, Judg. xiv. 3, who clearly laid open his sin to him. And he was in the event reproved for his folly, for his wife deceived him, told his riddle to his enemies; which he in the end perceived. And further to reprove him, in the issue she was given away to another, ver. 16, 17, 20. From all which passages of reproof, a holy man, that had his eyes in his head, could not but see his error. And yet again, a long while after this, (twenty years after, Judg. xv. 20,) when certainly ere that he had repented of this his sin, for which his parents before, and after God, so clearly did rebuke him, he went to Gaza, Judg. xvi. 1, ‘and saw a harlot, and went in to her,’ and there escaped narrowly with his life at midnight; and, ver. 4, after that also it came to pass he fell in love with another, as bad as any of the former, Delilah, who was his ruin. But his returning thus to folly cost him dear, for in the end he was taken as a captive to the Philistines, his enemies, and that through her falsehood; deprived of his strength he had spent upon these women, had his

eyes, those betraying lights, put out, that had ensnared him; and himself made a fool of, to make his enemies sport. So as no child of God can take any great encouragement thus to return to folly for the future by his example; though comfort they may have therefrom in case they have returned for the time past.

Examp. 2.—Another example may be that of Jehoshaphat, who committed a great sin in joining with Ahab, that wicked king that ‘sold himself to work wickedness,’ 2 Chron. xviii. 1–3; and he was foretold what would be the success of that confederacy and journey by Micaiah, before he went with him to battle, and after in the battle itself, where he hardly escaped with his life, and by an extraordinary providence at his prayer was delivered, ver. 31, 32; and as if that were not sufficient, God sends another prophet to him, chap. xix. 2, who with open mouth reproves him, and discovers to him his sin, ‘Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord:’ which message to so good a man doubtless was not in vain, but humbled him for that his sin, and wrought repentance in him to avert that wrath. And yet after that great and miraculous deliverance of him and his people, chap. xx., we find him relapsing into the same sin, ver. 35, ‘After this did Jehoshaphat join himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who did very wickedly. And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish;’ which another prophet in like manner reproveth, and likewise God himself rebuked by the like ill success of that league to the former: ‘the ships were broken,’ ver. 37.

Examp. 3.—St Peter, a man who seemed by other of his carriages bold enough, was yet three several times surprised with base fear: once when he tempted Christ not to hazard himself at Jerusalem, where Christ told him that he was to suffer, Matt. xvi. 21–23, ‘Master,’ says he, ‘spare thyself;’ upon which speech Christ calls him Satan, rebuketh him more sharply than at any other time, for which surely there was a more than ordinary cause. St Peter thought that if his Master should suffer at Jerusalem, that himself and the rest should not be safe. That speech, therefore, proceeded from fear; and therefore Christ doth immediately thereupon call for self-denial and taking up the cross, ver. 24. And this was immediately after peace spoken, ver. 16–18. Christ had never more comfortably given testimony to St Peter and his faith than there. Yet again, after this, Christ had him up into the mount, and transfigured himself, to hearten him against that trial to come, which made him so confident; yet then he denied him at his arraignment: when again Christ, immediately upon that, looked back upon him with so sweet a look as broke his heart for this his folly; and so he returned again, and it cost him many a tear. And Christ, after the resurrection, owned him again more than any of the rest; bade them that first met him, ‘Go tell Peter.’ He mentions him by name, and in especial: Go tell him the first news of it. And then also he asked him, ‘Peter, lovest thou me?’ and he said, ‘Lord, thou knowest I love thee:’ as if he had said, ‘Though I have played the wretch, yet I love thee.’ Upon this, though he grew more bold, Acts iv. 13, yet, Gal. ii. 11, 12, we find him falling into the grudgings of the same disease, which cast him into another fit: ‘he dissembled, fearing them of the circumcision.’ This was a spice of the former sin, though not so gross; and though the outward acts in these sins were diverse in their occasions, yet they were all acts and buds of the same root of bitterness; and may as well be called sins of the same kind as the committing differing acts of uncleanness are reckoned falling into the same sin.

4. In the fourth place, if the Scriptures had been utterly silent in examples,

yet reason, consonant to other principles, and grounds of divinity, and of the Scriptures, might persuade the same.

Reason 1.—If he may, after the most serious and thorough repentance, fall again into as grievous a sin of another kind, and return ; why not into the same again ? I confess there is some disparity, which might make him more averse, and set him in some more remoteness from the same sin he hath particularly repented of than another ; which shall be considered in its place. Yet the difference cannot be supposed such as should make the one possible, and not the other ; all true repentance working the heart to an abominating every sin, as well as any : and therefore, if it were true, it was for that particular sin, as sin ; and then it would work the like against all and every sin, according to the measure of the sinfulness. And though it may and doth work a more keen and special hatred against that particular sin a man hath been most stung with, yet still this is but so far as this aggravation (to fall into the same sin again) may cause such a relapse to be more sinful than another sin. And so far, and upon that ground, he is and may be more set and strengthened against it than against another sin. But then, if the supposition fall upon another gross sin, never before committed, the sole and single act of which other circumstances make as heinous even as this reiterated act of a sin formerly committed can be, then the one is equally as possible as the other. But, however, yet still the difference is but in degrees,—namely, in that the heart is elongated a degree or so further from that sin formerly committed than any other,—which will not therefore so vary the case (as *magis* and *minus* do not) that it should be made impossible to fall into the one, and not into the other.

Reason 2.—If he may fall into some gross sin, which at first conversion he did above all other humble himself for, and yet that same initial repentance did not put him into such an impossibility of falling into that sin again ; why then should a renewed act of repentance for the same, or for some other reiterated sin, be supposed to have such virtue in it as to make him shot-free for ever from the same fiery dart again ?

Reason 3.—Again, thirdly, let it be considered from whence it should be that a renewed, or indeed any act of true repentance, though never so great and intense, should have such a transcendent, eternal, and invincible virtue in it, and privilege annexed to it ; for how is it that repentance doth strengthen us against sin, but by restoring the decayed frame of grace to a better constitution and greater degree of strength than before, and by raising it above a man's lusts, and above that lust more than all other ? As in David, when he prayed, ' Create in me a clean heart,' which, through his sin of uncleanness, was in an especial manner defiled with a proneness to that sin. But yet withal remember, that that new frame of heart and strength gotten by that renewed repentance, and that augmentation and increase of hatred against, and abominating that sin wrought by it, is all but a creature,—as grace and every new degree of grace is,—and therefore, for preserving us, hath in itself but the power and force of a created habit, which may be prevailed against by the sin that is in us ; and can no more, nay, much less, put us into a state of confirmation against any particular sin, than the grace of the angels could of itself confirm them in a state against all sin.

And as for the impression of that bitterness which, in our repentance for that sin fallen into, was made upon our hearts, that also can be supposed to have but the like force upon our spirits that the impression of joy unspeakable and glorious hath upon the heart in those heavenly raptures which believers sometimes enjoy. Yea, and the latter of these will easily be sup-

posed to be of the greater efficacy of the two, and both but creatures. Now those ravishing joys are not yet such immortal and everlastingly quickening cordials, that put such spirits into a man as to preserve him from swounds and faintings of spirit for ever; and though, whilst they abide and are present to the heart, they do then raise it above all things here below, yet when a man hath been a while off from that mount, and hath conversed a while with things here again below, then that lustre wears away, as the glory that shined in Moses's face did, and after a while the sense and present taste of those joys wears out; and when that is gone, the bare remembrance of them which is left hath not, in their absence, such an infallible, though a great efficacy to preserve his mind in an everlasting disrelishing former delights, but that he may and often doth fall in love again too much with them; although indeed whilst the present sense of them did abide upon the heart, it abstracted the mind from all things here below. And hence a man is apt to 'fall from his first love,' Rev. ii, and from that high esteem of spiritual things; as the Galatians, chap. iv. 15, 'Where is the blessedness you spake of?' says St Paul to them. Therefore answerably the remembrance of the bitterness of any sin felt in our deepest humiliations is much less able to preserve a man, nor is the impression and dint made so lasting, nor the scars and wounds of conscience continuing for ever so fresh, as everlastingly to preserve and deter us from falling into the same sin again. For both are but creatures, and at best but arguments drawn from sense and experience within ourselves, and have but a human created power which is not always efficacious; especially seeing God hath ordained us to 'live by faith more than by sense,' for faith is appointed by God to be our more constant keeper, 1 Peter i. 5, 'We are kept through faith unto salvation,' and by it more surely and more constantly than by impressions of joy or sorrow which are made to sense: and yet we are not kept by it of itself, but by the power of God. So then we are kept by the power of God as the principal supporter and guardian, through faith as the instrumental, and by it rather than by sense or any other grace of sorrow or repentance, because faith carries the heart out of itself, and commits itself wholly into the hands of God as a faithful Creator, (who is the strength of Israel, to keep a man from every evil work,) as not being able to secure itself against any sin through the power of any fortification or strength that any other grace or degree of grace hath built, no, not for one moment; and therefore is as dependent upon God after a fall, and a renewed repentance out of it, yea, and more than before he fell; and his own woeful experience hath reason to make him so.

The like instance to illustrate the truth of this we may draw from the assurance of faith itself. For even the assurance of faith itself,—which is an act properly belonging to that grace, called therefore the assurance of faith, Heb. x. 22,—which doth strengthen us as much against doubting, when it is joined with joy unspeakable and glorious, as repentance can do against any other sin; and whilst it is upon us, in the strength of it a believer is apt to think himself armed and strengthened, and so established as that he shall never question God's love any more, or the pardon of his sins; and yet, experience shews it, that the guilt of sin prevails sometimes again after this, and the same doubts arise and prevail as much as ever. Neither will the remembrance of the former assurance be always of force enough to resist them; for he may come to question that assurance itself also, and so forget that he was purged from his old sins. And if the guilt of sin prevail in the conscience again, against such a renewed and settled act of faith, why may not

the power of a lust prevail in the members after a renewed act of repentance?

Reason 4.—If it be said that a renewed act of thorough repentance doth keep a man, not by any peculiar virtue in itself alone, but by the power of God concurrent with it; then I demand to see the promise wherein God hath infallibly obliged and engaged his power, upon such a renewed act of repentance, to preserve from falling into that sin of all other for ever, without which no man in faith can affirm it, and without which there is an *it may be*, and a supposition of such a possibility as sometime falleth out and is reduced to existence. God indeed hath said, that if we fall he will put under his hand to break that fall, that it shall not ruin us; but not so to keep us in his hands as we shall be out of danger of falling again. A renewed act of repentance is indeed an ordinance sanctified to preserve a man; yet but in the same manner that other ordinances are, as prayer, and the word preached, and admonition, &c., with which God doth not always so infallibly co-operate as efficaciously to work always that which they serve to.

5. If there were not such a possibility as might and doth sometimes fail out, then every regenerate man, after such a renewed act of repentance, might secure himself against the committing that gross act again for ever; but so he can never do against any particular act of sin but that sin against the Holy Ghost. St Paul therefore exhorts, when a brother is fallen into a sin, to ‘restore such a one with the spirit of meekness,’ upon this consideration, ‘considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted;’ and he lays the exhortation upon those who are most spiritual: ‘Ye that are spiritual, restore such a one, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,’ Gal. vi. 1; so as he speaks of such as have their hearts raised up to the best frame, through the most deep and serious repentance. And now we will suppose one that hath formerly fallen himself into the same sin which another is fallen into, but not yet restored, but himself is returned by repentance out of it; for, indeed, such a spiritual man is of all other like to be the meekest bone-setter of a man fallen; and even such doth St Paul exhort to consider that themselves may for the time to come be also or in like manner tempted,—that is fall as this man fell,—and therefore so be tempted as to fall into the same sin again that he was fallen into. And if any man could be secure from the like fall again, he had been out of the reach of this exhortation to this duty upon that ground mentioned, as not capable of it. But the Holy Ghost hath elsewhere, 1 Cor. x. 13, told us, that there is no temptation which is common to man but is incident to befall any man at any time; and therefore, ver. 12, exhorts ‘him that standeth’ to ‘take heed lest he fall.’ Indeed, that temptation which is common to devils with men, the sin of final despair, and against the Holy Ghost, &c., a regenerate man may, through the grace of Christ, secure himself against; but all such sins as are common to man, from these or any of them, no man, in any state, can, without an extraordinary revelation, secure himself from the commission of.

Only I add these cautions concerning this case:—

Caution 1.—There are two sorts of corruptions. First, more gross corruptions, which St Peter calls τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου, ‘the defilements of the world,’ 2 Pet. ii. 20; they being the common mire or kennel wherein the unclean swine of this world wallow, and which the Apostle calls such ‘works of the flesh as are manifest,’ Gal. v. 19, even to the light of nature; such as are adultery, fornication, drunkenness, &c.; and by those two expressions do they distinguish them from a sort of more spiritual and refined lusts. For, secondly, there are corruptions more spiritual, as pride, secret love of the

world. Now, for those gross corruptions which are contrary even to common honesty, and, to use Job's phrase, 'are punished by the judges,' chap. xxxi. 11, which profane men wallow in, a godly man hath more strength against them, so as it is not so ordinary for him to be entangled again and again with these. For where but moral principles are, these are abstained from, as we see in the Pharisee,—I am no adulterer, &c.,—therefore, where grace is, much more. And some sins are more opposite to the spirit of holiness, and less compatible with grace, as uncleanness, of which St Paul says, 'God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness,' 1 Thess. iv. 7; it is in an especial manner there opposed to holiness; and such as these are 'works of the flesh, which are manifest,' even to nature, to civil men; and therefore, when they are often fallen into, they do manifest that the heart is but flesh. And although the limits, how seldom or how often, cannot be set concerning relapses into these or any sins, yet, in an ordinary course, it may be said that few godly men fall into such sins again and again. God keeps them from such in an ordinary providence, that scandals should not arise; they being sins which all the world takes notice of. But those other sins of rash anger, and love of the world, and spiritual pride, &c., these being less manifest, and sitting more close to our spirits, godly men are more subject unto.

Caution 2.—Yet, secondly, we must again distinguish:—

(1.) There are the inward lustings to those outward acts now, though grace weakeneth the very lustings within, yet takes them not wholly away: 'The spirit that is in us,'—that is, in us saints,—says St James, 'lusteth to envy;' and as to envy, so to all other sins. And—

(2.) Secondly, there are the outward gross acts of such sins; and therein the weakness of sin in a regenerate man and strength of grace shews itself most in preserving from them. For, as 'to will is present with me,' says St Paul, 'to will what is good, yet how to perform it I am not able,' Rom. vii. 18: so, on the contrary, to lust the heart may be ready, and lust may soon rise up in rebellion, but when it should come to the act there is a weakness discovered; they come to the birth, and want strength often to bring forth; the contrary lusting and prevailing of grace being then seen and discovering itself. That it fareth with a regenerate man in this case often as with a man that is deadly wounded, who riseth up to strike his enemy, and thinks to run him through, but sinks down again, *medio conatu*, when his sword is at his enemy's breast, through a deficiency of spirits. Or as a man in a palsy, or the gout, who thinks he is able to walk till he comes to try, and then he finds a weakness which makes him fall back again. Thus, even when the whole forces of lusts are mustered up, yet the weapons fall out of their hands. Humours, in a healthful constitution, may stir and boake* in the stomach, when yet they come not up, nor prevail unto vomiting. In that place aforementioned, Gal. v., the Apostle seems not to deny but that in the most regenerate lustings may arise; for 'the flesh,' says he, 'lusteth against the spirit,' ver. 17; but yet, as for outward acts, he tells them, ver. 16, 'that if ye walk in the spirit,'—that is, in the prevalency of the spirit, keeping up a holy frame of heart above the flesh,—that then 'ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh:' for that frame of heart so kept up will hinder the outward fulfilling of the lust, which is never done till flesh and corruption is actually raised above the spirit, and gets more voices to carry it; till the spirit be under-hatches and the flesh above, and so steers the helm. Otherwise the lusting of the spirit against the flesh will hinder the outward doing and fulfilling of a lust.

For the reason he gives, ver. 17, 'so as you cannot do what you would,'

* Retch.—Ed.

implies, that not only lustings, which arise without consent, may be in such a man, but further, much of the will may be won to consent to them, to like them ; when yet there is not strength enough to carry it on to the outward act, 'you cannot do what you would.' And what those works of the flesh are, which are manifest works of the flesh, and which Christians, whilst they walk in the spirit, fulfil not, he mentions and reckons up in the following words. And this is the more ordinary frame of a Christian's heart ; for, ver. 24, says he, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the affections and lusts,' that is, so far as not to fulfil them.

Caution 3.—He may more easily fall into a gross sin of another kind than into the same after special repentance for it, and peace spoken in the pardon of it. Because true repentance especially fortifies the heart against that sin which a man hath most repented him of ; and sincerity lies more in watching over that sin than any other ; so, says David, Ps. xviii., 'I was upright, and kept myself from mine iniquity,' that especial sin which was eminently his sin. A man's arm that hath been broke will, if well set, rather break in some other place than where it was broke at first. Hence sometimes it falls out that that which was a godly man's bosom-sin before conversion continues not to be so after ; but another steps up in the room of it, by reason that he then endeavoureth to wash out that great stain most, and spendeth the most of the fuller's soap to purge himself from it, and so becomes ever after most watchful over it, and sets in this, his weakest place, the strongest garrison, and a watch, to prevent the enemy. And as an act of some presumptuous sin, though it inclines the heart more to all sin than before, yet especially to commit that kind of sin again rather than any other ; so, on the contrary, is it in a sound and solemn repentance for some especial sin, and in the endeavouring to mortify some especial member of the body of sin, (to mortify which, not only in the bulk and general, but also particularly and apart in the several members of it, the Holy Ghost exhorts. Col. iii. 5,) though thereby the whole habit of the body of sin is purged and weakened, yet that particular sin which we aim especially to have mortified, is, through God's blessing, more subdued than any other. We see idolatry was the sin which the people of Israel relapsed into again and again ; yet when they were once thoroughly humbled by the captivity for it, they never returned to it, of all sins else, not to this day : so as it may be said, as was foretold haply in another case, Ezek. xvi. 43, 'Thou shalt not commit this lewdness, of all thy abominations.' Jonah, though he would haply never run away from God again after his jail delivery out of the whale's belly, yet, immediately after peace spoken to his heart, he falls into a sin of another kind, into a passion of extreme anger and peevishness, and quarrelling against God.

And the reason of this especial tenderness to fall into the same sin is, because the conscience looks upon a relapse into that sin to be more heinous than into any other sin of another kind, because of that aggravation of it which thereby would stain and dye it ; and although a sin of another kind shews the variety of corruption more, yet this is more against the power and work of repentance itself, which was particularly exercised about that sin ; and also breaks and dissolveth all bands of a man's vows, covenants, prayers, &c., made against it in particular, and so is made more grievous. And this we may see in Ezra's humbling himself for that great sin of the people, in joining themselves in marriage with the people of the land, when he did set himself to humble himself for them, together with those 'that feared God,' chap. ix. 4. What a hideous apprehension of the heinousness of that sin, if

they should again fall into it, did that day's repentance raise his heart up unto? as appears, ver. 14, 'Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with them, wouldest thou not destroy us till thou hadst consumed us, and till there was no escaping?' Into which sin yet the people did again fall, after they had repented of it with a solemn confession and promise of amendment, which is recorded chap. x. 11, 12, &c.; yet they returned to it again the second time, as we find in Malachi, who lived the last of the prophets, and after this prayer of Ezra. For, chap. ii. 11, the prophet says, 'An abomination is committed in Jerusalem, for Judah hath married the daughter of a strange god;' and then follows the aggravation, ver. 13, 'This ye have done again,'—that is, the second time, and in that respect are challenged to deal treacherously, and that also in respect they had repented of it the first time,—'covering the altar with tears, with weeping, and with crying out,' as Malachi there speaks, so as 'God regardeth not your offerings any more.' And therefore, also, Ps. lxxviii. 40, 'How oft did they,' saith he, as aggravating their sins, by murmuring 'provoke the Lord?' and, Num. xiv. 22, God reckons up and mentions the times of their sinning, how often they had thus sinned, as an aggravation of them; 'they have tempted me these ten times.'

Caution 4.—He may fall into the same sin again and again, until he hath recovered himself and his peace fully by a thorough repentance, but yet seldom after. Lot committed incest two nights together; but the orifice of his lust was not yet stopped by repentance, the wound was not closed, and so bled again afresh; but when it is healed once, and the heart made perfect with God, and divorced from that sin, and entered into communion with God again, then though it may fall out, yet a man more hardly returns. A woman that is gone from her husband may play the whore a long while with him she ran away withal, till her husband fetches her again: but to run often away, after receiving again, is intolerable. That is not so ordinary in God's child.

Caution 5.—Though we can hardly set limits to say when, or when not, this shall fall out from the degrees of men's repentings,—as that if they have such or such a degree of repentance, then they fall no more,—yet we may further consider a difference of their returnings to God and repentings, and of God's speaking peace:—

(1.) Of their repentings. Some are more imperfect, and but, as it were, thawings of the mind a little, by means of a little sunshine of God's love: some are more thorough and deep, that recover a man, and put him into a sound and healthful estate. As, for example, a man in an ague hath well days, yet his fits return, and it may be they leave him for a month or so, and yet they take him again, as at spring and autumn; which is because all this while his body is not thoroughly recovered to a state of health: so is it with a man's heart, in respect of his lusts; though he may have many well days, wherein he may eat his meat, and receive sweetness in the word and ordinances, yet at times his distempers and aguish fits return, he being aguish still. But in the end, after the peace of God hath more thoroughly established his heart, he attains to some settled, constant victory over it; and when it doth not prevail to victory, such aguish fits end usually in consumptions, in which long agues often end. As in temporaries, in whom, sin overcoming God's striving with them, it eats all good beginnings out; but if they belong to God, then usually that aguish distemper is, in the end, by a more thorough repentance, so healed as that they attain to more victory and security against it than any other sin: that as in those other kind of

tentations, it often falls out that that which a man doubted of most he comes in the end to be most assured of, and to doubt no more ; so also here a man becomes most freed from that sin he was long exercised with of all others. So also—

(2.) For God's dealings with his, there is much difference therein to be found. There are some kinds of speaking peace by God, and meltings of the heart of his people, which yet are not of that force as to overcome, but wherein God doth but, as it were, strive with them ; which strivings do ever and anon work their hearts to a repentance, and that true and serious ; which yet is not so deep and thorough, nor so healing the heart at the bottom, as it should. For God sometimes useth more imperfect kind of strivings, even with his own children, about some particular sin they are to leave, which do not so fully at first prevail and overcome in them ; which God doth, to let them see the running issue of their natures, how grace would run out at it, (as the Apostle speaks, Heb. ii. 1,) and overcome grace in them, if he should let it alone : and so lets out upon his child, after many years, some lust which had been long down, which puts him to it exceedingly, so that he is in hazard to be undone, and is put into fears of it ; and yet God visiteth his spirit by fits, and, *per intervalla*, at times strives with him. And though he falls, yet he puts under his hand, and gives him well days, and some comfortable visitations ; yet such as are not deep enough to work him fully off from it. For as God strives with wicked men, so he sometimes strives with his own also ; which may seem to be the true meaning of that speech, Gen. vi., where, having mentioned the sin of his own children, ver. 2, that 'the sons of God took to them wives of that wicked seed of Cain,' he says, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that *he also* is but flesh.' He means not this of all mankind, for he says, *he also* is but flesh. Now, with what other creatures doth he join them in this comparison but with others of the sons of men ? So as the meaning is, I see my children, that they also are corrupt and degenerate, as well as the rest of mankind, and my Spirit hath striven with them. In which striving God lets them see how, if he did not in the end shew forth his free love to the full, in the rescuing of them and healing their backsliding, they would be undone. So as, in the end, through his grace, which is sufficient, they obtain the greatest conquest over that lust of any other ; when the heart is once thoroughly awakened, and settled in a thorough peace. And as those doubts they were most troubled with once—which though they had at times some light against, yet by fits did still arise—are yet in the end so overcome as they arise no more, but they enjoy the greatest freedom from them ; so is it often herein. And these strivings to not overcoming I resemble to the thawings of the ice in a great frost, as when in the daytime the sun shines, and in the sunshine it thaweth a little, but yet so as at night, or in the shade, it freezeth ; when sometimes also the weather begins to change for a night, and yet falls a-freezing again : so here there is not such a thorough shedding abroad the love of God in the heart as should make a thorough general thaw, to the purpose, as we say ; and so, when the heat of that is withdrawn, it freezeth again ; but in the end there comes a more thorough and general thaw and change, that carries all away, melts the heart, and so alters the temper and constitution of the weather, as I may so speak, as it freezeth no more. And such a thawing of his heart had David when Nathan came to him, and not before ; though it may be he had those lesser relentings often before.

But let those that are in such a case take heed they be not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin ; and of all the times that pass over you in

your lives, these are the most climacterial and critical, and most dangerous. For God will not always strive, but if thou beest his child, if such thawings will not do it, he will use some great afflictions, in the end to divorce the heart and thy sin; his love will one way or other overcome thee, and in the end prevail. As when Israel went on stubbornly in the way of his heart, says God, 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him and guide him,' Isa. lvii. 18; and the Lord may so heal thee as those lusts, of all other, shall not in that gross manner break forth any more. And in those times when God dealeth thus with him, a man will after say, that in such passages of his life he had more free love spent on him than in all his lifetime, before or after; and when he is freed and healed, he will be more thankful and fearful than ever before, or than otherwise he would have been, and so get ground by his stumblings. If any of you, being now in such a conflict as this, in such a vicissitude and chance of war, if yet thou findest a constant fight against thy sin, and that those breakings and meltings of thy heart by God do win ground of it, and that the comforts and hope which at times are vouchsafed do strengthen 'and stablish thy heart in well-doing,' as 2 Thess. ii. 17, and make thee more fearful every time thou risest than ever, so as to look upon another fit, if it should come, (which, knowing the deceitfulness of the heart, thou fearest,) as the fit of some great sickness, lest it should return again; esteeming it as the greatest cross that can befall thee, which thou wouldest buy off with thy blood; and bleedest most of all to think that thou hast so unconstant a heart, which as it hath abused God's love formerly, so thou fearest will do so again;—if thus thou go on to fight it out, the love of God will in the end overcome in thee. But if thou findest that those encouragements from God do, through thy corruption, (which turns God's grace into wantonness,) nourish thy lusts, and make thee less fearful against the next time, and thy heart harder and secure, and to slight sin more, because thou hast been so oft visited from on high, and pardoned; thy case is dangerous, and may prove desperate.

Caution 6.—Though he may return, yet not presently: Luke v. 39, 'He that hath tasted old wine, doth not straightway drink and desire new'—not whilst the love of God, and the taste and relish of it, is fresh in his mouth. When the impression is worn out indeed, and begins to be forgotten, then haply he may return.

Use.—To conclude with the use of this point: If it be folly to run into the same sin, though we repent of it afterwards, then what folly is it in them that utterly fall away, and after they have been enlightened, and tasted of the good word of God, then fall again to the pleasures of sin, and never repent of them? as many do that come and try a little what is in religion and the ways of God, and then return again to their vomits, and never return to piety again. 'Foolish souls, who hath bewitched you? Are ye so foolish that, having begun in the Spirit, ye end in the flesh?' as Gal. iii. 3. Folly indeed, to spend the harvest of your time in seeking God, and then to leave him when you are about to take leave of the pleasures of sin! Alas, poor souls! whither will ye go? Do you ever think to have such a God again? 'Thou hast the words of eternal life,' said the disciples to Christ; and as Saul said to his servants, to keep them from falling away unto David, 'Can the son of Jesse give you vineyards, and make you captains of thousands?' 1 Sam. xxii. 7: so, Can the world give you that peace that I can give you? (may Christ say to you :) yea, and heaven besides hereafter? Is the devil, with all the wages of sin you post after, able to make you amends? You thereby dishonour God in returning to sin, and bring an evil report

upon the good land, and discredit your master in changing your service ; but withal you befool yourselves most, 'you return to folly.' For even that which you think to gain the world's good word and opinion by, even that you lose ; for though they make a spoil of you, and triumph in such, and glory in their flesh a while, yet they never inwardly think well of such a one, nor truly love him. A backslider is like lukewarm water, having been once heated, which good men spue out, and evil men regard not ; for what use can, indeed, be made of it? 'Like salt that hath lost its savour, it is good for nothing but the dunghill.' Like one that hath been married, but lives divorced, she is undone for her marriage ever after. Such is the condition of those that fall away. You who have but turned unto folly, and are not grown to a despising and despiting God's ways, 'Return, O Shulamite, return.' And you that have peace and communion with God, take heed you do not lose him : you will never have such a God again.

THE TRIAL OF A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH

IN

MORTIFICATION, OR PURGING OUT CORRUPTION;

AND

VIVIFICATION, OR BRINGING FORTH MORE FRUIT:

A T R E A T I S E

HANDLING THIS CASE,

‘HOW TO DISCERN OUR GROWTH IN GRACE:’ AFFORDING SOME
HELPS RIGHTLY TO JUDGE THEREOF,

BY

RESOLVING SOME TENTATIONS, CLEARING SOME MISTAKES, ANSWERING
SOME QUESTIONS, ABOUT SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

TOGETHER WITH

SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE PARABLE OF THE VINE, JOHN XV. 1, 2

‘LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES FROM ALL FILTHINESS OF FLESH AND SPIRIT, PERFECTING
HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD.’—2 COR. vii. 1.

TO THE READER.

THIS following treatise, *The Trial of a Christian's Growth*, was formerly printed during the time of my absence out of my native country, and by reason thereof had many imperfections and incongruities both in style and matter ; which, now being again (through the good hand of God upon me) returned, I have endeavoured to amend : so as, partly through some alteration in the method and frame of it, partly by cutting off some redundancies, I have reduced it to some better shape, and nearer proportion to its fellows.

The scope and way of handling this subject, *growth*, is not doctrinal so much, nor yet hortatory, as either persuading to, or discoursing of a Christian's growth in general, concerning which much hath been already written by others ; but the more proper aim of this is to resolve *a case of conscience*, (like as those two other preceding tractates of mine have done,) namely this, *How to discern our growth*, and to answer more usual temptations about it. And so these three treatises being of like sort and kind, and properly belonging to that part of theology which we call *case-divinity*, I have therefore, in this new edition of the whole, ordered to put them together, (which is all the alteration I have made,) although in their first and single publishing some other came between.

If in the performance this falls short of many more raised experiments of growth which are found in such as the apostle John calls fathers, elderly Christians, who with Enoch have walked long with God ; yet I have hoped that you that are *young men*, (as he also styles the middle sort of Christians,) that you may find many things helpful to your right understanding and judging of your growth, and which may free you from many mistakes in misjudging thereof, and so consequently of many tentations about it, which that age of believers are more peculiarly incident unto. I dare not say, 'I write these things to you, fathers ;' I never presumed it in my thoughts. I myself wrote and preached it when I was but young in years, and for the time far younger in grace and experience. And I dare not (if the great Apostle, 2 Cor. x. 14, would not) stretch myself beyond that measure which God hath distributed

to me : a measure which yet may reach you that are young men, though more eminent grown Christians are gone far beyond the line of it.

The God of grace and peace grant us and all his children spirits endeavouring 'to speak the truth in love' in these dividing times, 'that we may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ,' Eph. iv. 15.

THO. GOODWIN.

April 26, 1643.

THE TRIAL OF A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH.

INTRODUCTION.

SOME OBSERVATIONS PREMISED UPON THIS PARABLE OF THE VINE :

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.—JOHN XV. 1, 2.

The sum and division of the words, and subject of this discourse.

A FAIR and fruitful parable this is, spread forth into many branches, in which, under the pleasant shadow of a *vine*, (upon occasion they had but newly been real partakers of his blood in the fruit of the vine,) Christ elegantly sets forth himself in his relation to his visible church, and the estate of his apostles, and in them of all visible professors to the end of the world ; shewing withal, under that similitude, what his Father meant to do with Judas, now gone out to betray him, as with all other unfruitful branches like unto him ; even ‘cut them off, and throw them into the fire :’ but, on the contrary, encouraging them, and all other fruitful branches, that they should still continue to abide in him, with promise that they should yet ‘bring forth more fruit.’

The parable hath three parts :—

1. A *vine* here is, of all the fairest, ver. 1.
2. A *husbandman*, of all the carefulest.
3. The end of planting this vine, *fruitfulness*.

1. First, this *vine*, as all vines else, hath two sorts of branches :—

- (1.) Such as, though green, bring forth no true fruit, nought but leaves.
- (2.) Such as bring forth fruit, ver. 2.

2. The *husbandman* hath answerably offices of two sorts towards them both : *αἵρειν, καταἵρειν*, which is a witty paranomasia, *amputare et putare*, to lop and cut off. First, clean to cut off those that are utterly unfruitful, which thereupon are ‘cast out, do wither, and are gathered and cast into the fire ;’ so ver. 2, 6. And thus now he meant to deal with Judas. But, secondly, to purge and but lop off the luxuriancies and too much runnings out of the fruitful branches into springs, which they are subject to.

3. Thirdly, his end in all is, that fruit, and more fruit, might be brought forth. This is his end of planting this vine, this is the end of purging these

branches of it, which he being frustrated of in those other is the cause why he takes them clean away.

And to exhort these unto fruitfulness was one main end of Christ's using this parable, and unto this tends all in the following verses, either as *means* or *motives* unto fruitfulness.

First, as *means*—

(1.) He assures them of their being in the state of grace, ver. 3. Assurance is a means of fruitfulness.

(2.) He speaks of purging them by his word in the same verse, 'Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you.' This is a means he further useth.

(3.) He inculcates into them the sense of their own inability 'to do any thing without him,' ver. 5.

(4.) Therefore to 'abide in him,' and suck from him, ver. 5.

(5.) And to let his 'word abide in them,' by which himself 'shall also abide in them,' and by which they may still be purged, and so be fruitful.

The *motives* are—

(1.) If not, they know their doom; to the fire with them, ver. 6.

(2.) If they do, their prayers shall be granted, ver. 7.

(3.) Hereby his Father is glorified, ver. 8.

(4.) They shall shew themselves his disciples, ver. 8.

(5.) They shall continue in his love, who loves them as dearly as his Father doth him, ver. 9, 10.

And so you have the sum of all this parable.

The principal subject I aim at in this scripture is this main case of conscience, which useth to be the exercise and inquisition of many good souls, *How a Christian may discern his growth, both in purging out corruptions and increase of grace, and the fruits of it.*

Therefore whatever other spreading fruitful observations grow upon this stock, and this vine affords many, we will but shortly, and as men in haste, view and take notice of, but as in our way to that other which I principally intend, and only so far stay upon the observation of them as the bare opening this similitude here used doth give sap and vigour to them.

First observation—How Christ is a vine, and only the true vine.

First, Christ, he is a *vine*. To explain this:—*First*, Adam indeed was a vine, planted in paradise, to bear all mankind upon, but he turned 'a wild one;' he proved not the true vine. God planted him (to allude to that, Jer. ii. 21) 'a noble vine, a holy and right seed,' but he degenerated, and so have all engrafted on him, and so bring forth nothing but 'grapes of Sodom,' as Isaiah speaks.

But, *secondly*, God the Father having many branches of chosen ones, that grew by nature on this cursed stock of Adam, whom yet, as ver. 16, 'he had ordained to bring forth fruit,'—that is, to spring and spread forth in the earth in all ages, and then to be transplanted unto heaven, the paradise appointed for them, the earth being but the nursery of them for a while,—hence therefore he did appoint his own Son to be a new root, as into whom he meant to transplant them, and ordained him to be that bulk, and body, and chief branch, which they all should grow out of, who is therefore called 'the Root of David,' &c., Rev. xxii. 16, and that 'righteous Branch,' Jer. xxiii. 5.

Whom, therefore, *thirdly*, he planted as a root here on earth with us, and clothed with a human nature, a weak and mean bark and body, and a rind and outside such as ours is, that so both root and branches might be of the

same nature, and homogeneal. Which nature of ours in him he likewise 'filled with his Spirit,' as with juice and sap, 'without all measure,' that so he might fructify and grow into all those branches appointed to be in him, by communicating the same Spirit to them.

And, *fourthly*, although he was of himself the fairest cedar that ever the earth bare, yet in relation to those multitudes of branches he was to bear, chooseth to be a vine, which is of all trees the lowest, the weakest, and of the meanest bark and outside of any other; only, because of all others it is the plentifullest of branches, and runs out and spreads its bulk in branches, and those, of all branches else of any other trees, the fruitfulest, it is therefore called 'the fruitful vine,' Ps. cxxviii. 3. And for that reason only doth he single out this comparison as suiting with his scope, shewing therein his love; that as he condescended to the lowest condition for our salvation, so to the meanest resemblances for our instruction, yet so as withal he tells us that no vine nor all the vines on earth were worthy herein to be compared, nor to be so much as resemblances of him.

For he, and he alone, is *the true vine*; that is the second observation.

For take those choicest excellencies in a vine, for which the comparison here is made, as, more particularly, that of fruitfulness either in boughs or fruit, and it is but a shadow of that which is in him. As God only is *I am that I am*, and all things else have but the shadow of being, so Christ alone hath only all the excellencies in him in the true real nature of all things to which he is compared. So in like manner he is said to be 'bread indeed,' John vi. 55, and, ver. 32, 'the true bread from heaven.' Manna, and all other meat, and all that sweetness which is in meat, is and was but a shadow to that which he affords. He excels and exceeds all things he is compared to in what they have, and they are but shadows to him, Heb. x. 1.

First, therefore, never any vine so fruitful. 'All our fruit is found in him,' Hos. xii. 8. 'If you abide in me, you shall bring forth much fruit.' He hath juice to supply you with every grace, to 'fill you with all the fruits of righteousness;' which if the branches want, it is for want of faith in themselves to draw from him, not want of sap in him.

Secondly, This he is at all times, hath been in all ages, thus flourishing; this root never withers, is never dry or empty of sap; it is never winter with Christ. 'Every branch,' saith the 2d verse,—that is, every one that hath borne fruit in any age,—beareth all its fruit 'in him;' branches in him fear no drought, Jer. xvii. 8.

Thirdly, For largeness of spreading, no such vine as this. He, as the Psalmist says, Ps. lxxx. 11, 12, 'sends out his boughs unto the sea, and his branches to the rivers;' all the earth is, or hath been, or shall be, filled with them.

Use—Is to persuade us to take Christ alone, and make him our all in all, because in him all excellencies are supereminently found. All creatures are not enough to serve for comparisons to set him forth, and when they do in part, for some particular thing that is the excellentest in them, yet therein they are but shadows, Heb. x. 1. He only is the truth, he is 'the true light,' John i. 9. The Baptist, Moses, and all lights else were but as twilight, but a shadow. So he is 'the true bread,' 'the true vine;' he hath really the sweetness, the comfort, the excellencies of them all. The like may be said of all those relations he hath taken on him; so he only is a true father and husband, &c., and the love and sweetness in all other fathers and husbands are but a shadow to what is in him.

Second observation—How the Father is the husbandman.

As Christ is thus a vine, so his Father is the *husbandman*, and as strange a husbandman as Christ a vine. For—

First, He is the very root of the vine itself, which no husbandman is to any vine; therefore he that is the vine calls the husbandman his Father, 'My Father is the husbandman.' This vine springs out of his bosom by eternal generation, for this is the derivation of our offspring, chap. xiv. 20, 'I am in my Father, and you in me.' And, chap. v. 26, 'The Father, he hath life' original 'in himself, and gives it to the Son,' and the Son to us, and thence spring living fruits, the fruits of righteousness.

Secondly, He is the engrafter and planter of all the branches into this vine. Isa. lx. 21, he calls them 'his righteous people, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands.' Other husbandmen do but expect what branches their vines will of themselves bring forth, but God appoints who, and how many shall be the branches, and gives them unto, and engrafts them into his Son.

Thirdly, He appoints what fruit and what store of fruit these branches shall bring forth, and accordingly gives the increase, which other husbandmen cannot do: 'Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God only gives the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 6. Though Christ merited, yet the Father decreed every man's measure of fruitfulness.

Fourthly, He is the most diligent husbandman that ever was, for he knows, and daily views, and takes notice of every branch, and of all their fruit; for, says the text, 'Every branch that brings not forth fruit, he takes away,' &c., therefore knows who beareth fruit, and who doth not. He knows their persons, who are his, and who are not, 2 Tim. ii. 19; not so much as one man could come in 'without a wedding garment,' but he spies him out.

Fifthly, The most careful he is daily to purge his vine; so says the 2d verse. And of all possessions, saith Cato, *nulla possessio majorem operam requirit*; vineyards need as much care, and more, than any other. The corn, when it is sown, comes up, and grows alone, and ripeneth, and comes to perfection, the husbandman sleeping and waking, he knows not how, saith Christ; but vines must be dressed, supported, sheltered, pruned, well-nigh every day.

And of all trees God hath most care of his vines, and regards them more than all the rest in the world.

Use 1—Is to honour the Father in all the works tending to our salvation, as much as we honour the Son. If Christ be the vine, his Father means to be the husbandman; and indeed it may teach us to honour all the three Persons in every work that is saving, for in all they bear a distinct office; the Father hath not only a hand in election, but also in sanctification, concerning which this parable was made. If Christ be the root that affords us sap, whence all fruit buds, the Father is the husbandman that watereth the vine, gives the increase, purgeth the branches, and is the root of that life which Christ affords to us; and then the Spirit also comes in to have a work and influence herein also: for he is the sap, though not here mentioned, yet which is implied, which lies hid in this parable of the vine, and appears in all the fruits that are brought forth, therefore called, Gal. v., 'fruits of the Spirit.' None of the three Persons will be left out in any relation, or in any work, that is for our salvation. That ever three so great Persons should have a joint care of our salvation and sanctification, and we ourselves neglect it!

That they should be so careful, we so negligent and unfruitful ! If they do all so much for us, what should not we endeavour to do for ourselves !

Use 2.—Be careful of your words, thoughts, ways, affections, desires, all which are the fruits of your souls ; for God takes notice of all, he walks in this his garden every day, and spies out how many raw, unripe, indigested performances, as prayers, &c., hang on such or such a branch, what gum of pride, what leaves, what luxuriant sprigs, what are rotten boughs and which are sound, and goes up and down with his pruning-knife in his hand, and cuts and slashes where he sees things amiss ; he turns up all your leaves, sees what fruit is under, and deals with men accordingly.

Use 3.—When the church is in any distress or misery, go to him that is the husbandman ; such is the usual condition of this his vine, spread over the face of the earth. Complain as they, Ps. lxxx. 12, ‘Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so as all they which pass by do pluck her ? the boar out of the wood doth waste it.’ Complain to him that the hogs are in his vineyard, and do much havoc and spoil therein ; and tell him that he is the husbandman who should take care for it. So they go on to pray, ‘Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts : look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted,’ ver. 14, 15.

Third observation—*Two sorts of branches in this vine, fruitful and unfruitful : and the difference between temporary and true believers, as they are laid down in the text.*

We see this vine hath branches of two sorts, fruitful and unfruitful, which is the third thing to be observed.

And herein our Saviour followeth the similitude ; for experience shews the like in vines. And writers of vines observe it, and accordingly distinguish the branches of vines into *pampinarios*, which bring forth nought but leaves, and *fructuarios*, which bring forth fruit.

The unfruitful, they are such as make profession of being in Christ to themselves and others, and receive some greenness from him, but no true fruit. For their profession they are branches ; for their emptiness, unfruitful ones.

Quest.—The only question is, How such as prove unfruitful are said to be branches, and to be in Christ ; ‘Every branch in me,’ &c.

Ans. 1.—Many comparisons there are of Christ, as he stands in various relations to his church ; whereof some serve to express one thing concerning him, some another. That of a vine here presents him only as he was to spread himself into a visible church on earth, in the profession of him ; and so considered, he may have many branches that are unfruitful. That other, of ‘a head over all the family in heaven and earth,’ imports his relation only to that invisible company of his church mystical, which together make up that general assembly spoken of in Heb. xii., which are his fulness, Eph. i. 23. And agreeable to this meaning—in comparing himself to a vine, in this large and common relation of a root to both sorts of professors, true and false—is that other expression also, whereby he sets forth his Father’s office, when he calls him, not ἀμπίλου γός, a vine-dresser, or a tiller of a vineyard, in a strict sense, as Luke xiii. 7, but γιωγός, as it were at large, the husbandman. As thereby denoting out, not simply and alone that peculiar care that he hath to true believers only, that are branches of this vine, though including it, but withal importing that common care and providence which he bears to others of his creatures ; and this because some of these branches of this

vine are to him but as others out of the church, and of no more reckoning with him. The Father's relation herein answering to, and in a proportion running parallel along with, that which Christ bears towards them: those that Christ is head unto, those he is a father unto; those whom Christ is but as a vine unto, he is but $\gamma\epsilon\omega\gamma\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, a husbandman unto, whose office is seen as well in cutting off such branches, as in pruning and dressing of those other.

Ans. 2.—These unfruitful ones are not, in Christ's account, reckoned as true branches here; for, in the 5th verse, he calls those disciples of his that were there and then present with him, (when now Judas was gone forth before, as appears chap. xiii. 30,) them only, the branches; and therefore repeats it there again, 'I am the vine,' with this addition, 'ye are the branches.' Implying hereby, that as he is the true vine, so that these only were the true branches. The other he calls but $\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ $\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\mu\alpha$, as a branch, ver. 6, 'He is cast forth as a branch,' giving them the name of branches, thereby the better to express his Father's dealing with such, that as they that are dressers of a vineyard use to do with such branches, so my Father with them; but they themselves are but *tanquams, quasi palmities, as branches*—not really and in truth such.

Ans. 3.—That expression which seems most to make for it is that in the 2d verse, when he says, 'Every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit;' but those words *in me* may as well, yea rather, be understood to have reference to 'their not bringing forth fruit *in him*,' than to their being properly branches *in him*: so as the meaning should be, they are 'branches that bring not forth fruit in me.' Though they do some good, yet it is not fruit; if so, not in me, though from me, and from my assistance. And so his meaning is not so much to declare that they are branches in him, as that they bring not forth fruit in him, which indeed is one of the characteristical differences between true and unsound branches, and one main scope of the parable; and this the Syriac translation makes for also, and confirms it: *Omnem palmitem qui in me non fert fructum*,—'Every branch which in me bringeth not forth fruit.' And there is this reason that this should be his meaning, that he never reckoned them at all true branches; because that is the difference God puts between these and those other, that 'those that bring forth fruit his Father purgeth, that they may bring forth more fruit.' He lets them not run so far out into sin as to become altogether unfruitful; but these 'he takes away:' so as true branches were never unfruitful.

Use.—The use is to stir up all that profess themselves to be in Christ to examine whether they be true genuine branches of this true vine or no. Here in this kingdom, Christ is spread forth into a fair and pleasant vine in show, as this earth affords. But if we ministers were able, with this husbandman here, to turn up the leaves of formal profession, and look with his eyes, we should discern that there are but a few true branches indeed to be found in flourishing congregations, as Isaiah foretold there should be in Israel: chap. xvii. 6, 'Like the gleanings, two or three in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches.'

Now for a general help to discern whether you be true branches, consider, that union with Christ is it that makes men branches; that is, men are accounted branches of Christ in regard of some union with him: and such as their union is, such also is their communion with him, and accordingly such branches are they, and such their fruit.

1. Some, and indeed the most, are united to him but by the external tie of the outward ordinances, such as their obligation made in baptism; and

are knit to him thereby, no otherwise than many grafts are, that do not take or thrive in their stocks, only stand there as bound about by a thread. And suitable is their communion with him, even wholly external ; they continuing to partake of the outward ordinances, but without any sap or inward influence derived, without any inward work of the Spirit, or stirring of affection. And answerable also is their fruit, when no other are found on them but such as you shall find grow in the waste of the wilderness among heathens, which ingenuity, and modesty, and natural honesty, and natural conscience do bring forth ; but not any such as an inward sap from Christ useth to produce. Civil men are not true branches ; for look on Christ, the root, and see what fruits abounded in him most, as fruits of holiness did ; and therefore if such were true branches, the same would abound in them likewise, for every tree brings forth according to its kind.

2. You have some, they living in the church, Christ begins to shoot some sap of his Spirit into their hearts, quickening them with many good motions, and stirring up some juiciness of affections in the administration of the word and sacraments, which causes them to bud forth into good inward purposes and outward good beginnings ; but this being not the communication of the Spirit, as sanctifying and changing the branch into the same nature with the root, therefore it comes to pass they are still nipped in the bud, as the stony ground was, and the sap stricken in again, like rath ripe fruit, which looking forth upon a February sun, are nipped again with an April frost. Many, when young, and their affections are green and tender, are wrought upon, and bud, but the scoffs of men nip them, and their lusts draw the sap another way, as hopes of preferment, and the pleasures of sin, and so these buds wither and fall off, and the Spirit withdraws himself wholly in the root again. Again—

3. Some there are, as the thorny ground, in whom this inward sap communicated to them, though not spiritually changing and renewing them, yet being communicated in a further degree, abides in them longer, shoots up farther, and these prove exceeding green branches, and are owned for true, even by the people of God themselves, as Judas was by the apostles, and therefore are outwardly like unto them ; for how else are they said to 'be cast out?' ver. 16, who therefore had once some fruit to commend them, for which they were accounted of by the people of God, and received amongst them, 'who judge of trees by the fruit.' Neither are their fruits merely outward, like Solomon's 'apples of gold, in pictures of silver,' merely painted ; but they have a sap that puts a greenness into what they do, and by reason of which they bear and bring forth ; for how else are they said 'to wither' also? ver. 6, which is a decay of inward moisture and outward greenness. And these also have some kind of union with Christ as with a *Lord*, 2 Pet. ii. 1, he 'ascending to bestow gifts, even upon the rebellious also,' Ps. lxxviii. 18, so far to enable them to do him some service in his vineyard. They are not united unto Christ as unto an *Head* ; neither is it 'the spirit of adoption' which they do receive from him. And such a branch was Judas, who was not only owned by the disciples, who knew him not to be false, but who surely at the first had inward sap of gifts derived from Christ, to fit him for the ministry, he being sent out as an apostle to preach ; whom therefore Christ here aimed at in this place.

Now for a more particular differencing of these branches and their fruits, it is not my scope to engraft a large commonplace head of all the differences between temporaries and true believers upon this stock ; this root is not big enough to bear them, those differences being many. Only I will explain

those differences which the text affords, because they are in our way, and will further open the words.

Difference 1.—That which they do bring forth is not true fruit; the Holy Ghost vouchsafeth it not that name; they are said here not to bring forth fruit. That speech in Hos. x. 1 will give clear light to understand this, with the ground of it also; Israel is there called 'an empty vine, which brings forth fruit to herself.' It implies a seeming contradiction that it should be called an empty vine, and yet withal to bring forth any fruit. And these bring forth, not leaves, good words only, but good works, good actions, and those green; and therefore, Jude 12, their fruit is said to wither, as themselves are said to wither here, ver. 6. And as there Israel is said to be an empty vine, though it hath fruit, so here these are said 'not to bring forth fruit' at all. Now the meaning of both is one and the same; for a thing is said to be empty when it wants that which is proper to it, and ought to be in it, as wells are called empty when they are not full of water, they are full of air: for *non datur vacuum*. So they are called an empty vine, and these branches to have no fruit, because not such as ought to grow upon them, such as is proper to the root they seem to grow upon. Therefore, in Heb. vi. 7, that epithet is added, '*meet herbs,*' or fruit,—that is, such as should grow there. So Luke iii. 8, they are to 'bring forth fruit *worthy* amendment of life,' or else they were to be cut down,—that is, such as became true repentants, as were answerable, suitable thereunto: as we say a man carries himself worthy of his place, when answerably to what is required of him in it. That place forecited out of Hosea further acquaints us with the true ground why their fruits, though green, which, chap. vi. 4, is called goodness also, yet were not to be accounted meet fruit, and so not fruit at all; even because of this, that it brought forth all its fruit, whether good or bad, to itself,—that is, those ends that did draw up the sap, and did put it forth in fruit, were drawn but from themselves, they bring them not forth principally to God, and for him. All their prayers, all their affections in holy duties, if they examine the reason of them all, the ends that run in them all, and whence all the motives that do actuate all they do in these, they will find they are taken from themselves. And though the assistance wherewith they are enabled to do what they do is more than their own, yet their ends are no higher than themselves, and so they employ but that assistance God gives them wholly for themselves. Now the end for which a true branch brings forth fruit is, that God might be glorified. Thus, Rom. vii. 4, when 'married to Christ,' they are said to 'bring forth fruit to God;' which is spoken in opposition to bringing forth fruit to a man's self. Thus also Christ here useth this as the great and main motive to fruitfulness in ver. 8, 'Hereby is my Father glorified, that you bring forth much fruit.' Now whom will this move? into whose affections will such an argument draw up sap and quicken them? None but those hearts who do make God's glory their utmost end; and so all true branches do, or else this motive should have been used by Christ in vain unto them. And as this end makes their performances to be fruit, so this being wanting, all that is brought forth deserves not the name of fruit, for it is not fruit worthy, as the Baptist says, not meet fruit for the dresser to receive, as was noted out of the Hebrews, not such as ought to grow on that tree. They should be 'trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified,' Isa. lxi. 3. Again, not fruit meet or suitable for the root it seems to grow upon,—that is, such as Christ did bring forth, for he did all that his Father might be glorified; and therefore, says he, exhorting them to fruitfulness, ver. 8 of

this chapter, 'If you do likewise, ye shall be my disciples.' Again, otherwise it is not such as is meet for the husbandman's taste and relish, it being equal that 'he that planteth a vineyard should eat of the fruit of it,' 1 Cor. ix. 7. And in fruit, you know, above all we regard the taste, and esteem the relish of it. Eve first considered the 'fruit was good for food,' then 'pleasant to the eye,' Gen. iii. It is not the sap that is in fruit only makes it acceptable; crabs are as full of sap as apples. Nor is it the greenness, or colour, or bigness, but the relish that is the chiefest excellency in it, though those other, when joined with a good relish, do make it more desirable. So though thy performances be full of life and affection, and green, and long, and many, yet if they relish and taste of none but self-ends, God regards them not, they are not *ad gustum suum*; it is the end that gives the relish, and makes them fruits, and acceptable to God.

Difference 2.—The second difference this text holds forth is, that they bring not forth their fruit in Christ; for so the Syriac translation reads it, as making the sense to be that 'they bring not forth fruit in me:' and so this particle *in me* referreth not so much to their being branches in him as to not bearing their fruit in him. Which indeed seems to have been Christ's meaning, for his scope in this parable is to shew how that he is the root of sanctification; and how not the habitual power only, but every act of grace, and the performance, comes from him: 'Without me ye can do nothing,' ver. 5. And thereupon he exhorts his disciples to fetch all from him, and to 'abide in him;' and therefore, also, when he speaks of these unfruitful branches at ver. 6, that which here he calls 'bearing not fruit in me,' he expresses there by 'not abiding in me,' as the cause of their not bringing forth in him. Yea, and the principal scope of that phrase, 'Abide in me,' is, (as evidently appears by ver. 4, 5,) to depend upon him for bringing forth of fruit, and to fetch strength from him by faith. There is therefore this essential defect in the work that is upon such, that they do not do all in that dependence upon Christ, such a dependence as a branch hath upon the root in bringing forth its fruit. For, my brethren, this you must know, that as it is essential to evangelical sanctification to do all for another, as your end, namely, to God; so to do all in the strength of another as your sole assistant, namely, Christ, who works all in you, and 'through whose strength,' saith Paul, 'I am able to do all things,' and nothing without it. 'The life we lead is by faith,' and it is 'not I, but Christ who lives in me.' Therefore we find both these joined, Phil. i. 11, 'The fruits of righteousness by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.' The latter, *to the glory of God*, is mentioned as the final cause; the other, *by Jesus Christ*, as the efficient cause. Both these are necessary unto true sanctification. For as we are to honour the husbandman by making him our end, so also the root, by doing all in him and from him. Now temporary believers, as they do all principally for themselves, so also all as from themselves; and as they do not make God their end, so nor Christ their root. And so some expound that phrase in the parable of the stony ground, Luke viii. 13, when it is said they 'have no root,' (though I think he means also inherent habits of grace infused, for it is added, 'no root in themselves,' which Job calls the root of the matter which was in him,) it is because they fetch not their strength to do all they do from Christ by faith, and from their union with him. And the reason is this, because they are never emptied of themselves, which is the root we all do grow upon, either in regard of their own ends or of their own efficiency of working. Whereas we must all be brought to nothing in ourselves, both in regard of self-aims

and also abilities of working; and till our hearts are inwardly taught that lesson, that 'we are not sufficient as of ourselves,' we will not go out of ourselves to do all in Christ; and therefore there was nothing which Christ endeavoured more to engraft upon their hearts than this principle, now at his departure, as it is ver. 4, 5. And indeed it is as hard a thing for nature to live out of itself and fetch all from another, as not to live to itself but to another. We are full of our own strength as well as of our own ends. And although these unfruitful branches they do indeed receive all their strength from Christ, and so all they do in what is good is from him; yet they do not honour Christ in receiving it by doing all as in his strength, and so do not do it as in him. But though they receive all, yet they work with it as if it were their own stock, and so 'glory,' as the apostle says, 'as if they had not received it.' And thus though the sap and liveliness which stirs them is really and all efficiently from Christ, yet they may be said to bring forth fruit in themselves, because both they neither fetch nor receive it by faith, nor act by faith that strength received, as men that were acted by Christ, and as working all in Christ; but they do all as if all proceeded from their own root. Even as the ivy, though it clasping about the oak receives much sap from it, which it digesteth and turneth into itself, yet it brings forth all its berries by virtue of its own root, rather than as in the oak, which yet sustains and supplies it with juice and sap. Whereas a true believer brings forth fruit in Christ, as a branch that is in and of the oak itself, as its own root, and so 'from him all their fruit is found,' Hos. xiv. 8. He fetcheth his assistance from him; whereas the inward assistance of another unsound branch is strengthened and supported by pride, and self-sufficiency of gifts and parts, and not derived by faith, and maintained by confidence in Christ's strength to act all in them. So that, as it is said of the Corinthians, that they 'reigned, but without us,' says Paul; so I may say, temporaries perform duties, and pray, but as without Christ. But all true believers are emptied first of their own strength and ability, and so walk as those who can 'do nothing without Christ,' as those who are not able to love, believe one moment more without him. So Phil. iv. 13, 'I am able to do all things,' but 'through Christ that strengtheneth me.' And this they lay for a principle in their hearts which they walk by, which therefore Christ presseth upon his disciples here, as the main requisite and fundamental principle of evangelical sanctification, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' And therefore such a one is sensible of that cursed self-sufficiency in him, and humbleth himself, checks himself for it, as for as great and foul a sin as any other; and humbleth himself not only for the want of what life and stirring, &c., should have been in the duty fallen short of in performing it, but also for that he sanctified not Christ in the strength he received to do it with. But another doth not so; if he finds strength, and power, and vigour to perform, and quickness in the performance, he looks no farther. That poor man in the gospel, as he acknowledged his want of faith, that he had much unbelief in him, so he goes out to Christ for the supply, 'Lord, help my unbelief,' for he knew that it was he was to be the worker of every degree of faith in him. And again, a true believer being thus sensible of his own inability, doth, when he is anything assisted, attribute all to Christ when he hath done; and honours him as the author of it in himself; confesseth in his heart, between Christ and himself, that it was not he, but Christ that strengthened him. 'It is not I,' says the Apostle, 'but the grace of God in me, though I have laboured more than they all.' But another, though he receives all, yet not being emptied of himself, 'boasteth as if he had not received it.' As the

Pharisee, though he thanked God in words, yet in his heart attributed all to himself. Such a one is the more full and lift up when he hath done, but the true branch more empty and humble. A true believer glories not of himself as in himself, but only as he is 'a man in Christ;' and that as a man in Christ, he did thus or thus: as Paul did, and no otherwise. So, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 'I knew a man in Christ,' &c. 'Of such a man I will glory, but of myself I will not glory.' And yet it was himself he spake of, but yet not in himself as of himself, but as he was in Christ.

Quest.—And if it be asked, Whether in every act a Christian doth thus?—

Ans.—I answer, it is in this as in that other parallel to this, the making God a man's end. Now, as it doth not require that in every action a man should actually think of that his end, whilst yet habitually he makes it his aim;—as a man in his journey doth not think of the place he goes to in every step he takes, yet so habitually hath it in his thoughts as he keeps in the way to it;—parallel to this is it in doing all in Christ: it cannot be supposed that in every act a man hath such a distinct thought of recourse to Christ; but at the beginning and entrance of greater actions, he still hath such actings and exercise of faith; and also often in the progress he reneweth them; and in the conclusion, when he hath performed them, he doth sanctify Christ in his heart, by ascribing the praise of all unto him.

Quest.—If, in the second place, the question be, Whether every true believer doth from his first conversion thus distinctly and knowingly to himself fetch thus all power from Christ, and do all in him?—

Ans. 1.—The answer is, that to all believers this principle of having recourse to Christ for acting their sanctification may haply not presently be so distinctly revealed as it hath been to some. This indeed is common and absolutely necessary to all believers, to constitute and make them such,—namely, that their faith should have recourse to Christ, and to take him for their salvation, in the large and general notion of it, as it enfolds all under it that is to be done to save them; and thus many more ignorant do, when yet they have not learned explicitly in every particular that concerneth their salvation, to have frequently a distinct recourse unto him. It is probable that these very disciples of Christ, who yet savingly believed, had not this particular principle of bringing forth all their fruit of holiness in Christ as their root, until this very time and sermon whereby Christ informed them in it, so clearly revealed to them, nor till then so clearly apprehended by them. For ignorant they were of, and negligent in having recourse to, Christ in many other particulars, and making use of him therein, which are of as much concernment as this. They had not so distinctly and explicitly, as would seem, put their prayers up in Christ's name: 'Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name,' John xvi. 24. Neither had they so frequently exercised faith on Christ in all things as they had upon God. Therefore, John xiv. 1, he calls upon them, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

Ans. 2.—Many sorts of principles believers' hearts may secretly have been taught, which also habitually they practise, and yet they may be exceeding hidden and latent in them in respect of their own discerning them; as was the case also of these disciples. John xiv. 4, says Christ, 'The way,' namely, to heaven, 'ye know;' and yet, ver. 5, Thomas says, 'How can we know the way?' and then, ver. 7, Christ says of them again, that 'they knew him and the Father;' and yet, ver. 8, Philip again saith to him, 'Lord, shew us the Father,' speaking as if they were ignorant of him, for Christ rebukes him, ver. 9, and tells him he had 'both seen him and his Father.' Those principles of atheism and unbelief,—as those sayings in the heart, that there

is no God, &c.,—of which the Scriptures speak so much, they are the principles that act and work all in men that are wicked and carnal, and are the encouragers and counsellors to all the sins committed by them; and yet they are least of all discerned by them of all other corruptions, for they are seldom or never drawn forth into distinct propositions, or actually thought upon, but do lie as common principles taken for granted, and so do guide men in their ways. And thus it is, and may be long, with some of the contrary principles of faith; they may act all secretly in the heart, and yet not be discerned, until called forth by the ministry of the word, or some distinct information, when it comes more distinctly to clear such a practice to them.

Ans. 3.—Neither is union with Christ presently cleared up to all believers; which, whilst it is darkly and doubtfully apprehended by them, Christ's communication of his grace and strength to them in every action remains doubtful also, and is not discerned by them. Of these disciples Christ says, John xiv. 20, 'That in that day'—namely, when they received the Comforter more fully, of the promise of whom he there speaks—'they should know that they were in him, and he in them.' But not so clearly was this as yet apprehended by them. And so likewise that intercourse betwixt Christ and them, both for grace and comfort, &c., was not so clearly discerned by them, though continually maintained by him in dispensing all grace and power to them.

Ans. 4.—And yet, in the meanwhile, take the lowest and poorest believer, and he doth these five things, which put together is really and interpretatively a bringing forth their fruit in Christ, though not in their apprehensions:—

(1.) In that their hearts are trained up in a continual sensibleness of their own insufficiency and inability for any good thought or word, as of themselves; for 'poverty of spirit,' to see their own nothingness in this respect, is the first evangelical grace, Matt. v. 3. And if the contrary would arise in them, to think, through habitual grace alone received, they were able of themselves to do good, it is checked soon, and confuted by their own experience, both of their own weakness, being sure to be left to themselves, as Peter was when confident in his own strength; as also by those various 'blowings of the Spirit' in them 'as he pleaseth,' with which, when their sails are filled, they are able to do anything, but when withdrawn they lay wind-bound, though all habits of grace be hoist up and ready, and not able to move of themselves. Now this principle of self-emptiness, habitually to live by it, no carnal heart in the world hath it, or doth live by it. And—

(2.) For this assistance they are trained likewise up, from the first, to have a continual dependence upon a power from above, without which they find they are able to do nothing, to come from God and from the Spirit of Christ, with a renunciation of themselves; which implicitly is the same with this immediate intercourse with Christ, and is really equivalent thereunto, though they hit not at first haply on the right explicit notion thereof, as having not been taught it by the ministry of the word, or other ways, in that distinct manner that others do. And yet in honouring the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, they honour Christ, who sends that Spirit into their hearts, even as in 'honouring the Son' Christ says that 'we honour the Father also,' although our thoughts may sometimes more distinctly be exercised towards one of the three Persons more than to another.

(3.) And, thirdly, when they are once taught from the word that it is the

duty of a Christian, and part of the life of faith, to live thus in Christ, and to bring forth all in him, and so come distinctly to apprehend this as requisite to a right bringing forth of fruit, then their hearts instantly do use to close with the truth of it, as being most suitable and agreeable to that holy frame of their own spirits, which are evangelically wrought to glorify Christ all manner of ways that shall be revealed. There is an instinct, a preparedness in their faith to make Christ their all in all, as any particular comes to be revealed to them, wherein they ought to exalt him in their hearts; and so this being once revealed to be one way whereby they are to honour him, if they have gone on before in a confidence on their own graces, 'henceforth they do so no more;' yea, they humble themselves as much for so robbing Christ of glory, or neglecting of him, in not having had that distinct recourse to him, as for any other sin. And—

(4.) Though haply after all this, yet still their union with him is not cleared to them, and so their communion with him herein, as must needs, doth still remain dark also. They therefore neither discern that they have any true communion with his person, nor can say how strength comes from him; yet having been thus taught to fetch all from him, as was formerly explained, they do, in a continual renunciation of their own strength, deny all offers of assistance from any other strength,—as, namely, that which their gifts and parts would make,—even as they deny unlawful lusts or by-ends, and they still have their eyes upon Christ to work in them both the 'will and the deed;' and so by a faith of recumbency, or casting themselves on him for strength in all, such as they exercise towards him for justification, Gal. ii. 16, 'they live by faith on the Son of God,' and have thereby such a kind of faith, a continual recourse unto him. Upon which acts of true faith being exercised by them towards him, he, as he is pleased to dispense it, moves them, and works and acts all in them, although still not so sensibly unto their apprehensions as that they should discern the connexion between the cause and the effect; nor can they hang them together, that is to say, know *how* or *that* this virtue doth come from Christ, because their union with him is as yet doubtful to them, and also because the power that worketh in believers is secret, and like that of the heavens upon our bodies, which is as strong as that of physic, &c., yet so sweet and so secretly insinuating itself with the principles of nature, that as for the conveyance of it, it is insensible, and hardly differenced from the other workings of the principles of nature in us: and therefore the Apostle prayeth for the Ephesians, 'that their eyes may be enlightened to see the power that wrought in them,' Eph. i. 18, 19. Yet so as—

(5.) Their souls walk all this while by these two principles firmly rooted in them, both that all good that is to be done must and doth come from Christ, and him alone; and that if any good be done by them, it is wrought by him alone, which do set their souls a-breathing after nothing more than to 'know Christ in the power of his resurrection.' And having walked thus in a self-emptiness and dependence upon Christ by way of a dark recumbency, when once their union with him comes to be cleared up unto them, they then acknowledge, as they, Isa. xxvi. 12, that 'he alone hath wrought all their works in them;' that they are nothing, and have done nothing. And though before this revelation of Christ, as Christ said to Peter, 'What I do now thou knowest not, but thou shalt know,' so they knew not then that Christ had wrought all in them, yet then they know it; and when they do know and discern it, they acknowledge it with the greatest exaltation of him, they having reserved, even during all that former time of their empti-

ness, the glory for him alone, staying, as Joab did for David,* till Christ come more sensibly into their hearts, to set the crown of all upon his head.

This I thought good to add, to clear this point, lest any poor souls should be stumbled.

Fourth observation.—In the most fruitful branches there remain corruptions unpurged out.

The fourth doctrine is, That in the most fruitful branches there remain corruptions that still need purging out.

This is taken but as supposed in the text, and not so directly laid down, and I shall handle it but so far as it makes way for what doth follow. What shall I need to quote much Scripture for the proof of it? Turn but to your own hearts, the best will find proofs enough of it.

Reason 1.—That God might thereby the more set forth and clear unto us his justifying grace by Christ's righteousness, and clear the truth of it to all our hearts. When the Apostle, long after his first conversion, was in the midst of that great and famous battle, chronicled in that 7th of Romans, wherein he was led 'captive to a law,' and an army of sin within him, 'warring against the law of his mind,' presently upon that woful exclamation and outcry there mentioned, 'O miserable man that I am,' &c., he falls admiring the grace of justification through Christ,—they are his first words after the battle ended,—'Now,' says he, 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.' Mark that word *now*; that now, after such bloody wounds and gashes, there should yet be no condemnation, this exceedingly exalts this grace; for if ever, thought he, I was in danger of condemnation, it was upon the rising and rebelling of these my corruptions, which, when they had carried me captive, I might well have expected the sentence of condemnation to have followed; but I find, says he, that God still pardons me, and accepts me as much as ever upon my returning to him, and therefore I do proclaim with wonder to all the world, that God's justifying grace in Christ is exceeding large and rich. And though there be many corruptions in those that are in Christ, yet there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, that walk after the Spirit, though flesh be in them. And this at once both *clears* our justification by Christ's righteousness alone, and also *magnifies* and extols it.

It *clears* it; therefore how doth this remaining of corruptions afford to our divines that great demonstration against the Papists, that we are not justified by works, nor are those works perfect, which they so impudently affirm against their own experience, even because corruption stains the best, and 'our best righteousness is but as a menstruous cloth.'

And as it *clears* it, so likewise it *extols* it; for how is grace magnified, whenas not only all the sins and debts a man brought to Christ to pardon at first conversion are pardoned, but after many relapses of us, and provings bankrupt, we are yet still set up again by free grace with a new stock; and though we still run upon new scores every day, yet that these should still be paid, and there should be riches of love enough and stock enough, that is, merit enough to hold out to pardon us, though we remained in this mixed condition of sinning to eternity, this exceedingly advanceth the abounding of this grace.

Reason 2.—It serves exceedingly to illustrate the grace of perseverance, and the power of God therein; for unto the power of God is our perseverance wholly attributed. 1 Pet. i. 5, 'Ye are kept,' as with a garrison, as the

* Apparently referring to 2 Sam. xii. 28.—ED.

word signifies, 'through the power of God unto salvation.' And were there not a great and an apparent danger of miscarrying, such a mighty guard needed not. There is nothing which puts us into any danger but our corruptions that still remain in us, which 'fight against the soul,' and endeavour to overcome and destroy us. Now, then, to be kept maugre all these, to have grace maintained, a spark of grace in the midst of a sea of corruption, how doth this honour the power of God in keeping us! As much in regard of this our dependency on him in such a condition, as he would otherwise be by our service, if it were perfect, and we wholly free from those corruptions. How will the grace of God under the gospel triumph over the grace given Adam in his innocency; when Adam having his heart full of inherent grace, and nothing inwardly in his nature to seduce him, and the temptation that he had being but a matter of curiosity, and the pleasing his wife, and yet he fell; whereas many poor souls under the state of grace, that have but mites of grace in comparison, and worlds of corruption, are yet kept not only from the unnecessary pleasures of sin in time of prosperity, but hold out against all the threats, all the cruelties of wicked persecutors in times of persecution, which threaten to debar them of all the present good they enjoy! And though God's people are foiled often, yet that there should still remain 'a seed within them,' 1 John iii. 9, this illustrates the grace of Christ under the gospel. For one act in Adam expelled all grace out of him, when yet his heart was full of nothing else. Were our hearts filled with grace perfectly at first conversion, this power would not be seen. The angels are kept with much less care, and charge, and power than we, because they have no bias, no 'weight of sin,' as the Apostle speaks, hung upon them to draw them aside and press them down, as we have.

Reason 3.—Neither would the confusion of the devil in the end be so great, and the victory so glorious, if all sin at first conversion were expelled. For by this means the devil hath in his assaults against us the more advantages, fair play, as I may so speak, fair hopes of overcoming, having a great faction in us, as ready to sin as he is greedy to tempt; and yet God strongly carries on his own work begun, though slowly, and by degrees, basketh and maintains a small party of grace within us to his confusion. That as in God's outward government towards his church here on earth, he suffers a great party, and the greater still by far, to be against his church, and yet upholds it, and 'rules amongst the midst of his enemies,' Ps. cx. 2, so doth he also in every particular believer's heart. When grace shall be in us but as a spark, and corruptions as much smoke and moisture damping it, grace but as a candle, and that in the socket, among huge and many winds, then 'to bring judgment forth to victory,' that is a victory indeed.

Reason 4.—Lastly, as God doth it to advance his own grace, and confound the devil, so for holy ends that concern the saints themselves; as—

(1.) To keep them from *spiritual pride*. He trusted the angels that fell with a full and complete stock of grace at first, and they, though raised up from nothing a few days before, fell into such an admiration of themselves that heaven could not hold them,—it was not a place good enough for them: 'They left,' the text says, 'their own habitation and first estate,' Jude 6. 'Pride was the condemnation of the devil,' 1 Tim. iii. 6. But how much more would this have been an occasion of pride to a soul that was full of nothing but sin the other day, to be made perfect presently? Perfectly to justify us the first day by the righteousness of another, there is no danger in that, for it is a righteousness without us, and which we cannot so easily boast of vainly; for that faith that apprehends it empties us first of our-

selves, and goes out to another for it. But sanctification being a work wrought in us, we are apt to dote on that, as too much upon excellency in ourselves. How much ado have poor believers to keep their hearts off from doting upon their own righteousness, and from poring on it, when it is, God wot, a very little ! They must therefore have something within them to pull down their spirits, that when they look on their feathers they may look on their feet, which, Christ says, are still defiled, John xiii. 10.

(2.) However, if there were no such danger of spiritual pride upon so sudden a rise,—as indeed it befalls not infants, nor such souls as die as soon as regenerated, as that good thief,—yet, however, God thinks it meet to use it as a means to *humble* his people this way; even as God left the Canaanites in the land to vex the Israelites, and to humble them. And to have been thoroughly humbled for sin here will do the saints no hurt against they come to heaven; it will keep them nothing for ever, in their own eyes, even when they are filled brimful of grace and glory. For—

[1.] Nothing humbles so as sin. This made him cry out, ‘O miserable man that I am!’ He that never flinched for outward crosses, never thought himself miserable for any of them, but ‘gloried in them,’ 2 Cor. xii. 10, when he came to be ‘led captive by sin’ remaining in him, cries out, ‘O miserable man!’ And—

[2.] It is not the sins of a fore-past unregenerate estate that will be enough to do this thoroughly; for they might be looked upon as past and gone, and some ways be an occasion of making the grace after conversion the more glorious. But present sense humbleth most kindly, most deeply, because it is fresh; and therefore says Paul, ‘O miserable man that *I am!*’ And again, we are not able to know the depth and height of corruptions at once, therefore we are to know it by degrees. And therefore it is still left in us, that after we have a spiritual eye given us, we might experimentally gauge it to the bottom, and be experimentally still humbled for sin. And experimental humbling is the most kindly, as pity out of experience is. And—

[3.] God would have us humbled by seeing our dependence upon him for inherent grace. And how soon are we apt to forget we have received it, and that in our natures no good dwells ! We would not remember that our nature were a step-mother to grace, and a natural mother to lusts, but that we see weeds still grow naturally of themselves. And—

[4.] God would have us not only humbled by such our dependence on him, but by a sense of our continual obnoxiousness to him, and of being in his lurch; and therefore leaves corruption still, that we might ever acknowledge that our necks do even lie on the block, and that he may chop them off; and to see that ‘in him we’ should not only ‘live and move’ as creatures, but further, that by him we might justly be destroyed every moment, this humbles the creature indeed, Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 32.

(3.) As thus to humble them, so that they might have occasion to *deny themselves*; which to do is more acceptable to God than much more service without it, and therefore the great promise of ‘having a hundred-fold’ is made to that grace. It was the great grace which of all other Christ exercised. Now, if we had no corruption to entice and seduce us, what opportunities were there for us thus of denying ourselves? Christ indeed had an infinite deal of glory to lay down, not so we. Unless there be a self in us to solicit us, and another self to deny those solicitations, we should have no occasions of self-denial or the exercise of any such grace. Therefore Adam was not capable of any such grace, because he had no corruption to seduce him.

And therefore a little grace in us, denying a great deal of corruption, is in that respect, for so much as is of it, more acceptable than his obedience. Though we have less grace, yet in this respect of a higher kind in the exercises of it.

Use 1.—To be meek and charitable to those who fall into sin, as knowing corruption is not fully yet purged out of thyself. This is the Apostle's admonition upon this ground, Gal. vi. 1, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault,'—he speaks indefinitely, that any man may,—if it be but an overtaking, not a sinning wilfully and obstinately, but a falling by occasion, through rashness, suddenness, and violence of temptation, &c.; 'ye which are spiritual, restore such a man with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' He would have every man be meek in his censure, and in his reproof of such a one, and restore him, and 'put him in joint again,' as the word signifies: for still he may be united to Christ, as a bone out of joint is to the body, though for the time rendered thereby unuseful. And do this, says he, with tenderness and pity, 'with the spirit of meekness,' which a man will not do unless he be sensible of his own frailty and subjection to corruption, unless he reflects on himself, and that seriously too. *Considering*, saith the Apostle there, as implying more than a slight thought,—I may chance to fall also; but the seeing and weighing what matter of falling there is in thine own heart, if God but leave thee to thyself a little while; this works a spirit of meekness towards such a one. For meekness and pity is most kindly when we are sensible of the like in ourselves, and make it our own case. And this he speaks to the most spiritual Christians; not to those who are as yet but as carnal, as he speaketh of the Corinthians, Christians newly converted, who—finding their corruptions at the first stounded with that first blow of mortification given them, and though but in part killed, yet wholly in a manner for a while laid asleep, and having not as yet, after their late conversion, had a fresh experience of the dangers and temptations a man after conversion in his progress is subject to—are therefore apt to imagine they shall continue free from assaults, and think not that their lusts will get up again, and so are prone to be more censorious of the falls of others. But you, who are more spiritual, to you I speak, says the Apostle, for you are most meekened with a sense of your own weakness; and even you, says he, if you 'consider yourselves,' and what you are in yourselves, have cause to think that 'you also may be tempted.'

Use 2.—Never set thyself any stint or measure of mortification, for still thou hast matter to purge out. Thou must never be out of physic all thy life. Say not, Now I have grace enough, and health enough; but as that great Apostle, 'Not as if I had as yet attained,' for indeed thou hast not; still 'press forward' to have more virtue from Christ. If thou hast prevailed against the outward act, rest not, but get the rising of the lust mortified, and that rolling of it in thy fancy; get thy heart deadened towards it also; and rest not there, but get to hate it, and the thought of it. The 'body of death,' it must not only be 'crucified with Christ,' but 'buried' also, and so rot, Rom. vi. 4, 6; it is 'crucified to be destroyed,' says the Apostle there,—that is, to moulder away more and more, after its first death-wound.

Fifth observation—*That branches that have brought forth true fruit, God takes them not away.*

The fifth doctrine is, That those who are true branches, and bring forth any true fruit pleasing to God, though they have many corruptions in them, yet God takes them not away, cuts them not off. The opposition implies

this, he speaks of 'taking away' the other; not so of these, but 'purgeth them.' It is an elegant paranomasia, αἵρεσι, καθαίρει, which the Holy Ghost here useth.

For an instance to prove this, wherein I will also keep to the metaphor here used, I take that place, Isa. xxvii., where this his care of fruitful branches, with the very same difference put between his dealing with them and the unfruitful that is here, is elegantly expressed to us. God professeth himself the keeper of a vineyard, his church, ver. 2, 3, 'I the Lord do keep it;' and, ver. 6, 'He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the earth with fruit.' But Israel having corruption in him which would hinder his growth, he must be lopped and cut. And so, in the next verses, God is said to deal with him; but not so as to cut them off, as he doth others that are both his and their enemies. 'Hath he smitten them as he smote those that smote him?' No. For 'in measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it.' When Israel is but a tender plant, and first shooteth forth, he doth but in measure debate with it, that is, in such a proportion as not to destroy it, or cause it to wither; but that it may blossom more, he measures out, as it were, afflictions to them, but 'stays his rough wind,' as it follows, that is, such afflictions as would shake that his plant too much, or quite blow it down; but such a wind as shall make it fruitful, and blow away its unkindly blossoms and leaves, so much, and no more, will he let out of his treasury, even he who holds the winds in his fists, and can moderate them as he pleaseth. For his scope and purpose is nothing less than to cut off Jacob, both root and branch, because of corruptions and sins that do cleave to him. 'But this is all the fruit to take away the sin,' says he, ver. 9,—that is, this is the fruit of that wind, and of all these his dealings with them; and it is *all* the fruit,—that is, all that he intends thereby, even to purge them.

But doth he deal so with others? No; for 'the boughs of the most fenced city wither, and are broken off and burned,' ver. 10, 11.

Reason 1.—First, because in Christ God accepts a little good, and it pleaseth him more than sin in his doth displease him. And therefore, as in nations he will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, so nor in men will he cast away their righteousness that is in them for a little wickedness' sake, but will rather purge out the one, and so preserve the other. This we have expressed under the same metaphor, Isa. lxxv. 8, we have in hand: 'Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it;'—that is, look as when a man is about to cut down a vine, and his axe is even at the root of it, and one standing by spies a cluster upon it that hath new wine in it, (which also argues there is sap still in the roots, which may yet bring forth more,) Oh, says he, destroy it not: even so says God of nations and men that fear him, of nations where he hath many holy ones. So there it follows, 'So will I do' with Israel, 'for my servants' sake I will not destroy them all:' so it follows there; and thus he likewise says of particular men, There is a blessed work in such a man's heart, though mingled with much corruption, 'Oh, destroy it not.' Take away the sin if possible, but cut not off the man. Why should his grace perish with his wickedness? Every dram of grace is precious; it cost the blood of Christ, and he will not suffer it to be destroyed.

Reason 2.—Because he hath ordained that all the fruits of his children should remain, John xv. 16. Now, if they should be cut off, their fruit would wither, their work must perish with them. Now, no man's work shall 'prove in vain in the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58. But though the world, and all works

and lusts of the world, will, with their makers, come to nothing, 'yet he that doth the will of God endureth for ever,' 1 John ii. 17. As the works of Christ in himself are eternal, so his works in us are eternal also, because they are the fruits of what he did: 'He that soweth liberally, and gives to the poor, his righteousness remains for ever.'

Reason 3.—Because he loves the person, and hates only the sin; therefore he preserves the one, destroys only the other. 'This is all the fruit, to take away the sin.' Thus, Ps. xcix. 8, 'He forgave the persons, and took vengeance only on their inventions.' The covenant that is made with us in Christ is not a covenant made with works, but with persons; and therefore, though the works be often hateful, yet he goes on to love the persons; and that he may continue to love them, destroys out of them what he hates, but cutteth not them off. A member that is leprous or ulcerous, a man loves it as it is 'his own flesh,' Eph. v. 29, though he loathes the corruption and putrefaction that is in it; and therefore he doth not presently cut it off, but purgeth it daily, lays plasters to it to eat the corruption out: whereas a wart or a wen that grows to a man's body, a man gets it cut off, for he doth not reckon it as his flesh.

Reason 4.—Therein God shews his skill, that he is able to deal with a branch which hath much corruption in it, so artificially as to sever the corruption, and let the branch stand still. Utterly to cut down, and make spoil of all, there is no great skill required to it; but to lop the branches in the right place, and due time and season, so as they may become fruitful, this is from the skill of the husbandman. Come to unskilful surgeons with a sore leg or arm, and they seeing it past their skill, they talk of nothing but cutting it off, and tell you it is so far gone that there is no way else; but come to one that is skilful indeed, that discerns it is not so perished but it may be cured, and he will try his art upon it. And so doth God with branches and members that have much corruption in them: he tries his skill upon them, makes a great cure of a leg or an arm where he discerns some sound flesh, though much corrupted; he can cut out the dead flesh, and let the sound remain, and so makes it whole in the end.

Use 1.—Of comfort to those who are true branches, and continue to bring forth fruit in the midst of all the trials that befall them, that God will not suffer them to be cut off by their corruption. If anything in them should provoke God to do it, it must be sin. Now for that, you see how Christ promiseth that God will take order therewith, and will purge it out of them. In Ps. lxxxix. 28–30, this is the covenant made with David, (as he was a type of Christ, with whom the same covenant is made sure and firm,) that 'if his seed forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments,'—What! presently turn them out of doors, and cut them off, as those he meant no more to have to do with? What! nothing but utter rejection? Is there no means of reclaiming them? Never a rod in the house? Yes,—'then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes,' whip out their stubbornness and sinfulness; 'but my loving-kindness will I not take from him' as I did from Saul, as it is 1 Chron. xvii. 13.

Let the saints consider this, that they may return when they are fallen, and submit to him and his nature, and suffer him to do what he will with them, and endure cutting, and lancing, and burning, so long as he cuts them not off; endure chastening, and all his dealings else, knowing that all the fruit is but to take away the sin, to make them 'partakers of his holiness;' and 'if by any means,' as Paul speaks of himself, as Phil. iii. 11, be the means what it will, it is no matter. And God, if at any time he seems to

cut thee off, yet it is but as the incestuous Corinthian was cut off, that 'the flesh might be destroyed, and the spirit saved.'

Use 2.—Of encouragement to go on still to bring forth more fruit to God. For if you do, God will not cut you off; 'he will spare you as a man spares his son that serves him;' he will not take advantage at every fault to cast one off. It was his own law, Deut. xx. 19, that such trees as brought forth fruit fit for meat, they should not destroy when they came into an enemy's country. 'Doth God take care of trees?' No, it was to teach us that if we bring forth fruit, he will not destroy us, if it be fruit indeed fit for meat. Oaks bring forth apples, such as they are, and acorns, but they are not fit for meat; such trees they might cut down. So, if thou bring not forth such fruit as is for God's taste and relish, wherein thou sanctifiest not God and Christ in thy heart, thou mayest and wilt be cut down, but else not. If thou beest betrothed to Christ, and he hath begotten children on thee, fear not a bill of divorce, he will not lightly cast thee off. And it is a good argument to use to him, desire him to spare thee by all the children he hath begotten on thee. Children increase love between man and wife; so between Christ and us.

Sixth observation—That unfruitful branches God in the end cuts off, and the several degrees whereby he cuts off professors that are unfruitful.

That unfruitful branches God in the end takes away,—as he did Judas, who was here especially aimed at,—for proof take Ps. cxxv. It is a psalm made of purpose to shew the different estate of the professors of religion. Those that are 'upright,' ver. 4, he saith, God will continue to do them good, and 'they shall be as Mount Zion,' and all the gates of hell shall not be able to remove one of these mountains. But because there are many that like planets go the same course with the other orbs, and yet have some secret byway besides of their own, of these he says, 'Those that turn aside into crooked ways, God will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity;'—that is, in the end he will discover them to be what they are. And though they go amongst the drove of professors like sheep, yet God will detect them, either in this life or in the life to come, to be goats. Though they did not seem to be workers of iniquity, yet God will lead them forth with them.

Reasons why God dealeth thus with them:—

Reason 1.—Because they dishonour the root which they profess themselves to be grafted into. They profess themselves to be in Christ. Now, he is a fruitful root, full of sap, and for any to be unfruitful in him is a dishonour to him. When you see unfruitful branches upon a tree, you blame the root for it; so doth the world blame the grace of Christ, the profession of Christ, yea, even the root itself, for the unfruitfulness of the branches. Therefore, that they may dishonour the root no more, he takes them away, cuts them off from that root they seemed to stand in, and then they run out into all manner of wickedness.

Reason 2.—Because the husbandman hath no profit by them: Heb. vi. 8, 'The ground that bringeth forth thorns, and not fruit meet for him that dresseth it, is nigh to cursing.' In the 8th of the Canticles it is said, 'Solomon had a vineyard, and he let it out to keepers,' &c. He speaks this of Christ, of whom Solomon was a type, and of his church; and his comparison stands thus: Solomon being a king, and having many vineyards for his royalty,—for the riches of ancient kings lay much in husbandry,—he let them out to vine-dressers, and they had some gain by them; but 'Solomon must have a thousand,' and they 'but two hundred;' the chief gain was to

come to Solomon. So the vineyard that God had planted here below, he lets it out to men, and they shall have some profit by it, you shall all have wages for the work you do, yet so as the chief gain must return to God ; he must have a thousand for your two hundred. But when men will have all the gains that is in what they do, set up their own ends only, and the husbandman shall have none, such branches he takes away, because they are not for his profit, for it is made a rule of equity, 1 Cor. ix. 7, 'that he that planteth a vineyard should eat of the fruit of it.'

Reason 3.—Because of all trees a vine is good for nothing else but to bring forth fruit, as we see it expressed to us, Ezek. xv. 4 ; it is good for nothing but the fire when it becomes unfruitful. Other trees are good for building, to make pins of, but not the vine. And this similitude God chose out to shew, that of all trees else, professors, if unfruitful, are good for nothing ; their end is to be burned.

Now if you ask, How God taketh them away ? the degrees he doth it by are set down here, ver. 6, 'If a man abide not in me,' &c.,—that is, fall away,—then, 1. They are *cast out* ; and, 2. They *wither* ; 3. They are *gathered* ; 4. They are *burned*.

1. They are *cast forth*,—that is, out of the hearts of God's people, out of their company, out of their prayers, yea, and out of their society by excommunication often ; and many times they cast out themselves, being given up to such errors as discover them to be unsound. As Hymenæus and Philetus, they were forward professors, so that their fall was like to have shaken many of the fruitful branches, insomuch that the apostle was fain to make an apology about their fall : 'Nevertheless the foundation of God remains sure,' 2 Tim. ii. 19. God gave them up to such opinions and heresies as discovered their hearts to be rotten and unsound. So also he gives these carnal professors up to such sins as will discover them. This was the case of Cain ; he brought forth some fruit, for he sacrificed ; yet because not in sincerity, he envied his brother, and was given up to murder his brother, upon which it is said that 'he was cast out of the sight of the Lord,' Gen. iv. 16,—that is, cast out of his father's family, and from the ordinances of God there enjoyed, and made a vagabond upon the face of the whole earth, which of all curses is the greatest. Or else, as was said, they of their own accord 'forsake the assembly of the saints.' The Apostle makes this a step to the sin against the Holy Ghost, Heb. x. 25. He saith, that when men forsake the assemblies and company of the people of God, public and private, and love not to quicken and stir up one another, or begin to be shy of those they once accompanied, they are in a high degree to that which follows in the next verse, 'to sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth.'

2. Being thus cast forth, they *wither*,—that is, the sap of abilities which they once had begins to decay ; that life in holy duties and in holy speeches begins to be withdrawn, and their leaves begin to fall off ; they cannot pray nor speak of holy things as they were wont. Thus it is said of such professors, Jude 12, that 'their fruit withereth,' even here in the eyes of men ; for when God casteth them out, then he withdraws his Spirit from them ; and then, although they come to the ordinances, yet they have no breathings. They come to prayer, and the Spirit of God is departed ; and so by degrees God withdraws sap from them till they be quite dead. Thus he dealt with Saul ; when he had discovered himself by sparing the Amalekites and by persecuting David, it is said, 'the Spirit of God departed from him,' and he withered ever after, all his gifts vanished, and the spirit or frame of heart he once had departed from him. So likewise they that had not 'gained by their

talents,' Matt. xxv. 26, their 'talents were taken from them,' even in this life, and the Spirit of God, which rested upon them, rested upon some other that were more faithful.

3. Lying long unfruitful, in the end it is said they are *gathered*. Our translation hath it, 'men gather them,' which either respects a punishment in this life, that when they are cast out from the society of God's people, wicked men gather them, they fall to those that are naughty. Popish persons or profane atheists take them, as the Pharisees did Judas, when he cast himself out of the society of the apostles. Or else it may in a metaphor refer to the life to come; the angels, they are the reapers, they 'gather them in the last day,' and bind them in bundles for the fire.

4. So, lastly, it is said, they are *cast into the fire*, and they burn. A man would think he needed not to have added that, for being cast into the fire they must needs burn; but his meaning is, that of all other they make the fiercest, hottest fire, because they are trees most seared, and 'fuel fully dry,' as the prophet speaks.

Use.—You, then, that profess the name of Christ, take heed that you be fruitful branches indeed. I say to you, as the Apostle saith, Rom. xi. 19, 20, 'Because of unbelief they were broken off thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.' Take heed that it be fruit that you bring forth: do all for God, make him your end in all, bring forth more fruit every day, let your fruit be ripper and more spiritual daily, labour to spread and root yourselves as much downward in inward holiness as you do upward in outward profession, and purge yourselves continually, lest that which is threatened here befall you, which are fearful things to be spoken, and yet concern many a soul. The Apostle compares such to 'trees twice dead, and plucked up by the roots.' You were born dead in Adam; since that you have had perhaps some union with Christ by common graces; if you wither again, then you are 'twice dead,' and therefore fit for nothing but to be stubbed up and cast into the fire. And if any soul begin to forsake the assemblies of the saints, or be cast out from them, let him look to himself lest he wither in the end, and be twice dead, and so he never come to have life put into him again; that is, repent and return again. And know this, that if you, being cast out by the church and people of God, break your hearts, so that you mourn for your sin, as the incestuous Corinthian did, it is a sign you are such branches as God will yet make fruitful; but if, being cast out, you begin to wither, as here, the end will be burning.

PART I.

OF GROWTH IN VIVIFICATION, AND BRINGING FORTH MORE FRUIT.

He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.—JOHN XV. 2.

CHAPTER I.

That all true branches in Christ do grow.

GROWTH in grace is the main thing held forth unto us in these words ; and therefore I make it the chief subject of this discourse.

Now as in the work of sanctification at first there are two parts, *mortification* and *vivification*, so our progress in that work hath two parts also apart to be considered, and both here in the text :—

1. A growth in mortification, or purging out of sin : ‘ He purgeth it.’

2. A positive growth in holiness, and all the fruits of it : ‘ That it may bring forth more fruit.’

And my purpose is accordingly to treat of these two distinctly and apart by themselves. And although purging out of sin is here first mentioned, yet our growth in fruitfulness shall have the first place in the method of handling of them ; both because growth in positive holiness, and bringing forth more fruit, is the end and perfection of the other, and so chiefly intended ; the other but subserving unto this, and is accordingly made mention of here by Christ, ‘ He purgeth it, *that* it may bring forth more fruit.’

Now, in handling this first head, I shall do three things :—

First, In general, shew that all true branches do grow in grace and fruitfulness, and the reasons of it.

Secondly, Propound such considerations by way of explication as may conduce to satisfy the tentations of such Christians as discern not their growth herein.

Thirdly, Explicate more largely, by way of trial, what it is to bring forth more fruit, thereby further to help believers to discern and judge aright of it.

My scope in this discourse being not so much to give means or motives unto growth as helps to judge of and try our growth, and prevent such mistakes herein as Christians are apt to fall into.

First, In general, to demonstrate that all true believers do grow more or less in fruitfulness. I shall give both proofs and reasons of it.

For proofs out of Scripture, those two places, Hos. xiv. 5 compared with Psalm xcii., where the Holy Ghost singeth out the choicest trees and flowers in the world on purpose to express the saints’ fruitfulness, and their growth therein, will suffice.

As, first, to shew the sudden springing up of the new creature, as it falls out upon some men's conversions, or upon the saints' recovery again after falls, he compares them to the lily, Hos. xiv. 5, whose stalk, though long hid in the earth, when once it begins to feel the dew, grows up oftentimes in a night. But yet a lily is but a flower, and soon decays.

Therefore, secondly, to shew their perpetuity and stability, together with their growth, the prophet there compares them to the cedar, whose wood rots not, proverbially put to express immortality—*Digna Cedro*—and which is not only most durable, but of all trees the tallest, and shoots up the highest.

But yet, thirdly, suppose the new creature be kept under and oppressed with tentations and oppositions, yet to shew that still it will grow and flourish again, therefore he further compareth them to a palm-tree, which useth to grow the more weight is hung upon it, and sprouts again even when it is cut down to the roots.

Fourthly, to shew that they grow with all kinds of growth, therefore the prophet expresseth their growth both by the spreading of their root and also of the branches, and so in a growth both upward and downward, 'He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon,'—that is, grow inwardly in habitual grace in the heart, and then outwardly 'spread forth their branches,' and so grow in the outward profession of God's ways and truth, and external holiness in their lives.

Neither, fifthly, is it a growth merely in bulk, but also in fruitfulness, and therefore he compares them to the olive and the vine, (so in that place of Hosea,) which are of all trees the fruitfulest and most useful to God and man, Judges ix. 9, 13.

But yet, sixthly, trees have a flourishing time of it but for some while, during which, although they may be thus green and fruitful, yet in their age they wither and rot, and their leaves fall off, and their fruit decays. The Holy Ghost therefore, as preventing this exception to fall out in the saints' growth, he adds, Ps. xcii., 'They bring forth fruit still in their old age.' When nature begins to decay, yet grace renews its strength; which if it be wondered at, and how grace should grow and multiply, the soil of our hearts being a stepmother to it, 'From me,' says Christ, 'is thy fruit found,' ver. 8 of that 14th of Hosea. 'It is God that gives this increase, and I will be as the dew to Israel,' ver. 5.

The reasons why Christians do thus grow are drawn—

1. From Christ's being our head, and we his members. Now although clothes, though never so gorgeous, grow not, yet members do. This similitude the apostle useth in two places, to express the growth of the saints, Eph. iv. 15, 16, and Col. ii. 19, where he saith, Christ is a head, 'from whom the whole body grows up to him in all things.' Now the consequence of this reason will many ways appear:—

(1.) If no more but that there might be a conformity of the head and members, it was meet we the members should grow; 'for we are predestinated to be conformable to the image of his Son,' Rom. viii. Now Christ 'did grow in wisdom,' Luke ii. 40, 42; and therefore so must we. But—

(2.) As he is our head, he hath received all fulness, to that very end that we might grow even to 'fill all in all,' Eph. i. 23.

Now we are empty creatures at his first taking of us. John x. 10, 'I came,' says Christ, 'that they might have life;' and not only so much as will keep body and soul together, as we say, but 'that they might have it more abundantly.' Why is grace called life, and of lives the most excellent, but

because it containeth all the essential properties of life in it? Now the main properties of life are to move and grow. The stars they have a moving life, but they grow not; the sun increaseth not, for all its tumbling up and down, as snow-balls do; plants they have a growing life, but they move not out of their place: but in grace there is both. It is an active thing, and it is a growing thing also; and because the more it is acted the more it grows, therefore its growth is expressed by its motion. Yea—

(3.) As his fulness is for our growth, so our growth makes up his fulness, even the fulness of Christ mystical, though Christ personal is full without us. Therefore the stature that every Christian grows up to is called, Eph. iv. 13, 'the stature of the fulness of Christ.' In like speech to this, Eph. i. 23, it is said that 'his body is his fulness;' and, Eph. iv. 13, the growth of these members is said to be 'the fulness of Christ.' So that as Christ should be a head without a body if he had no members, and his body a lame body if he wanted any of those his members; so it would be found a disproportioned body, as it were, if any of these members should not grow to that stature God hath appointed them. So that as there will be *plenitudo partium*, a fulness of parts, no member lacking, so also *plenitudo graduum*, no degree of growth wanting in any part; that so Christ, who filleth all in all, may be fully full. And as there would be a deformity if any one should not grow,—as to have a withered member were a dishonour to the head,—so to have any one grow *in immensum*, to too great a stature, would breed as great a deformity on the other side; therefore he adds, that 'every member hath its measure.' The hand grows according to the proportion of a hand, and so the rest; and so in the 13th verse he hath it, that there is a 'measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' that every one attains to.

2. The second reason is taken from God the Father—

(1.) Who first hath appointed, as who shall be members, so also what growth each of these members shall attain to; therefore it is called 'an increasing with the increase of God,' Col. ii. 19. Other parents appoint not what stature their children shall attain to, but the Lord doth, that when they meet in heaven there may be a proportion in the body; as all Christ's 'members were written in God's book,' so the growth of them also.

(2.) He hath promised that they shall grow; therefore it is said, Ps. xcii., 'They shall bring forth fruit in their age, to shew the Lord is faithful,' which respecteth his promise; for faithfulness is the fulfilling a promise.

(3.) God the Father hath accordingly appointed means to that end, principally that they might grow. As—

[1.] Eph. iv., it is said he hath 'given gifts unto men,' not that they may be converted only, but also to 'build them up for the edifying of the body of Christ.' He speaks as if that were one main end. Therefore the word is not only compared to seed, that begets men, but to milk also, that so babes may grow, and to strong meat, that men may grow, and thus that all sorts of Christians may grow. So also sacraments, their principal end is growth, and not to convert, but to increase; as meat puts not life in, but is ordained for growth where life is already.

[2.] He gives his Spirit, which works growth in the hearts of his people; and by him they have a nutritive power conveyed from Christ. For it might be said, though there be never so much nourishment, if they have no power to concoct it, still they cannot grow; therefore the Apostle says that there is an 'effectual working to the measure of every part,' Eph. iv. 16, the same power working in us which raised up Jesus Christ from death to life, Eph. i. 19.

3. The last reason is taken from the saints themselves: they could not otherwise enter into heaven; which I take from that place, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' He speaks this to his disciples, who were converted before; but saith Christ, Unless ye grow, there being a further measure appointed you of my Father, you cannot enter into heaven. There is therefore as great a necessity to grow as to be born again, or else we cannot enter into heaven.

CHAPTER II.

An explication how the saints do grow.—Many considerations to satisfy those that discern not their growth.

HAVING given you the reasons, I will now explicate the point.

And that chiefly for the satisfaction of those whose main doubts and troubles about their estate are occasioned by their want of discerning themselves to grow, and so call into question the work begun, because not carried on so sensibly unto perfection as they expect and desire.

Their objections are many and diverse.

They say, when they were young, they then had more spiritual enlivenings and quickness of affections, more joy in duties, &c.; that formerly they had more zeal in what they did for the good of others, and more fruit of their labours; that heretofore they have spent more time in duties, in conference, and hearing, &c.; that others start up who have more grace the first day than they have been getting many years. Yea, they are so far from discerning that they grow, that they rather think that they fall back, and therefore fear even the truth of grace in them, because all believers grow.

Now, the scope of all which I shall speak of this argument will tend to this, to help such to discern and judge aright of their estates herein, and to free them from such mistakes and errors as their objections are usually founded upon.

I. And, first, concerning this kind of temptation and trouble, let me premise this one observation, concerning what sort of converts this temptation is aptest to seize on.

You all know that there are two more eminent and conspicuous manner of conversions of God's people usual in the church. The conversion of some is more sudden and apparent, like the bringing of Joseph out of a dungeon into a marvellous glorious light. It is with a sudden change, which therefore is accompanied with a mighty violent inundation and land-flood of humiliation for sin, increased with many gracious enlargements and dews from heaven; which afterwards abating, and the stream settling and growing less, and coming to an ordinary channel, and falling but unto so much as the natural spring of grace, as I may so call it, will serve to feed, they then begin to call all into question for their want of growth. Others, on the contrary, whose conversion hath been insensible, and carried on with a still and quiet stream, and have had a more leisurely, gentle thaw; and their change from darkness to light hath not been sudden, but as the breaking forth of the morning, small at first, and not discernible at what time day began then to break: these, on the contrary, are exercised rather about the truth of the work begun, about the work of conversion itself, and the right beginning of all at first; but their tentations arise not from a want of growth so much, for this to them is more evident and sensible, being like 'the morning light, which grows clearer and clearer unto the perfect day,' Prov. iv. 18.

Now, observe the different condition of these two sorts. The former of these hath a more apparent work at first to shew as the evidence of their estate, but are apt, through desertions, neglects, and carnal presumption, to call into question their progress in it, and from thence to question the truth of that first work begun. The other, on the contrary, sees a constant spring and stream increasing, but cannot shew the well-head, or when or where the spring began. So that so apparent a work of grace begun would become matter of assurance to the one, but is checked with want of discerning growth answerable to such beginnings. But an apparent growth, and fast going up of the building, comforts the other, but yet so as they still are apt to question whether the foundation of such a building be well and surely laid; that they are going on further to perfection, this they clearly see, but whether they come in at the right gate or no, that is the scruple which exerciseth their spirits. Thus hath our wise God, as in the work of his providence, so of his grace, 'set the one against the other,' as Solomon speaks, that unto both these there might be occasion of exercise left, that neither might confide in any works wrought upon them, but fly alone to Christ; and that neither should rejoice against the other, or be discontented with that way wherein God hath dealt with them.

II. In the second place, there are some considerations to be added concerning a Christian's discerning his spiritual growth, which will be profitable to the thing in hand.

1. As, first, that our growing in grace is a mystery to be apprehended by faith rather than by sense; our spiritual life itself is carried along by faith, much more the discerning the increase of it. Yea, and it being carried on by contraries, as by falls and desertions, and even by our own opinions of our decrease, therefore it is rather discerned by faith than sense, for 'faith is the evidence of things not seen.'

2. Secondly, the eager desire that many Christians have to have more grace, together with their going on to discern more and more their wants, which in some respect is a growth, these do keep them from thinking that indeed they do grow. 'There is,' as Solomon says, 'that maketh himself poor, and hath great riches,' Prov. xiii. 7; because he enlargeth his desires still, therefore still he thinks himself poor. So hungry and greedy Christians, looking still to what they want, and not to what they have, are still complaining and unthankful. If thou wouldst discern thy growth, do not compare the copy with thy writing, but rather thy writing now with thy writing at the first. For this is a sure rule, that the better thou learnest to write, the better copy doth God daily set thee,—that is, gives thee to see more strictness in the rule, and so still mayest think that thou wantest as much, and art as far short as at first, if thus thou comparest thyself with nothing but thy sight of the rule itself.

3. The third consideration: that if growth at any time be made sensible, and be discerned by sense, yet so as after a while it is not so discernible as that great change which was made upon a man's first conversion; the reasons whereof are—

(1.) For at first conversion the change was specifical, wholly from want of grace unto beginnings of grace; but the change in our growth afterwards is but gradual,—that is, but addition of more degrees only, of something of the same kind still; and therefore it doth not so eminently affect the heart as the change at first conversion doth. To be translated out of a prison to a kingdom, as Joseph was, would affect more than to have new kingdoms added to one that is a king already, as Alexander had.

(2.) Because then the newness makes a great impression. One that begins anew to study any art, his growth is sensible, because everything he reads is new; whereas afterwards in his reading he meets with the same thing again and again, and with new notions but now and then, and yet he studies, it may be, harder, and learns what he knew before more perfectly, and adds new to his old.

4. A fourth consideration to discern thy growth: there must be time allowed; 'For the time,' says the Apostle, 'they might have been teachers,' Heb. v. 12, implying they must have had time to grow up to perfection. Christians do not grow discernibly till after some space. The sun goes up higher and higher, but we discern not its progress till after an hour's motion. Things most excellent have the slowest growth: bulrushes grow fast, but they are weaker kind of plants; herbs, and willows, and alder-trees grow fast, but full of pith; oaks more slowly, yet more solidly, and in the end attain to a greater bulk.

5. Fifthly, consider the growth itself; there may be a great difference thereof in several men. You heard that every man hath a measure appointed to which he must grow; but men are brought to this fulness several ways, which makes a difference in their growth.

(1.) First, some have the advantage of others at first setting out; God gives them a great stock of grace at first, and that for these causes:—

[1.] When there is a present use of them. Paul was 'the last of the apostles, born out of time,' as himself complains, as one that was set to school long after the rest of the apostles, and yet came not behind any of them in grace, because God was to use him presently. To some God gives five talents, to others but two; so that he that hath five hath as much given him at first as he that had but two with all his gains all his lifetime.

[2.] When a man is converted late, as he that came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour was furnished with abilities to do as much as the rest, for they all received but a penny.

(2.) Secondly, in the manner of their growth some have advantage of others.

[1.] Some grow without intermission, as that great Apostle, and the Colossians, who 'from the first day they heard of the gospel, brought forth fruit,' Col. i. 6. Others have rubs, and for some time of their lives stand at a stay. And thus some do presently after their first conversion, as the church of Ephesus, who 'fell from her first love.' Others in old age, as the Hebrews, 'who when for the time they might have taught others, were so far cast behind, that they had need be taught again the first principles' of religion, Heb. v. 12. Measure therefore not so your growth by a piece of your lives, but by comparing your whole life together.

[2.] Some die sooner, and therefore God fits them for heaven sooner. Dorcas died 'rich in good works;' Stephen died 'full of the Holy Ghost,' Acts vii. It is with several Christians as with several planets: the moon goes her course in a month, the sun in a year, the rest in many years, so as often they that live shortest grow fastest.

CHAPTER III.

What it is to bring forth more fruit explicated negatively by removing many mistakes.

LET us now see what it is wherein Christians may be said to grow, that so you may be able to discern what it is to bring forth more fruit.

And this I will explicate two ways :—

I. First, negatively; what it is not to bring forth more fruit really, though in appearance and in show it be a growth in fruit, which occasions many mistakes.

II. Secondly, positively; what it is truly to bring forth more fruit.

I. For the first :—

1. First, to grow is not only or chiefly to grow in gifts or abilities, as to preach and pray, &c., but to increase in graces: in gifts only, so reprobates may grow; yea, and so true believers may grow, and yet not bring forth more fruit. The Corinthians grew fast this way in respect of gifts; they were 'enriched in all utterance and knowledge, and came behind in no gift,' 1 Cor. i. 7, and yet he tells them that they were 'babes and carnal,' chap. iii. 2, 3. And therefore in the 12th chapter, after he had spoken of gifts, and endeavouring to excel therein, as they did, he tells them that indeed they were things to be desired, and therefore exhorts them to 'covet the best gifts;' but yet, says he, 'I shew unto you a more excellent way,' in the last verse of that 12th chapter. And what was that? It follows in the 13th chapter, even true grace, charity, love to God, and love of our brethren. A dram of that is, says he, worth a pound of the best fruit of gifts. And so his discourse, chap. xiii., doth begin, ver. 1, 'Though I speak with tongues of men and angels, yet if I have not charity,' &c. Gifts are given for the good of others, to edify them especially, 1 Cor. xii. 7; but graces, as love, faith, and humility, these are given to save a man's own soul, and therefore therein is the true growth. Yet as concerning this I will propound a caution or two :—

Caution 1.—Indeed, growth in gifts, together with growth in sanctification running along with it, will increase our account; for God will crown his own gifts in us, if, as they come from Christ, so they be used in him, and for him, in our intentions; but otherwise they puff up and hinder. They serve indeed to set out and garnish the fruit, and to help forward the exercise of graces; they are good fruit-dishes to set the fruit forth. But if grace grow not with them, we bring not forth much fruit, for at best they are but blossoms, not fruit.

Caution 2.—Again, men are indeed to endeavour to grow in these gifts of memory, and instructing others, and conferences, &c. As was said to Timothy, 'Let thy profiting appear to all,' 1 Tim. iv. 15; and to the Corinthians, 'Covet the best gifts,' especially whilst you are young; yet we are not simply thereby to take an estimate of our growth.

Caution 3.—Though this let me withal add, that often by increasing in grace a man increaseth in gifts, and for want of increasing in grace, gifts also do decay. The talents being used faithfully, were doubled, and unfaithfully, were lessened.

And this consideration may help to answer some doubts and objections which some Christians have about their growth; as, because they cannot pray so well as others, nor do so much service to the saints as some do, therefore they bring forth less fruit. Thou mayest bring more fruit for all that, if thou walkest humbly in thy calling, and prayest more fervently, though less notionally or eloquently. By how much the more we are humble, prize ourselves less by them, and use them in Christ and for Christ, seeing they come all from him; the more we are contented to want them, and not envy others that have them; so much the more fruit we bring forth, even in the want of such gifts.

Again, decay in gifts, as in old age, doth not always hinder men from bringing forth more fruit. As, although they cannot remember a sermon so well as they had wont, nor preach with that vigour, and vivacity, and quickness when they are old, nor be so active, stirring, forward, it follows not that they bring not forth more fruit. David when he was old could not govern the kingdom, nor do the church that service he had done formerly, yet true fruit he might grow in, in regard of his personal carriage towards God for his own salvation. A musician when he is young is able to sing sweetlier than when he is old; or when his vigour decays, his joints grow lame, he cannot play as he had wont; yet still he may grow a better musician, and have more skill, and set better. Affections, the quickness of them depends much upon bodily spirits.

2. Our bringing forth more fruit, it is not to be measured simply by our success towards others in the exercise of those gifts, though that be called fruit also; so, Jer. xvii. 10, they are called 'the fruit of our doings.' There are our doings, and the fruits of our doings,—that is, the success which our examples, or gifts, or graces, have upon others,—and so the conversion of the souls of men by the apostles is called by Christ 'their fruit,' John xv. 16; yet simply by this we are not to reckon our growth, for in success and exercise of gifts a man may decrease when he grows older, and so see less fruit of his labours than formerly, or haply he may be laid aside. So says the Baptist of himself, 'I must decrease,' John iii. 30. John, when Christ came to preach, had less comings in. And in this respect, old Christians and ancient ministers may decrease, and young ones increase, and yet they decay not in grace; for there are God's works in us, and God's works with us. Now, God's work with us in doing good to others may be less when yet his works in us may be more; for as there are 'diversities of gifts,' so of 'operations,' 1 Cor. xii. 4, 6. The Holy Ghost may use one of less grace to do more good than one of more: though herein this caution is to be added, that he delights usually to honour those of most sincerity with most success; as in that eminent apostle, Paul, 'the grace of God was more in him,' and so wrought more with him in doing much good to others, 1 Cor. xv. 10; and God also will reward 'according to the fruit of our doings,' as Jer. xvii. 10, when our desires are enlarged to do much good, and we intended and aimed to do that good which is done; there it is added there, in that Jer. xvii., 'whose heart thou knowest.' When he sees the heart clearly enlarged to do much good, then the fruit that is done is reckoned him as his; otherwise, whatever it be he doth by us, he will reward but according to our works, as concurrent with his. So, 1 Cor. iii. 8, the Apostle upon this oc-

casion intimates that seeing it is 'God that gives the increase,' he says that 'God will reward men according to their own labours;' not simply according to his works by them. As if God doth not go forth with a minister whose heart is much set to do good and to convert souls, to do so much good by him as with another, who is in his own spirit less zealous; yet if his heart was large in desires, and his endeavours great to do good, God will reckon more fruit to him than to another that had fewer endeavours, though more success.

3. This growth in grace, and bringing forth more fruit, is not simply to be reckoned by the largeness or smallness of those opportunities which men have of doing more or less good, and so, by the bringing forth of more fruit, in respect of more opportunities vouchsafed. Some that have more grace, and better gifts, have their shop-windows shut, night overtakes them, and the power of darkness, as it did Christ himself in the end, and then 'they cannot work.' Others have lesser shops to work in, and yet have more grace; yea, the same man may have larger opportunities when young and lesser when he is old, and yet grows and brings forth before God more fruit, because he accepts the will for the deed. So the Baptist was hindered in his latter time in prison, when yet he brought forth more fruit; and therefore he envied not Christ that got all his custom, his hearers, and disciples, but rejoiced that the work went forward, though not by himself. Here was as much grace expressed as in many sermons. So Paul, he was much of his time in prison, yet then he ceased not to bring forth more fruit that should tend to his salvation; for, Phil. i. 15, 16, whenas he being in prison, he heard others preached, and that out of envy to him, others out of good-will, I in prison rejoiced, says he, 'that Christ is preached,' though I cannot do it myself; and I know, says he, 'that this shall turn to my salvation,' ver. 19. These fruits were as much, and would bring him in as much glory as his preaching. Indeed, when a man shall prize opportunities of doing good, and for them voluntarily let go all opportunities of advancing himself and his credit, or ease, or carnal advantages, then the more fruit he brings forth in those opportunities, the more is reckoned on his score.

4. It is not always to be measured by accessory graces, as joy and spiritual ravishment, &c., which tend to the *bene esse*, the comfort of a Christian; but it is to be estimated rather by those substantial graces, as faith, humility, love, strong and solid affections to what is good. The other may decrease when these that are more substantial do increase. These sweet blooms may fall off when fruit comes on; though the gloss wear out, no matter, so the stuff be strong and substantial. Young Christians grow like new instruments; they have more varnish than old, but not so sweet a sound. Yea, often the decreasing of those superadded graces are a means of the increase of the other. Want of feeling causeth more exercise of faith, as taking away bladders exercises a man to swim. One that hath bladders, and the stream with him, seems to swim as well and as fast as one that hath learned long, and hath more skill and strength, but wanteth these, and swims against the stream, yet not so fast. Spiritual withdrawings cause more humility, more cleaving to God. A man, as the leper cleansed, haply at the first leaps more, but goes as fast afterward.

5. It is not increasing in outward professing, and a seeming forward, but especially in inward and substantial godliness; the other is but as increasing in leaves; but in growth there must be a bringing forth more fruit. When the root strikes not deeper downward and further into the earth, but spreads much upward in the branches, this is not a true growth; though look where

there is more rooting, there will be more spreading also above ground. Growth, it lies not in this, 'that men should think of me above what I am indeed,' 2 Cor. xii. 6. Many at first grow into so great a profession as they cannot fill up and grow up to all their days : make bigger clothes than they can grow to fill ; as they say of elephants, that the skin is as big at first as ever after, and all their lifetime their flesh grows but up to fill their skin up. True growth begins at the vitals ; the heart, the liver, the blood gets soundness and vigour, and so the whole man outwardly ; this heart-godliness is the thing you must judge by.

6. And yet, even in inward affections many be deceived ; even there the party for Christ in appearance may be greater than in truth. So, often in a young Christian, there is a greater army of affections mustered, but most of them but mercenaries : his affections are then larger, his joys greater, his sorrows violenter than afterwards. More of his heart joins in duties at first ; but afterwards, though less, yet more spiritually and truly. The objects being then new, draw all after them : not only spirit, or that new principle of grace is stirred then, but flesh also. The unregenerate part becomes a temporary believer for a time, hath a work upon it *per redundantiam*, as an unregenerate man hath who is a temporary ; which work on the unregenerate part doth decay, as in temporaries it doth, and grows less. Not only godly sorrow is stirred to mourn for sin, but carnal sorrow, being awakened by God's wrath, joins also, and so makes the stream bigger. Infidelity itself, like Simon Magus, for a while believes. Whilst the things of grace are a wonder to a man, as at first they are, presumption joins and ekes out faith. A great party in the heart 'cleaves by flattery,' as the phrase is in Daniel, and for by-ends, which, after some progress, fall off and faint in the way ; and those lusts that, over and above their true mortification, were further cast into a swoon, begin again to revive.

All this was resembled to us by the coming of the children of Israel out of Egypt, when, by those plagues in Egypt, and Moses's call, not only the Israelites, but even many of the Egyptians were wrought upon, and began out of self-love to fear the Lord, Exod. ix. 20, and so 'a mixed multitude,' it is said, went out with the Israelites, Exod. xii. 38, to sacrifice to the Lord ; but ere long, as Num. xi. 4, this mixed multitude began to murmur, and to fall off. So, at a man's first setting out at his first conversion, mixed carnal affections, the unregenerate part, through the newness of the objects, and impression of God's wrath, and heavenly ravishments, are wrought upon, and go out with the new Israel to sacrifice, but after a while these fall away, and then the number is less ; but the true Israelites may be increased. Hence it is that young Christians, if they know their hearts, complain more of hypocrisy, and old Christians of deadness. So, in times of peace, presumption ekes out faith, and makes it seem a great deal, which in times of desertion and trial falls off ; and then, though the believing party be less, yet more sincere. When the fire is first kindled, there is more smoke, even as much as fills the house ; but after the flame comes, that contracts all into a narrow compass, and hath more heat in it. So it is in young Christians, their affections, which Christ compares to the smoking flax, their joy in duties, their sorrow for sin, their love of God, is more, but exceeding carnal ; the flame after, though less, grows purer, and less mixed with vapours of corrupt self-love.

7. We must not measure our bringing forth more fruit by some one kind or sort of duties, but by our growth in godliness, in the universal extent and latitude of it, as it takes in and comprehendeth the duties of both callings,

general and particular, and all the duties of a Christian. Thus it may be when grown up we are less in some sort of duties than we were when we were young Christians. Haply we were more then in praying, in fasting, and reading and meditating; yea, spent the most, if not the whole, of our time in these. But because now we spend less time in these, we must not say therefore that we are fallen or decayed; for there are many other duties to be done besides these, which haply then we neglected, but now make conscience of. So that take all sorts of duties in the latitude of them, and we may be grown more, and do bring forth more fruit. Perhaps we bring forth less fruit of some one kind than afore, but if we be filled with all variety of fruits of the first and second table of our general and particular callings, this is to bring forth more fruit.

Men at their first conversion are necessitated often for to spend their whole time in such duties wherein they immediately draw nigh to God. Paul then spent three whole days in fasting and prayer. And then we allow them to do it, because their estates require it; they want assurance and establishment, they see grace to be that one thing necessary, and therefore we give them leave to neglect all things for it; they are new married to Christ, and therefore they are not to be pressed to war the first year, (as I may so allude,) as for young married persons it was provided in Leviticus; and parents and masters are to give allowance to such, then in their travail of their new birth, to lie in, and not to be cruel to them, in denying them more time than ordinary.

So also when they are in desertion,—which is a time of sickness, and in sickness you allow your servants time from their work,—as the church when she wanted her beloved, Cant. iii. 2, no wonder if she leaves all to seek him. As yourselves, when you want a child or a servant, you cry him in every street, and leave all to find him, as he left ninety-nine to find one lost sheep. And they then come new out of prison, out of their natural estate, and out of the fresh apprehension of the wrath of God, and therefore no wonder if they run so fast to haste out of it, and salute none by the way, stay to do no business; but when once they are gotten to the city of refuge, then they fall about their business and callings again. Hence young Christians are apt to be more negligent in their particular callings, and are all for the duties of religion, for their present distress and estate requires it. Ancienter Christians are apt to abound more in the duties of their particular calling. But he that hath learned to be conversant in both aright, to be conversant in his calling, so as to keep his heart up in communion with God, and so attend upon God without distraction, and to be conversant so in duties as to go about his calling cheerfully, and to 'do with all his might what his hand therein finds to do,' he is the best Christian. And therefore, 1 Thess. iv. 10, when he had exhorted them to increase more and more in grace, he goes on, ver. 11, to exhort them also 'to do their own business, and to work with their hands,' that they may 'walk honestly towards them without;' for to neglect our callings gives offence to them without, and therefore masters stumble at young Christians. But both, you see by the Apostle's exhortation in that epistle, may stand together, increasing in holiness, of which he had spoken before, chap. iii. 12, and chap. iv. 1, 10, with diligence in a calling, of which he speaks, ver. 11, &c. To be conversant all day in holy duties is indeed more sweet to a man's self, and is a heaven upon earth; but to be conversant in our callings is more 'profitable to others,' and so may glorify God more. And therefore, as when Paul would gladly have been with Christ,—for 'that is best for me,' says he,—yet, says he, 'to

abide here is more profitable for you,' Phil. i. 24. So, to enjoy immediate communion with God in prayer, and to meditate all the week long, is more for the comfort of a man's particular; but to be employed in the business of a man's calling, the more profitable for the church, or commonwealth, or family. And therefore it is to be accounted a bringing forth of more fruit, when both are joined and wisely subordinated, so as the one is not a hindrance to the other. Though the child, out of love to his mother, and the sweetness he hath in her company, could find it in his heart to stay all day at home to look on her, yet it pleaseth her more for him to go to school all day, and at night to come home and be with her, and play with her; and she then kisseth him, and makes much of him. Children when they are young, they eat often, and do little, and we allow them to do so; afterwards you set them to work, and to school, and reduce them to two good meals, and they thrive as well with it.

CHAPTER IV.

What it is to bring forth more fruit explicated positively; wherein many direct trials of growth are given.

II. THUS I have shewn you negatively what this growth is not to be measured by, and so by way of intimation wherein it consists; I will, secondly, do it more positively, and directly, and affirmatively.

1. We grow when we are led on to exercise new graces, and so to 'add one grace to another,' as the apostle Peter exhorts; as when in our knowledge we are led into new truths, and have answerable affections running along with those discoveries towards the things revealed. At first a Christian doth not exercise all graces, though all are radically in him. But as a man lives first the life of a plant, then of sense, then of reason, so is it in graces. There are many forms Christians go through, as scholars at school do, wherein their thoughts are in a more especial manner taken up about divine objects of a higher or inferior nature. The first form is to teach them to know their sinfulness of heart and life more; and so they go to school to the law, and are set to study it, even oftentimes a good while after conversion and faith begun. And then, after they have learned that lesson thoroughly, they are led up higher to have their faith drawn out, and to be exercised about free grace more, and towards Christ's person, union with him, and about the art and way of drawing virtue from him, and doing all in him. And herein it falls out with particular Christians as with the church in general; that as although the most infant days of the church, from Adam's time in the old world, had the knowledge of all fundamentals necessary to salvation, yet God went over *πολυμερῶς*, piecemeal, Heb. i. 1, age after age, to instruct his church in a larger knowledge of those fundamentals: so is it in God's dealing with particular Christians. Though a believer in his conversion hath the substance of all these taught him, yet he goes over them by piecemeal again throughout his whole life; and hath often such a distinct apprehension renewed of them, as if he had not known or minded them before. And sometimes his thoughts do dwell more about the emptiness of his own righteousness, sometimes about that fulness is in Christ, sometimes more about the spiritual strictness he ought to walk in. And because some are apt to give up the old work when they have new, hence that which is indeed but growth in grace in them many account to be but their first conversion; though every such eminent addition be to be accounted as a conversion, as Christ speaks to his disciples, 'Except ye be converted;' yet they were converted before. Now, the purpose I speak this for is a help to discern our growth; for when God thus is leading us with further light and affection to a larger apprehension of spiritual things, or to the trying new graces, so long we grow. Therefore, Cant. vii. 13, the church is said to 'lay up for her beloved fruits new and old;' and, Rom. v., from patience a man is led to experience, and from experience to hope. As wicked men are led on from

one sin to another, and so grow worse and worse; so godly men from one grace to another: and when it is so with us, then we increase.

2. When a man finds new degrees of the same grace added, and the fruits of them grow bigger and more plentiful: as when a man's love grows 'more fervent,' as 1 Pet. iv. 8; when faith, from merely casting itself on Christ, comes to find sweetness in Christ, which is to 'eat his flesh and drink his blood;' and then from that grows further up to an 'assurance of faith,' which is an addition to it; when anything that 'was lacking in faith,' as the apostle speaks, 1 Thess. iii. 10, is added. So when a man grows up to more strength of faith in temptations, and is less moved and shaken in them, more rooted in faith, as the apostle speaks. Thus in godly sorrow, when from mourning for sin as contrary to God's holiness, we go on to mourn for it as contrary to him who loves us, which follows upon assurance, as they 'mourned over him which once they had pierced:' not only that we mourn that we should offend a God hath so much mercy in him, but out of a sense of it to us, which many cannot find. So when our motives to hate sin grow more raised, more spiritual, these are additions of the same degree. So in prayer, when we find our prayers to grow more spiritual, as in that part of prayer, confession, when more spiritual corruptions are put into our confessions; and so, in like manner, stronger grounds of faith put into deprecation and petitions for pardon; more enlargedness to thankfulness; more zeal to pray for the churches; when we go on to 'pray with all prayer more,' as the Apostle speaks, Eph. vi. 18. Or in obedience, when we 'abound more and more in the work of the Lord,' as, Rev. ii. 19, it is said of that church, that 'their last works were more than the first;' so as the boughs are laden, and we are 'filled with the fruits of righteousness,' Phil. i. 11.

3. When the fruits and duties we perform grow more ripe, more spiritual, though less juicy, that is, less affectionate; and though they grow not in bigness nor in number,—that is, we pray not more nor longer,—yet they grow more savoury, more spiritual, more compact and solid. It is not simply the multitude of performances argues growth; when one is sick, and his body is decayed, he may be less in duties; but it is the spiritualness, the holiness of them. One short prayer put up in faith, with a broken heart, is in God's eye more fruit than a long one, or a whole day spent in fasting; even in the same sense that the 'widow's mite' is said to be 'more than they all' cast in, Luke xxi. 3. Young Christians perform more duties at first, and oftener, than after; as young stomachs eat more and oftener. As in noting sermons, so in performing duties, some will note more words but not more matter, because with less understanding. Young Christians perform more duties, and withal spoil more duties; young carpenters make many chips. But the more spiritual your performances grow, the more fruit there is to be esteemed that there is in them. It is not the bigness of the fruit, or juiciness of them, for then crabs were better than apples, but the relish it is that gives the commendation. And it is the end you have therein that puts this relish into them: when your ends are raised more to aim at God, and to sanctify him more, and to debase yourselves in a sense of your own vileness, and emptiness, and inability; and when your obedience proceeds more out of thankfulness, and less out of the constraint of conscience. As the greatest growth of wicked men is in spiritual wickedness,—in which the Pharisees grew, and sinners against the Holy Ghost do grow, when yet it may be they leave more gross evils,—so the greatest growth of grace is in spiritual holiness, in sanctifying God much in the heart, and 'worshipping him in spirit and truth.'

4. When a man grows more rooted into Christ, that is the true growth, and that which makes the fruit to be more in God's sight and esteem; therefore, Eph. iv. 15, we are said 'to grow up in him,'—that is, to live the life we lead more out of ourselves and in Christ. As when, for the acceptance of our persons, we are emptied of our own righteousness; so for strength to perform duties, we are emptied of our abilities, seeing 'without him we can do nothing.' So when for acceptance of our performances when we have done them, our hearts have learned habitually to say more and more with the apostle, 'Not I, but Christ in me;' when we interest Christ more and more in all we do, as the efficient and also the final cause. And therefore I observe, when growth of grace is mentioned, it is still expressed by 'growing in the knowledge of Christ;' so, 2 Pet. iii. 18, 'Grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ;' as if to grow in grace without him were nothing, as indeed it is not. So in the Ephesians we are said both to grow up in him and for him. Philosophers did grow in moral virtues, but not in Christ; so do civil men and others. Temporaries do duties from him, but yet as in themselves; as the ivy that hath sap from the oak, but concocts it in its own root, and so brings forth as from itself. To do one duty, sanctifying Christ and free grace in the heart, is more than a thousand. Young Christians, it may be, do more works, but not as works of grace: and the more men think by duties to get Christ and God's favour, the more in duties they trust, and so they become as works of the law; but the more dead a man grows to the law, and to live to Christ and Christ in him, and the more free grace is acknowledged in all, trusted in above all, the more evangelical our works are, and the more to God, (for that is the end of the gospel, to honour Christ and free grace,) the more we grow. 'We are of the circumcision,' says the Apostle, 'who rejoice in the Lord Jesus, worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh,' Phil. iii. 3. As these are the surest signs of true grace, so of true growth.

5. The more we learn to bring forth fruits in season, the more fruit we may be said to bring forth. For the seasonable performance of them makes them more. All the fruits in their season, how acceptable are they! which out of season they are not. In the 1st Psalm a righteous man is said to 'bring forth his fruits in due season;' and in the Proverbs, 'Words in season are as apples of gold and pictures of silver.' In Ezek. xlvii. 12, they are said to 'bring forth pleasant fruits in their months.' As in reproof he is not so much to reprove, as to reprove in season; to have our 'senses exercised' to know fit seasons, and to 'consider one another to provoke to love,' as it is Heb. x. 24. Young Christians do more, but more out of season, and the devil abuseth them, putting them upon duties, when they would be at their refreshings, at their callings; he deceiving them with this, that holy duties in themselves, as alone simply compared, are better than to do anything else; whereas the season adds the goodness to our actions. Thus to recreate thyself at some seasons is better than to be a-praying. A 'righteous man orders his conversation aright,' Ps. l. 23, and order gives a rectitude, a goodness to things.

6. When we grow more constant in performances, and more even in a godly course, and settled in spiritual affections without intermission, it is a sign we grow. It argues that 'our inward man is more renewed day by day,' when we can walk closely with God a long while together. A righteous man is compared to the palm-tree, 'whose leaf never fades,' Ps. i.; whereas other trees bring forth by fits. And by fits to be much in duties is not a sign of growth, but weakness; it is out of inordinacy. And of such

a frame are young Christians' hearts, like new lute-strings, which, when they are wound too high, are still a-falling ever and anon ; whereas strings settled long on an instrument will stand long, and not slip down.

7. A man may be said to grow and bring forth more fruit, when, although the difficulties of doing duties become greater, and his means less, yet he continues to do them, and this though it may be he doth no more than he did before. For a tree to bring forth much fruit in cold weather, or standing in the shade, is more than in summer, or when it stands in the sun. 'I know thy work, thy labour, and thy patience,' Rev. ii. 19. When a man, though he do fewer works, yet with much labour, having it may be now a body grown weak ; or holds out in the profession of the ways of God, with more scoffs, and hazarding more, in a place where 'Satan's throne is ;' this makes a little done for Christ a great deal. So when a man thrives with a little trading, with small means of grace, and yet exceedeth those that have more ; to pray, and to continue to do so, though the stream is against us, and gales cease ; to pray, and to continue to pray, when we hear no answers, but the contrary. It is noted of Daniel, that 'he did the king's business after he had been sick,' chap. viii. 27 ; and so he prayed, you know, when he ventured his life for it. When we have less straw to make the same number of brick with, less wages, less encouragements, and yet do as much work with cheerfulness.

8. When a man, though he doth less for the outward bulk, yet grows more wise and faithful to lay out all his opportunities and abilities to the best advantage ; this is to bring forth more fruit. Thus Moses, who at first began to hear himself all causes both small and great, but in the end he gave over the lesser causes to others, and reserved the hearing of the greater to himself, Exod. xviii. 13-26, yet still he continued to do more, and laid himself out to the greater advantage. His former course would in the end have killed him ; 'Thou wilt wear away like a leaf,' saith Jethro to him. So the Apostle, who strived to preach the gospel 'where Christ had not been known,' Rom. xv. 20. When a man forbears lesser things to lay out all for the church's advantage ; less ventures himself in a smaller course, (unless particularly called to it,) not out of fearfulness but faithfulness, and will lay all the stock on it in a greater. Young Christians are as young fencers, they strike hand over head, downright blows ; whereas if they would consider their brother, or a wicked man whom they would reprove, as skilful fencers do, and at an advantage hit them a good blow, is it not much better ? When a man 'watcheth in all things,' as he exhorts Timothy, 2 Tim. iv. 5, and 'serves the season,' as some read it, Rom. xii. 11,—that is, waits for the best advantages of doing good, both which may stand with fervency of spirit, and enduring afflictions, for so the next words are in both those places. A man is no less liberal that studies how to lay out his money to most charitable uses, though he gives less to fewer particulars. We live in a wicked world, and godly men cannot do what they would, as wicked men also cannot. When therefore a man looks about him, and studies to improve himself to the utmost advantage for God in his place, to lay out his credit, his parts, and all for God, as a faithful factor in the best wares, though he deals in fewer particulars, he may notwithstanding bring forth more fruit.—And thus much for matter of trial about the first thing, positive growth in fruitfulness.

PART II.

OF GROWTH IN MORTIFICATION; OR, GOD'S PURGING OUT CORRUPTION.

He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.—JOHN XV. 2.

CHAPTER I.

The observation out of the text propounded, That God goes on to purge corruption out of true branches.—Bounds set to this discourse about it, according to the scope of the text.—The reasons of the point.

I COME now to the trial of our growth in that other part of sanctification,—namely, the mortification of lusts, and purging out of corruptions,—which the text also calls for; Christ here saying not only that they bring forth more fruit, but that God ‘purgeth them’ that they may bring forth more fruit.

The observation from which words is clearly this, *That God chooseth true branches to grow, in a purging out of their corruptions, as in true fruitfulness.*

In the handling of this point, I shall do these four things:—

I. First, Set the bounds and limits of this discourse about it, according to Christ's intendment, as here he speaks of it.

II. Secondly, Give some reasons of the point.

III. Thirdly, Shew the ways which God useth to carry on the progress in this work.

IV. Fourthly, Give some helps of trial about it.

I. Now for the first, the explication and limiting this point unto Christ's intendment here, that so I may only so far handle it as the scope of the words will bear, I premise these three things about it:—

1. That purging here intended, which is indeed all one with mortification, and emptying out sin out of our hearts and lives, is to be restrained here to the progress of a Christian in that work, and not as taking in with it that first work of mortification wrought at a man's first conversion; so as I intend not now to lay open to you the nature of mortification, and what it is, by way of commonplace, but only intend to speak of growth in it: for of that Christ speaks, because it is such a purging as is after bringing forth some fruit, and whereof the end is to bring forth more fruit. Neither—

2. Are we so much to speak of it here as it is a duty to be done by us, though it be so, but as it is a work of God upon us, which he takes care to go through with and perfect in all those who are fruitful; for he speaks here of it rather as an act of God's—‘he purgeth’—than as it is to be an act of ours, that we ought to purge ourselves; though both do go together, as

in that speech, Rom. viii. 13, 'We by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh;' so as that which is proper to the point in hand, for the explication of it, as here in this place it is laid down, is not so much to give you motives or means of purging yourselves, as to shew you the ways and courses God takes still one way or other to purge his children by, that they may be more fruitful. And yet—

3. In this work of mortification, considered thus in the progress of it, we are not mere passives,—as at that final perfecting and finishing of it, and carrying away all sin at death we are, and are at that first habitual beginning of it, at conversion,—but therein we are 'workers together with God:' we being purged from sin as the body is by physic from humours; though the physic work, yet nature joins with the physic, being quickened and helped by it to cast out the humours; for give a dead man physic, and it carries not any humours away. So as those means whereby God purgeth us are not to be imagined to do it as mere physical agents, like as the pruning-hook cuts off branches from a tree, or as when a surgeon cuts out dead flesh; but these means do it by stirring up our graces, and quickening them, and by setting our thoughts, and faith, and affections a-work, and so God assisting with the power of Christ's death, he doth purge us daily, by making his word, afflictions, and the like, to set our thoughts a-work against sin, and so to cast it forth. It is certain, that unless our thoughts work upon the means, as well as the means work upon us, and so do mingle themselves with those means; that unless faith and Christ's death be mingled in the heart, it purgeth not. And therefore it is said as well that 'we purge ourselves,'—so 2 Tim. ii. 21, and also 1 John iii. 3, and Rom. viii., that 'we by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh,'—as it is said that 'God purgeth us,' which is the thing affirmed here, because God still, in going on to purge us, doth it by stirring up our graces, and useth therein acts of our faith, and love, and many motives and considerations, to stir up our graces so to effect it. Now—

II. For the reasons that move God thus to go on to purge corruptions out of his children:—

1. Because Jesus Christ hath purchased an eternal divorce between corruption and our hearts. He hath bought off all our corruptions, and redeemed us from all iniquity. Titus ii. 14, 'He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people;' and God will have the price of Christ's blood out.

2. Because God desires more and more to have delight in us, and to draw nigh to us, and therefore he more and more goes on to purge us. For though he loves us at first, when full of corruptions, yet he cannot so much delight in us as he would, nor have that communion with us, no more than a husband can with a wife who hath an unsavoury breath or a loathsome disease. They must therefore be purified for his bed, as Esther was for Ahasuerus. 'Draw nigh to God,' says James, 'and he will draw nigh to you,' chap. iv. 8, 9; but then you must 'cleanse your hands, and purify your hearts,' as it follows there; God else hath no delight to draw nigh to you.

3. He daily purgeth his that they may be fit for use and service; for unless he purged them, he could not use them in honourable employments, such as to suffer or to stand for him, in what concerns his glory; they would be unfit for such uses, as a vessel is that is unscoured. Therefore, 2 Tim. ii. 21, 'If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour,'—that is, he shall be used in honourable employments, and not laid aside,—and he shall be 'meet for his master's use,' as vessels kept clean, when on the sudden the master hath occasion to use them, and to have them served in.

4. That as our persons, so that our services may be more and more acceptable ; that our prayers and such performances may savour less of gifts, and pride, and self-love, and carnal desires : so, Mal. iii. 3, 4, it is said, ' He shall sit as a purifier of silver ; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, as gold is purified, from their dross, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness : and then shall their offerings be pleasant to the Lord ' The more the heart and life is purged, the more acceptable your prayers are, and your obedience, and all you do.

CHAPTER II.

The ways God useth to purge out our corruptions ; and means whereby he causeth us to grow therein.

III. Now, in the third place, for the ways whereby God goes on to purge us, there are many and diverse ; he blesseth all sorts of means and dealings of his to accomplish it.

1. First, he useth occasional means to do it, and blesseth them ; as—

(1.) Even falling into sins. Thus it was with David when he fell ; thereby God set him anew upon this work, as by his prayer appears, Ps. li., ‘Oh, purge me, make me clean.’

(2.) Secondly, by casting them into afflictions. So, Dan. xi. 35, ‘They shall fall, to purge them and make them white.’ What the word doth not purge out, nor mercies, that afflictions must. These vines must be cut till they bleed. Summer purgeth out the outward humours that lie in the skin by sweating, but winter concocteth the inward by driving in the heat, and so purgeth away the humours that lie in the inward parts ; and so, what by the one, what by the other, the body is kept in health. Thus mercies prevail against some sins, and afflictions against others. Moses neglected to circumcise his child, (as we do our hearts, it is such a bloody work,) till God met him, and would have killed him. And in like manner God sometimes puts us in the fear or danger of losing our lives, casts us into sicknesses, and the like, making as if he meant to kill us, and all to bring us off to this work of purging, to circumcise our hearts.

2. As these occasional, so also instrumental instituted helps, as his word. So, Eph. v. 26, Christ is said ‘to cleanse his church with the washing of water by the word ;’ by the word *spoken*, either in preaching or in conference. So in the very next words to my text, ‘Now ye are clean through the words I have spoken unto you ;’ they had then received the sacraments, and had heard a good sermon. The word at once discovers the sin, and sets the heart against it : ‘I was ignorant, till I went into the sanctuary.’ There goes a light with it to see sin after another manner, although a man did know it before, and then the word sets out the vileness of a sin ; and to hear a sin declaimed against and reproveth sets an exasperation upon the mind against it, and so a man goes home, and sets upon it to kill it and destroy it. Or else by the word *meditated* upon, as by keeping some truth or other fresh and sweet in the mind, which the mind cheweth on. God fastens the mind upon some new promise, or new discovered sign of a man’s estate, and these ‘cleanse’ him, 2 Cor. vii. 1 ; or upon some attribute of his, and that quickens the inward man, and overcomes the outward. Some consideration or other every day God doth make familiar to a man’s spirit, to ‘talk with him,’ (as the phrase is, Prov. vi. 22,) and to keep him company, and usually some new one ; God leading us through varieties of sweet truths to chew upon, one this day, and another to-morrow. And these have an exceeding purging virtue

in them; they keep the purging issue open, even as those that have issues made in their arms or legs use to have a pea, or some such small thing, to lie in the orifice of the issue to keep it open; and so doth such a new truth, with spiritual light discovered, still keep the purging issue of sin open, and draws out the filth, and 'keeps the heart.' So says Solomon, Prov. vi. 21, 22, 24: observe the coherence there, and it is as if he had said, Keep this command fresh in mind, and it shall keep thee.

3. God useth also the examples of others as means to provoke a man to purge himself.

(1.) Examples of those that have been professors, and fallen away. They provoke a man to set fresh upon this work, lest that the like sins should prevail against him also, and cause him to fall. Therefore the Apostle, when he heard of Hymenæus and Philetus's fall, 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'Let every one,' says he, 'that calls upon the name of the Lord,' make this use of it, to 'depart from iniquity.' And it follows, 'If you purge yourselves from these, ye shall be vessels of honour.' It follows upon that occasion.

(2.) Examples of holy men. To hear very holy men speak what victory over lusts may be attained here doth much provoke another to purge himself, who else would content himself with a lesser degree; so Phil. iii. 17.

4. In the last place, there are many inward workings upon the heart, whereby God goes on still to purge us.

(1.) First, by a further discovering of corruptions unto us; either a greater filthiness in the evils we saw before, or to see more of them, and by what one sees to suspect more. God never discovers lusts to his but to carry them away; he stirs the humours to purge them. Thus when David saw his sin, he sets anew upon cleansing himself. In the 19th Psalm, coming new from taking a view of his heart, and having seen such volumes of corruptions, so many *errata* in all that he did, he cries out, 'Who can understand his errors?' and withal, 'Oh, cleanse me from secret sins.' He then saw secret evils, and suspected more than as yet he saw; and this made him cry out, 'Oh, cleanse me,' and so to use all means, and to go to God to cleanse him. So when, in the 51st Psalm, God let down a light to let him but see the corruption of his nature afresh, that he was 'born in sin,' and had 'no truth' there, more falsehood than he could ever have imagined, 'Oh, purge me,' says he upon it.

(2.) Secondly, he sets the heart on work to make it a business to get one's lusts mortified more and more, and not to rest in the measure attained. Phil. iii. 13, Paul 'forgot what was behind;' he did still desire to have more fellowship with Christ in his death and sufferings, in the death of sin. When a man's heart is set upon the work, as that τὸ ἔργον he came into the world for, as David, who took up a resolution, 'I said I would look to my ways;' so when a man hath said unto himself, I will grow in grace, as they say, 'I will be rich,' 1 Tim. vi. 9, and so looks at it as his business, being as much convinced of this, that he should be more holy, as he was at first that he was to be new born; when growth of grace is as much in a man's eye as getting grace at first was, and as great a necessity made of the one as of the other. This conviction many want, and so take no care to grow more holy and more pure. Phil. iii. 15, 'If any be otherwise minded, says the Apostle, that there is no such absolute necessity of going on still to perfection, 'God shall reveal it to him.' God doth reveal and set on this upon every godly man's heart at one time or another, and so goes on to purge them. And this is also expressed to us, 1 Peter iv. 1, 'Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, let us arm ourselves with the same

mind,' namely, to mortify our lusts ; for it follows, 'He that hath suffered in the flesh,' that is, hath mortified his lusts, 'hath ceased from sin.' That same 'arming' there is God's putting into the mind a strong and invincible resolution to go through with this work ; when he arms and steels it against all difficulties, all encounters. This is meant by 'arming us with the same mind : ' that as Christ looked upon it as his business why he came into the world, even to suffer for us ; so for us to look upon it as our business to crucify our lusts. When therefore we intend all our endeavours upon this work, and mind nothing in comparison, pray for nothing more, receive sacraments for this purpose, and hear and perform all other duties with an eye to this, prosecute this business as the main ; when God hath put such a resolution into a man, and preserves it, then he goes on to purge him.

(3.) Thirdly, God doth it by drawing the sap and juice of the affections of the heart more and more into holy duties and into obedience. When that intention of mind, as our morning thoughts and the like, which we formerly spent upon vanities, are now drawn into prayer and holy meditations, then lusts do wither ; and when our care is how to please God more, and our hearts are more in the duties of obedience, then doth corruption shale off more and more ; and thus by diverting our intentions doth God work out corruptions. And look, as the sun doth draw up the sap out of the root, so doth Christ draw out the heart at some times more than at others to holy duties, and unto communion with himself in the duties. This killeth sin, and causeth it to wither,—namely, by taking away the sap, that is, that intention of mind which doth usually nourish it. Thus, 1 Pet. i. 22, 'We purify our hearts by obeying the truth.'

(4.) Fourthly, by bringing the heart more and more acquainted with Christ, his Son, which is the Father's work to do, for 'none comes to the Son but whom the Father draws.' Now, how many souls are there who have gone puddering on, as I may so speak, in the use of other means, and though in the use thereof Christ hath communicated some virtue to them, yet because they did not trade with him chiefly in those duties, they have had little in comparison to what afterwards they have had when he hath been discovered to them, as that great ordinance who is appointed by God to get their lusts mortified. Before this they have washed and washed, but they have washed without soap, until Christ hath been thus revealed to them, and the virtue of his death and rising again, which is compared, Mal. iii. 2, unto 'fuller's soap,' &c. In Zech. xiii. 1, it is said that 'God opens a fountain to the house of David, for sin and for uncleanness,' that is, for the guilt of sin and the power of sin. Now by that opening is not meant the promise of sending his Son into the world to be crucified, but the discovery of him to believers after his being crucified : for, chap. xii. 10, he is supposed to be crucified already, for they there 'see him whom they have pierced ;' therefore by that opening there is meant the discovery of him to his people, and him to be the great ordinance of cleansing them. Now, the more distinctly a man understands Christ, and how to make use of him, who is already made sanctification to us, the more easily he gets his lusts purged. Such a one, that trades immediately with Christ, will do more in a day than another in a year ; for, seeing that the power of purging us lies immediately in him, and that he is the purging drug which mingles itself with the word and all means else, and sets them all a-work, therefore the more of him we have, and the more immediate application we have of him to us, and of his power, the more recourse our hearts have to him, the more our lusts are purged. As it is in drugs or minerals, if the infusion and steeping of them in liquors will work,

how much more if the substance of them be taken down inwardly and immediately? Now this comes to pass, as God doth go on to open our faith to see him, and know him, and to be acquainted with him; for so the Apostle expresseth it, Phil. iii., 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.' The more we look upon all means else in the use of them as ineffectual without him, the more power we shall find from him.

(5.) Fifthly, by assuring the soul of his love, and shedding it abroad in the heart, and by working spiritual joy in the heart, doth God also purge his people. And to work all these is in God's power immediately and solely. 'I am crucified with Christ,' Gal. ii. 20. And how? By believing that 'Christ gave himself for me, and loved me.' This deadens a man to the world, makes a man crucify that which Christ was crucified for; and this makes a man hate sin, the more he loves Christ, or apprehends his love. And it doth this in a double relation or respect, not only because sin so displeaseth him, nor only as it is contrary to his will, but because it did afflict him so much once, and because to 'take sin away' was the intent he came into the world. For so (1 John iii. 4) although a believer is said to mortify sin upon this consideration indeed, that it is 'the transgression of the law,' yet much more upon this other, because 'Christ was manifest to take sin away.' And the more assurance I have of another life and a better, and of being like Christ hereafter, the more a man purgeth himself to be fit for that condition. 'He that hath this hope in him purgeth himself, as he is pure;' so in 1 John iii. 2. The more joy a man hath in Christ, the more deadened he must needs be to the world; the one eats up the other: for the ground of all sin is but the love of pleasure. Now, if I find it in God and Christ, it deadens me for seeking it in the world; for *omnis vita gustu ducitur*, all life is maintained by a taste of some sweetness. Now, when the sweetness of sin, the relish of it, is spoiled by the taste of a greater, it must needs die and abate. And though that sweetness from God doth not always remain in the present taste and relish of it, yet it leaves such an impression behind it, that whatever a man tastes after, it hath no relish with him in comparison; still he says 'the old is better:' and though the taste of one sinful pleasure may take us off from another, yet none but a contrary pleasure doth kill the sin and the pleasure in it.

CHAPTER III.

The trial of mortification ; and that first by negative signs, or such as argue much corruption yet remaining unpurged out.

IV. I WILL now come to that fourth thing which was propounded, namely, helps whereby you may discern what progress hath been made in this work. And as I said at first that my purpose was not so much to handle mortification in the commonplace of it, as only growth therein ; so those things I shall now deliver about discerning the measure of it, I intend them not so much for signs of mortification, as rules whereby we may judge how the work goes forward in us, and how far we are still short in it.

1. And, first, I will handle it negatively, and give you such symptoms as argue much corruption, a great deal of humours yet remaining to be purged out ; such as argue little proficiency in this work, though such as withal true grace may be supposed to be in the heart.

(1.) When a man doth magnify and sets a high price upon worldly and carnal excellencies and pleasures ; is much taken with outward things, and carried away with them ; or when, though we restrain ourselves from the eager pursuit after them, yet if in our eyes and opinions they seem glorious and goodly things, and, oh, we secretly think, the enjoying such a pleasure, the obtaining such an excellency, or such or such a condition of life, accommodated with such and such conveniences and circumstances, would be so great an addition of happiness to us ; this argues a green heart, much want of mortification, though truth of grace be there. These apostles to whom Christ spake this parable of the vine, and unto them especially, how were they affected and transported with a trifle ! Even that very night that Christ was to be attached, they strive for precedency, and ‘who should be the greatest amongst them,’ Luke xxii. 24, who should be chief of that noble order. And it was such a precedency which they affected as noblemen have in kingdoms, as appears by the following words : they shewed themselves but Gentiles in it, (as, ver. 25, Christ insinuates,) who stand upon their blood and their outward privileges. It was not for nothing Christ tells them in this parable they needed purging ; but the reason was, they were but children yet, and ‘babes in Christ,’ now in their minority, and were not weaned from rattles and trifles. Christ was not yet crucified, nor they so thoroughly crucified with him as they were afterwards. The Holy Ghost had not yet come upon them as fire to burn up their lusts, and to consume this their dross. That other apostle, Paul,—who says of himself that he was ‘born out of time,’ in comparison to them,—had attained to a greater measure, he glorying in this as his highest title, that he was ‘the least of the apostles.’ This magnifying of outward things in our conceits and opinions is indeed but ‘knowing things after the flesh,’ as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. v. 16, because the flesh doth fascinate and corrupt the judgment, in judging ourselves by such things. And this argues exceeding much want of mortification, for it

is lust that puts that lustre, and gloss, and varnish upon the things of the world ; for the things in themselves are vain, and we have had experience that they are such. How comes it, then, we should esteem them and be taken with them, that we should have such high conceits of them ? It is by reason of our lusts unpurged out, which represent them falsely ; and therefore it is observable that John, 1 Epist. ii. 16, speaking of the things of this world, he puts *the lust* which is in us to express the *things* themselves. He says not, riches and preferment, &c., though he speaks of them, but the 'lusts of the eye' and 'pride of life ;' so he expresseth them, because they are these lusts that make the things so glorious to us, and set a price upon them. And therefore so much magnifying and high esteem of outward things as there is in us, so much inordinate lust there is in the heart after them, and so much want of mortification ; and when these lusts boiling in us fume up so high as to intoxicate and corrupt our esteem and judgments, which though grace should keep us from pursuing these vanities, that yet we look upon them with a wanton eye, and think great matters in them, and think ourselves, as it were, debarred and restrained of so much of our happiness, whilst we want and cannot enjoy them, this argues an unmortifiedness ; for herein lies the power of mortification, even to 'count all things dross and dung,' to look upon them as 'crucified things,' to have them seem all as withered flowers, as 'small things,' as he speaks of man's esteem, 1 Cor. iv. 3.

(2.) Secondly, when our minds are carried out to superfluities, and more than needs, and are discontented with our own condition, though it be such as might content us, this argues a great want of purging, this is from superfluity of humours abounding in the heart. When they in the wilderness, though they had manna, yet they must have quails also. When there are such extravagant affections in us, that we think any other condition would please us better than our own, this argues much unmortifiedness, though it run not out into acts ; it is the 'superfluity of naughtiness,' the excess of corruption that thinks 'stolen meat sweet,' as in the Proverbs. When our longings are wild and humorous, like the longings of women with child, whom nothing but some one odd thing they have set their fancy on will please ; like sick men's stomachs, with whom nothing will down that is provided for them, but still they have a mind rather to something else ; so nor we with what God allots us. And when we are environed about with comforts, yet all are nothing if some one be wanting. Such unmortified lusts we see in Samson ; though a good man, yet none of the daughters of Israel could please, but he must have one of the Philistines, Judges xiv. 3.

(3.) Thirdly, when our minds are so glued to anything, as we cannot tell how to part with it ; how to lose such a friend or such a convenience, we would think ourselves half undone if such or such a thing should fall out. David's heart was full of humours, and needed purging, when he ventured so much of his comfort in his Absalom alone, that when he was cast away he wished that he had died for him. It is good often to try our hearts, by supposing the worst that can befall us,—What if a change should come, such a thing I should be put to,—to see how the heart can bear it. When some men have a loss in their estates and riches, it is as it were raked out of their bellies, as Zophar speaks, Job xx. 15, and a piece even of their very heart goes with them.

(4.) Fourthly, when a man is still distempered under variety of conditions and businesses, and is inordinate in them all, it argues much unmortifiedness. As if he be to recreate himself, he is inordinate in it, and knows not when to end, and fall to his calling again ; if to study, then he is also as violent in

it, and entrenches upon the duties should keep up his soul in health, as also upon the necessary refreshings his body requires. Broach the vessel where you will, if still it runs muddy and thick, it is a sign the vessel is full of ill liquor. To be distempered in some one particular is less, but when in every vein that is opened much corrupt blood comes forth, it is a sign the body is full of humours, and needs purging. A man that is in an ague, and when the cold fit takes him he is extreme cold, and when the hot fit comes he is on the contrary as extreme hot, it is a sign he is full of humours, which as they are purged out, one or the other abates, or both. If when a man abounds, then he is commonly confident, and forgets God; if when he wants, then he is as much on the other side distempered, and grows solicitous, distrustful. Sound bodies can bear sudden alteration of heat and cold, but distempered weak bodies cannot. Nature cannot bear a sudden alteration, but much grace can; 'I know how to want, I know how to abound,' Phil. iv. 12. He was much therefore mortified; he could work hard in summer, without much sweating, and he could undergo the cold of winter without catarrhs, and such weaknesses as others are subject to; his soul was well purged of humours. And so Job had learned to bless God when all was gone; he was a man thoroughly mortified before, he had carried himself in his best estate without security and carnal rejoicing; thus he says of himself, that he 'made not gold his hope, nor his confidence, nor had rejoiced because his wealth was great,' chap. xxxi. 25, and answerably, he behaves himself in his worst estate with patience and thanksgiving.

(5.) Fifthly, the more carnal confidence we have in the creatures, and bear ourselves upon them, and have our spirits strengthened and upholden by them, the more want of mortification. The Corinthians, though godly, yet they were very unmortified; therefore the Apostle says, they were 'rather carnal than spiritual,' 1 Cor. iii. 1. Now this their carnal-mindedness, among other things, was expressed in their carnal confidence they had in outward things. They had riches, and gifts, and learning, and they did swim in these; and reigned and domineered in their own thoughts, and excelled all other churches in their own opinions, and so despised others in comparison. They were carried aloft by these waxen wings, which I take to be the Apostle's meaning, 1 Cor. iv. 8, 'Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned;' they had riches and gifts, &c., and they thought themselves as kings, full of happiness, having the world before them, and were filled with conceits of it; and 'I would to God you did reign,' says he,—that is, that it were not *regnum in capite*, in your own conceits only,—and that there were indeed such real cause to applaud your own conditions. 'We are of the circumcision,' says the Apostle, 'and have no confidence in the flesh,' Phil. iii. 3. The more the heart is truly circumcised,—of which he there speaks, in opposition to those who rested in outward circumcision,—it trusteth not, nor beareth not itself, upon outward things, privileges, and endowments, as riches, blood, credit, learning, righteousness; these, when the heart is not circumcised, do puff it up; 'but we,' says he, 'have no confidence in the flesh,' either for comfort, or for justification, or anything else; but we rejoice in Christ Jesus.'

(6.) Sixthly, the more full of envyings, and heart-burnings against others, and of breaking forth into strife, our hearts are, and of strivings and contentions to get the credit, or riches, or victory away from others, &c., the more unmortified are our hearts, and the more need of purging. These overflowings of the gall and spleen come from a fulness of bad humours. 'Whereas there is among you envying and strife, are ye not carnal?' 1 Cor.

iii. 3. That is, this argues you to be such, for envy and strife are **not only** lusts in themselves, but further they are such lusts as are always the children and fruit of some other; they are rooted in, and spring from inordinate affections to some things which we contend for; and accordingly, if this fire of envy or strife prove great, it argues the fuel—that is, the lusts after the things we envy others for—to be much more. For envy is but an oblique lust, founded on some more direct lust; these are but the outward flushings, that shew the distemper to be much more within. James iv. 1, 'From whence come wars and fightings amongst you? come they not hence, even of your lusts which fight in your members?' There is something the heart would have, as it follows in the 2d verse, 'Ye lust, and have not,' &c. A contentious spirit is an unmortified spirit; 'If ye bite and devour one another,' Gal. v. 15. 'This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' Mark the coherence, it comes in upon biting one at another, for such walk not in the spirit, flesh doth prevail in them, that is his meaning.

(7.) Seventhly, the less able we are to bear reproofs for the breakings forth of our lusts, the more unmortified it argues our hearts to be. It is a sign we love those much whom we cannot endure to hear spoken against: therefore, says the Apostle, 'Be swift to hear, but slow to wrath;' take heed of raging when you are touched. And it follows a verse after, 'Casting away all superfluity, receive the word with meekness,' for it is your lusts uncast out, unpurged, that cause that wrath and heart-boiling against reproof. That good king was in a great distemper of spirit when he cast the prophet in prison that reproved him, for 'he oppressed the people also at the same time,' as is said, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. He was then taken in the springtide and swelling of his lusts of covetousness and oppression; they brake down all that withstood and opposed the current of them: and if, as he in this fit at this time, so we be found in such passionate tempers upon such occasions of reproof ordinarily, it argues the habitual frame of our hearts to be much unmortified, as this argued him at this time to have been actually much distempered.

(8.) Eighthly, the more quick and speedy the temptation is in taking, the more unmortified the heart is: when an object at the first presenting makes the lust to rise, and passeth through at the very first presenting of it, and soaks into the heart, as oil into the bones, and runs through all; when a man is gunpowder to temptations, and it is but touch and take, so as there needs not much blowing, but the heart is presently on fire, as, Prov. vii. 22, it is said, 'He went straightway after her.' A man will find that when his heart is actually in a good temper, a temptation doth not so easily take; his heart is then, though tinder, yet as wet tinder, that is more slow in taking. As there is a preparedness to good works, so there is a preparedness to evil; when the heart is in a covetous humour, 'and will be rich, then a man falls into temptations and a snare,' 1 Tim. vi. 9. His lusts will nibble at every bait in everything he deals in; they will take presently. When the heart is thus bird-limed, then it cleaves to everything it meets with. It is a sign that the heart is not 'awake to righteousness,' as the Apostle speaks, but to sin rather, when a little occasion awakeneth a lust, and rouseth it; as when, on the contrary, if a great deal of jogging will not awaken a man's grace.

(9.) Ninthly, the more our lusts have power to disturb us in holy duties, and the more they prevail with the heart, then the more unmortified and profane the heart is; as to have unclean glances in hearing, and worldly thoughts then ordinarily to possess the heart, and to take it up much: 'They

are profane,' says God, Jer. xxiii. 11, 'for in my house I have found their wickedness.' If the heart be carried away and overcome with unclean and worldly thoughts, then this argues much unmortifiedness, and that the flesh is indeed much above the spirit. For why, then a man is in God's presence, and that should overcome and overawe the unregenerate part, if it were not impudent and outrageous; and besides, then the regenerate part hath the advantage, for the word and the ordinance is a stirring of it up and provoking it to holiness. And therefore that at such a time a man's lusts should be able to tempt and seduce a man's heart, it argues sin hath a great part in the heart, when it affronts God in his throne, when grace is *in solio*, where it would be. For the disciples then to be talking who should be greatest, when Christ had made so long a sermon to them, and had administered the sacrament to them, this argued much want of mortification in them; even as it were a sign that the orthodox party were but a weak party in a kingdom, if, whilst they are at sermons, Papists durst come in and disturb them, and put them out.

(10.) Tenthly, when the recalling former acts committed by a man prove still to be a snare to him, and being suggested by Satan as a means to quicken his lust, the thought thereof doth rather stir up his lust afresh, it is a sign of an unmortified frame. Thus it is laid to the charge of that nation, Ezek. xxiii. 21, that 'she multiplied her whoredoms in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.' The remembrance of them was a snare to her, as appears by the 8th verse. It is a sign a man is deeply in love whenas he falls in love with the picture. When the remembrance of whence he is fallen should make him repent, that it should, on the contrary, cause him to commit the same sin again, it is a sign flesh hath much the better. To have the mind stirred with new objects and new temptations may stand with far less corruption and more grace, than to have it stirred afresh with the remembrance of the old. To find sweetness in a lust twice sod, which we have also often steeped, as I may so speak, in godly sorrow and hatred of it, and so boiled it in sour herbs; yet still to find sweetness in the remembrance of such an act, this argues much corruption. As the Apostle argues the sinfulness and strength of corrupt nature in him, that the law, which was holy and good, should stir up his lust whilst unregenerate; so may we, when the thought of a sin, which should stir up godly sorrow, should provoke and tickle corrupt nature again. Indeed, that the new scent of meat should have moved the Israelites would not have been so much, but that the remembrance of their flesh-pots should do it! That speech, Rom. viii., where we are commanded to 'mortify the deeds of the flesh,' may admit, among other, this interpretation also, that not only the lusts, but even former deeds and acts committed, which may prove an occasion of sin to us, and have a fresh verdure in our eye, are to be mortified.

CHAPTER IV.

Positive signs of growth in mortification, and God's purging of us.

2. AND so now I come to the second sort of signs—namely, positive signs of growth in mortification, and of God's purging of us.

(1.) First, the more insight a man hath into spiritual corruptions, together with a conflict against them, the more growth he hath attained unto in purging out corruptions; so as that now the chiefest of his conflict is come to be with spiritual lusts, not worldly lusts and gross evils; it is an evidence of his progress in this work. These ordinarily are sure rules, that whilst a man's conflict is with more outward gross evils, as uncleanness, worldly-mindedness, &c., so long and so much he is kept from the sight of those inward, hidden, close corruptions, which sit highest to the heart. As also, on the contrary, the more a man is freed from, and hath got victory over such more outward evils, the more his thoughts and intentions are bent inward to the discovery of the other more spiritual wickednesses. And the reason is, for these spiritual lusts, as pride, carnal confidence in a man's own graces, self-flattery, presumption, and the like, these corruptions lie, as I may so express it, more up in the heart of the country; but those other, of worldly lusts, lie, as it were, in the frontiers and skirts of it: and therefore, until such time as a man hath in some good measure overcome those that encounter him at the borders, he comes not to have so through a discovery and constant conflict with those that lie higher up in the heart: 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution, both of flesh and spirit,' says the Apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1, which implies that there are two sorts of corruptions, one of the flesh or body, the other of the spirit or soul: for so the opposition there is to be taken, for else all lusts are lusts of the flesh; that is, of corrupt nature. Again, such corruptions cause 'a blindness, that a man cannot see afar off,' as 2 Pet. i. 9. Whilst a scholar that learns a tongue hath not learned to escape all grosser faults in grammatical construction, he cannot be supposed to have come to know the elegancies of the tongue, nor see his errors therein; so nor do men come to be critics indeed, and cunningly skilful in the more curious *errata* of their hearts and spirits, till they have attained to such a degree of mortification as to be free from grosser evils. And indeed, those who are grown in grace have attained ordinarily some freedom from such sins; therefore, says John, 1 Epist. ii. 14, 'You young men are strong, and have overcome that evil one:' they have attained so much strength as to overcome the grosser evils. So as, to allude to what the Apostle says in another case, they then come to conflict not so much with 'flesh and blood' and outward evils, as with 'spiritual wickednesses' within,—that is, with affections and dispositions contrary to the work of grace; and therein lies their chiefest exercise, which is not till they have some freedom and victory over the other, and so are at leisure to view these.

(2.) Secondly, we may discern our victory over our lusts by our ability

more or less to deny ourselves. The more we grow up to a readiness, willingness, and freeness, and cheerfulness of heart to deny ourselves when we are called and put upon doing of it, the more are lusts purged out; for the reason that our hearts consult so much with carnal ends in business, that we have so much ado with them ere we can bring them off to part with such and such things, as God and our own consciences do call us unto, is through want of purging. For all want of self-denial is from an adhesion to outward things. Were we free and unmarried men to the world, were our hearts loosened from all, and were all the secret *fibræ*, those stings of lusts that shoot into things, cut, it would be nothing to us to part with them: this was in that great Apostle, how ready was he to lay down his life! 'My life is not dear to me, so I may fulfil my ministration with joy;' and so when the time of his departure was at hand, says he, 'I am ready to be offered,' 2 Tim. iv. 6. He speaks it in the present tense, *σπένδομαι*, 'I am offered;' it was done in his heart already. As in like phrase of speech it is said, Heb. xi. 17, that 'Abraham offered up his son,' because in his heart he fully purposed it. When men must be forced by terrors of conscience, as Pharaoh with plagues, to let their credits or estates go by restitution, or for God and good uses, &c., it is a sign of want of purging. The more loosened a man is from the world and the things of it, the more prepared that man is for all works of self-denial, and the more purged. So when a man parts with all without sticking or higgling, as Abraham is said to 'believe without staggering,' it is a sign he hath attained to a good degree, even as that argued a strong faith, Rom. iv. 20. When a man hath an open and a large heart to God, as a liberal man hath an open hand to men, as Abraham had when he was willing to let God have his only son, it was a sign he was much weaned; when God can command anything thou hast at an hour's warning, as we say. Abraham stood not long deliberating, Shall I, shall I? but went 'early in the morning,' even the next morning, God having called for his son that very night, as it is likely by that in the 22d of Genesis, ver. 3; for the night was the time when God used to reveal himself by visions; and the next morning he went forth early.

(3.) Thirdly, the more constancy there is in our hearts and ways, the more even, stable in well-doing, and the more lasting, durable frame and temper for holiness we find our hearts to abide in, the more we are purged; for in that we find such sudden flowings and re-flowings in our hearts, that when a corruption seems to be at a low ebb, and our hearts in a good frame, within an hour or so a mighty tide comes in, and we find our hearts overflowed with a sea of filth, such sudden alterations from the better to the worse do come from those vast seas of corruptions that are still within us, that tumble and float up and down in our hearts. So the Apostle intimates, 'Purge your hearts, ye double-minded.' That their hearts are of so unequal a temper, sometimes in hot fits, sometimes in cold, and so suddenly altered, this cannot be but from much corruption. This double-mindedness comes from want of purging. The Galatians were surely very weak and foolish, as he tells them, when they were so soon transported. He marvels not so much that they were removed, as that so soon, *ὥτω ταχέως*, so suddenly, Gal. i. 6, and brings it in as an evidence of their weakness, that they who would have 'given him their eyes' should now so much be altered and carried away; so much mortifiedness, so much constancy. Therefore, in the 5th of Galatians, ver. 24, 25, when in the 24th verse he had said, 'Those that are Christ's have crucified the affections with the lusts,' he adds in the 25th verse, 'If we live in the spirit, let us walk in the spirit:' the word imports a being constant

in the spirit. Then when lusts are crucified, then the Holy Spirit will rule us in our ways, and a holy frame of heart will be discovered, in a constant tract of holiness; we shall walk in the spirit, keep ourselves long in a spiritual frame and course, and not be biased aside; that we step out so much, is from strong lusts unmortified.

(4.) Fourthly, the more a man comes to a spiritual taste of the spiritual word, and that which is most spiritual therein, the more it is a sign that corruption is purged out. When a man comes to his stomach, it is a sign he is growing out of a sickness, and that the humours are much purged out. So, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 'Laying aside all malice,' &c., 'as babes desire the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted.' Therefore the more corruption is laid aside, the more we taste the word, and God in it; the more we taste, the more we desire it; the more we desire it, the more we grow.

(5.) Fifthly, when we are ashamed of former carriages and ways, as seeing and discerning those weaknesses we saw not before, as scholars use to be of their exercises a year or two after; so if we be ashamed of former prayers, hearings, &c., as that great proficient discerned in himself, who, looking back upon his first days of conversion, says, 'When I was a child, I spake as a child:' he speaks it, applying it to his growth of grace.

(6.) Sixthly, when in ordinary times of temptation a man finds a lust not so violent and raging as it was wont, but more impotent and weak. Look to your fits of sinning whether they become greater or less, for then a man's strength or weakness is discerned most; as the bodily strength is, when a man either goes about to put himself forth, or is assaulted and set upon. Many that are sick, whilst they lie still in their beds think they have a great deal of strength, but when they attempt to rise and walk they sink down again. As a man's weakness to good is discerned when he comes to do and to act it,—Rom. vii., 'to do I am not able,'—so a man's weakness to sin, or strength against it, is then also best discerned. The weakness or strength of a kingdom is best seen and discerned in time of war, when all forces are mustered up. Now, God sometimes appoints some more frequent assaults, and on purpose suffers 'the law in the members to war,' and to muster up all their force, that, as it is said of Hezekiah, a man 'might know what is in his heart.' Now, if then a man finds that the motions of sin in his heart do every temptation after other meet a hotter encounter than they had wont; that the resistance against sin grows quicker and stronger; that sin cannot advance and carry on his army so far as formerly, but is still encountered and met withal at the frontiers, and there overthrown even at the first setting out, so as it cannot carry it through the camp, (as Zimri did his mistress Cozbi,) as sometimes it had wont, whenas grace stood at the tent door, as Moses, weeping, yet unable to resist it; and although assaults and temptations do continue, that yet there is ground kept and won upon the encroachments of a lust, insomuch that at least the outward forts are kept by grace,—that is, outward acts are abstained from: now so far as the lust is not fulfilled as it had wont to be, and not only so, but the inroads of it are confined and contracted also to a narrower compass, and to have a lesser ground and space in regard of inward acts; also so far it is purged more forth. As, for instance, be it a lust of fancy, when it cannot boil up to such gross fancies as it had wont; be it a lust of pride, or uncleanness, or grosser acts, when it falls from bringing forth fruit, to bring forth but blossoms, but inward burnings, and from blossoms only to bring forth leaves, it is a sign then it is withering more and more. When the intention of mind in the

temptation, which is as the fire that makes it to boil, grows less and less ; when the inordinate thirst is not so great in the time of the fit ; when the inward acts are grown in their requests more modest, the lustings themselves pitch upon lower and inferior acts than they had wont ; when their armies depart with lesser spoil, are content with them, whereas before they flew at the first onset to the highest kinds of villanies and outrages ; when thus the overflowings of a man's lusts do abate and fall short, the tides lessen, overflow less ground, overspread less every day than another, this is another probable sign of a growth herein.

(7.) Seventhly, the more ability to abstain from occasions and opportunities of satisfying a man's lusts ; as Job, a man much mortified, 'made a covenant with his eyes not to behold a maid,' and kept to it, chap. xxxi. 1. When a man hates the 'very garment spotted with the flesh,' it is a sign of a strong hatred, when a man cannot endure to come where one he loves not is, cannot endure the sight of him, anything that may put him in mind of him, not so much as to parley or to speak with him.

(8.) Eighthly, when our hearts do not linger after such objects as may satisfy our lusts when absent, but when out of sight they are out of mind ; this is a good degree of mortification. We may find it in ourselves, that when objects are not presented, that yet there is in our hearts oftentimes a lingering after them, and this from themselves, without any outward provocation ; that is far worse. Many a man, when he sees meat, finds he hath a stomach to it, which he thought not till it was set before him ; but when a man longs after meat he sees not, it is a sign he is very hungry. As we see against rainy weather, before the rain begins to fall, the stones will *give*, as we use to say, and grow dank ; so a man that observes his heart may find, before objects are presented, or actual thoughts arise, a giving of his heart to such and such a lust, an inclination, a darkness, a moistness, a sympathising with such an object,—that is a sign of unmortifiedness. David was 'as a weaned child,' he had no thoughts of the dug, no longings after it ; I have 'no high thoughts' after the kingdom, says he, Ps. cxxxi. A child that begins to be weaned, it may be, at first cries after the dug, though he sees it not ; but afterwards, though it may be when he sees it he cries after it, yet not when absent. Objects present have a far greater force to draw, when absent less ; therefore this is a further degree of mortification attainable. It was in Joseph, when his mistress tempted him from day to day ; opportunity was ready, the object present, but he denied her. So in Boaz, a woman lay at his feet all night. So in David, when he had Saul in his lurch, might as easily have cut off his head as the lap of his garment ; and was egged on to do it, but he was then weaned indeed, and did it not. When a man can look upon beauty and preferment, and truly say, They are no temptations to me. It is a sign of an unsound temper, when upon eating such or such meats, a man is presently put into the fit of an ague ; a healthful man is not so. The prophet calls them 'the stumblingblock of their iniquity.' When a man is going on his way, and though he did not seek occasions of falling, yet meeting with them, he cannot step over them, but is caught, and stumbleth, and falls, it is a sign of unmortifiedness.

CHAPTER V.

Some cautions to prevent misjudging by false rules.—This case resolved, Whether growth in mortification may be judged by the ordinary prevailings of corruption, or actings of grace.

BESIDES these rules both these ways given, I will, in the third place, add some cautional considerations, to prevent misjudging of our growth in mortification, by such false rules as men are apt to be deceived, in judging worse or better of ourselves by, than the truth is, or than there is cause. Which considerations will also further serve as directions to us, as well as the former have done.

1. First, men may deceive themselves when they estimate their progress herein by having overcome such lusts as their natures are not so prone unto. The surest way is to take a judgment of it from the decay of a man's bosom-sin, even as David did estimate his uprightness by his 'keeping himself from *his iniquity*,' Ps. xviii. 23; so a man of his growth in uprightness. When physicians would judge of a consumption of the whole, they do it not by the falling away of any part whatever, as of the flesh in the face alone, or any the like; such a particular abatement of flesh in some one part may come from some other cause; but they use to judge by the falling away of the brawn of the hands, or arms and thighs, &c., for these are the more solid parts. The like judgments do physicians make upon other diseases, and of the abatement of them from the decrease in such symptoms as are pathognomical, and proper and peculiar to them. In like manner also the estimate of the progress of the victories of a conqueror in an enemy's kingdom is not taken from the taking or burning of a few villages or dorps, but by taking the forts and strongest holds, and by what ground he hath won upon the chief strength, and by what forces he hath cut off of the main army. Do the like in the decrease of, and victory over, your lusts.

2. Secondly, you must not judge of your mortification by extraordinary assistances or temptations; as you do not judge of the strength of a kingdom by auxiliary foreign forces, that are at extraordinary times called in. A young Christian shall, for his encouragement even in the heat of the battle, when he is ready to be overcome and carried away captive, find the Holy Ghost breaking in, and rescuing of him, as Jehoshaphat was (to allude to it) when 'he cried to the Lord;' whereas a Christian of much standing is left to fight it out hand to hand. Now it doth not follow that the other, because thus freed, hath the more strength. Again, on the other side, a man is not to judge of himself by his weakness in some one extraordinary temptation. A man that is very sick, and nigh unto death and dissolution, may, through much heat and stirring up of all his spirits, have the strength of five men in him, and much greater than when he was in health. And so a godly man, whose corruptions are weak, and more near to dissolution, yet in a fit may have all the corruption that is within him mustered up, and blown up by

Satan, and so it may for the present appear to have more strength than ever in all his life, and yet he may be much mortified. Even as Sarah may, by an extraordinary means, have pleasure in her old age, and bring forth a child when she had left* child-bearing long, and yet her 'womb was dead,' Rom. iv. 19. And as it may be true that one of small grace may have that little grace drawn out, and wound up to a higher strain, for one fit, brunt, and exercise; all the strings wound up to a higher note for some one lesson, than one haply of more grace ever felt, to higher acts of love to God, and of rejoicing in God, and purer strains of self-denial; yet take the constant strains of one's spirit that hath more grace, and the strings will ordinarily endure to stand higher, and continue so. So, on the contrary, one of much mortification may have his lusts spurred on faster, and boiled up higher by Satan's fires than one of less. The estimate of our growth must not therefore be taken by a step or two, but by a constant course; for as a man's sincerity is to be measured, so is his growth: even as a man's health is to be measured by the constant tenor of his temper.

Only, I will add three things to give further direction concerning such extraordinary cases of temptation:—

(1.) First, that it is certain that so much corruption as at such a time, and in such a fit, a man felt a-stirring in him, so much indeed and in truth there is of corruption in his heart; for the devil can put none in, but only acts and doth improve what is there already. For, as that speech of Christ implies, Satan can work but according to the matter he findeth in us: 'He cometh, and findeth no matter in me;' the wind adds no water to the sea, only can make the waves to rise and surge; the fire adds nothing to the water when it is set upon it, but attenuates it only, and causeth it to boil. And so in Hezekiah, when he was cast into that fit of pride, the text says that it was 'that he might know all that was in his heart,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. It was in his heart before.

(2.) Secondly, I add, that yet hence it cannot be infallibly inferred that a man hath, comparatively either to himself, more corruption in him than he had twenty years before, because more is stirred up; or that, comparatively to others, he hath more corruption than they, because more is now for a fit drawn forth. So that it follows not from hence that others which are kept free from such a temptation, that they have less† mortification because they were never cast into so hot and burning a fit. One whose body is less full of humours, and naturally of a more moderate temper for heat, may yet, through some accident or other, or disease, suppose the plague, be cast into hotter fits of a burning fever, than one whose temper is more fiery, and humours more abounding in him. To have recourse to the former instance. Hezekiah surely had more corruption twenty years before his recovery out of his sickness than at that time, and yet it wrought not so, that we read of, as it did then; not that the barrel was then fuller, but that now it was broached lower, and a greater vent given, and so it came more gushing out, dregs and all. That a man, after he is grown up to his full strength, falls into so great a sickness, such a one as he never had when he was a child, which maketh him weaker than when he was ten or twelve years old, doth not argue but that he is a man grown for all that. David, after a long growth, had a time of great sickness, whereby he lost the exercise, the lively, vigorous use of his graces; enfeebled by that sickness, he lost his taste in God's ordinances by it, and 'the joy of God's salvation,' as appears by the 51st Psalm.

(3.) And the third thing I would add is this, that such a one as is indeed

* Rather, 'passed the age of child-bearing.'—ED.

† Qu. 'more'!—ED.

much mortified, if it happens he falls into such a fit, yet the greater measure of his mortification will appear afterwards, in that the lust will be weaker after his recovery again. It is in this as with a man that is in a hot fiery fit of a fever, though he have at that instant the strength of two men in him, as was said, yet afterward, when the spirits are ebb'd and settled again, his body is the weaker for it; so is the body of sin, upon the resurrection of grace, after such a fall. Many grow more after sickness. For God's end being but to discover his weakness, and what he is in himself, and to rouse him out of his security, he then loves to manifest his power when once we have seen our weakness; and so 'makes his strength perfect in our infirmities,' when they are not ordinary, but beyond the ordinary temper and dispositions of our spirits.

Quest.—But then the question may be concerning the more ordinary passages of a man's life: Whether a man may measure and take a sure estimate of the inward root of corruption left in him, by the ordinary risings and stirrings of it, and his fallings into sin more or less? I speak not now of extraordinary fits, but of ordinary qualms and weaknesses.

Resolved.—To this I answer, that ordinarily men may conclude from the more or less busy they find corruption to be in them, that the more or less there is of corruption in them, and so thereby measure their growth; for grace and corruption are as two roots, and therefore the actions of them both are called their 'fruits,' Gal. v. 19, 22. Now Christ elsewhere gives us this rule of nature, to judge of the tree by the fruits, to proceed by in matters of grace also. And as by the fruit we may know of what species and kind the tree is, so likewise what plenty of sap there is at the root, by the plenty, or bigness, or fairness of the fruit it doth bring forth. The more inward corruption at the root, ordinarily the more fruit thereof appears in the life; and proportionably also of the tender fruits of the Spirit. And therefore Christ here says that the vine is to be 'purged, that it may bring forth more fruit;' because the more corruption is emptied, the more holiness will appear in your inward and outward fruitfulness. And the reason hereof is, because ordinarily as a thing is in being, so it is in working. *Læsa principia habent læsas operationes.* Children, the weaker, the more falls they have in their ordinary walkings; bodies, the more sickly, or the weaker and more unhealthy the *νεῦρα* and constitution is, the more qualms; and as they recover strength more and more, they find they outgrow such weaknesses. And therefore, ordinarily, according to what activeness a man finds of grace or sin in him, according as the inward principles of either of them more or less in him. For the soul of man, as it is an active thing, so being left to its ordinary course, it acts according to the sway, and bias, and inclination of the habits that are in it, which are also active, as both grace and sin are. As a bowl, when the force of the hand that threw it begins to decay, it is swayed by the bias, and lead that is in it; and so the less grace, the less, ordinarily, it acts graciously, and the weaker. And then also the opposite corruption must needs be so much the more active; for the soul being active, abates not of its mettle, but it will still shew itself one way or other. The flesh will 'lust against the spirit' so much the stronger, as the spirit is weaker, 'for they are contrary.' Yea, and thus God judgeth of the principles of grace in us, according as they act in us: he will judge of our mortification by the fruits of it in our lives and hearts; the more the fruits of sin grow on in us, the less mortified he will account us; as he will judge of faith by the works, so of mortification by the fruits. And therefore it is observable,

that he bids us mortify the deeds of the body, as well as the body of sin, Rom. viii. 13 ; for God will judge of the one by the other. Therefore the objects of mortification are the deeds of the body, as well as the inward principle of corruption, because the mortification of the inward principle will be seen and appear in the deeds.

Obj.—But it may be objected, that grace is acted, or lusts do stir, accordingly as the Spirit of Christ, who is a voluntary agent, doth act grace, or will leave a man ; so that if he be pleased to stir that little grace in a weak Christian, he shall act it more, and if he leave a strong Christian to himself, he shall fall more.

But to this it is answered—

Ans. 1.—First, that though the Holy Ghost be a voluntary agent, and blows when and where he pleaseth, for his times of working, yet ordinarily he acteth grace in us, take our whole course, according to the proportion of grace given us, so as he that hath more habitual grace shall be more assisted and enlivened, which falls out according to that rule, which in this case will hold, *habenti dabitur* : Matt. xxv. 29, ‘To him that hath shall be given,’ if it be a true talent. Hence therefore he that had five talents gained more than he that had but two : for he gained his five more unto his five ; the other but two more to his former two ; though he that had but one is said to have gained none, because indeed it was not a true talent, for he ‘seemed but to have it,’ the text says. And the reason hereof is, because those habits of grace which God hath infused are his own works, and are ordained by him to be acted, and he delights still to crown his own works in us with more. And as he proportions glory to works, so he promiseth to act according to the principles of grace infused, which else would be in vain, they being ordained to that end. As the Apostle says of gifts, that they are ‘given to profit withal,’ so are graces to work, and therefore ordinarily God draws them out, where he hath bestowed them, as he doth gifts also, according to their proportion. And thus, *è contra*, it is for leaving a man to sin ; the more corruption a man hath, the more ordinarily he lets it vent and discover itself, that so men that have many corruptions in them might know what is in their hearts ; and so when God doth mortify them in them to thank him the more, the grace of which else would be to them lost, if God should mortify their lusts in them, without their seeing and bewailing them, and crying to him, ‘O miserable man that I am !’ and ordinarily see and discern them men would not, unless left to them. As in case of humbling a man, though God sometimes doth humble a man that hath less sins more than one that hath greater, to shew that he can give a spiritual light to see more sin in a little than others in much ; yet ordinarily those are most humbled that have been greatest sinners, as Manasseh ‘humbled himself greatly,’ and Mary Magdalene ‘loved much,’ and the Apostle thought himself ‘the greatest of sinners.’ And thus it is in acting grace, or letting forth corruptions ; it is according to their principles within.

Ans. 2.—And, secondly, that very acting grace doth increase habits : so as the increase of habits and inward mortification is proportioned according to the acting of grace by the Holy Ghost ; for every abstinence doth mortify, as was said, and every act of grace doth, through the blessing of the Spirit, further sanctify and increase the habit : Rom. vi., ‘You have your fruit in holiness.’ When they do any duty, it makes the heart more inwardly holy, so as indeed the one cannot be without the other ; but the more a man doth abstain out of right principles, by the assistance of the Spirit, the

more he grows : so as in the end all comes to one ; he whose holiness is acted most hath in the end most habitual grace, and thereby often it comes to pass that 'he that is first comes to be last, and he that is last first.'

Yet there are two limitations to be put in about this :—

(1.) First, I grant, for some times of men's lives, that God doth act some men's graces more, who have yet less grace, and leave those to sins who have more grace. So he left Peter, who in all appearance had more grace than any of the twelve, yet God left him to deny Christ more foully and falsely than any of the other.

But then let the ends of God be considered why he doth it :—

[1.] First, in case of too much confidence upon inherent grace, and the strength of it. When we trust to habitual grace received, then Christ, to shew that it is a new grace, to assist that grace, and to the end that it may be acknowledged that he that gives one grace is not bound to give another, may in this case leave one that hath indeed more grace to the prevailing of corruptions more. It falls out sometimes that when men are young Christians, and new born, God adds much assistance, and this for their encouragement ; and as you carry young children in your arms, and so they are kept from falls more than some more elderly that are let go alone, thus, Hos. xi. 3, 'God takes them by the arms when a child,' ver. 1, but then 'they acknowledge it not,' as it follows there, and are apt to think that that strength and life they have is from themselves, and so God afterwards leaves them, when grown more elderly. Those Christians who walk most sensibly of their own weakness, and observe God's keeping them from sin, and attribute this to him, such God delights to help, though for the present they have less habitual grace. And so those Christians that sooner come to the knowledge of that way of dependence upon Christ,—some come to see it the first day, and make use of it, others not so clearly a long while,—they shall be more assisted than another. To many that way so soon is not so clearly opened.

[2.] Again, secondly, sometimes God will magnify this his acting grace, as I may call it, more in one man than in another, seeing it is a grace. That one Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul, did more than all the apostles ; shall we thereby infallibly conclude he had more inherent grace than they all ? but that he had more assistance. As God sometimes useth men of weaker gifts to do more than men of greater ; so men of weaker graces, and less growth, to shame the other. As there are 'diversities of gifts,' so of 'operations and exercise' of those gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 6, the 'Spirit dividing as he will,' ver. 11. God casts aside one of eminent gifts into a place or condition wherein they are not useful, and so he may one of much habitual grace.

[3.] Thirdly, he acts often according to actual preparation ; the habitual preparation lies in habits, and is more remote ; as strings may be good, yet out of tune, and so not played upon.

[4.] Again, fourthly, God may leave a Christian of more grace and growth to more stirring of corruptions, in case he means yet to bring him to a higher pitch of humiliation, and that by sins. It is in this his dealing of leaving men to corruptions, and the vigorous conflicts with them, as it is in his leaving his people sometimes to those other evils of afflictions. God humbleth his either by afflictions or by sins, and his manner in both is sometimes alike. You shall see one who hath attained to a great measure of grace already, and that by affliction, and yet never to be out of the fire, but God still followeth him with one affliction or another ; whereas one of less growth and grace, who in that regard hath more need, shall have fewer afflictions in

his course. And what is the reason of this difference? It is not that the grown Christian hath simply more need of affliction than the other, but because God intends to bring him on yet to a further degree of grace. As refiners of sugar, taking sugars out of the same chest, some thereof they melt but once, and another part of it they melt and refine again and again; not that that which they refine twice hath more dross in it, but because they would have it more refined, doubly refined. And as God deals thus in afflictions, so also in leaving of his people to the stirring of corruptions, which of all afflictions is the greatest to humble a holy heart. And thus in experience it is found that he doth sometimes leave a grown Christian to conflict with corruptions more than a weaker Christian; not that he hath more in him, but because he means to bring on that grown Christian to a further degree of humiliation; he is not humbled as he means to have him yet. And whereas God humbleth some men by afflictions, he humbleth others by sins. And nothing humbleth more than sins, for crosses do but humble by revealing sin as the cause; and nothing will humble a grown Christian more than to see such shameful soul-corruptions still stirring in him: the greatest aggravation of which to him will be in this, that after so long a time such lusts should be so lively in him; to have such gross faults in his exercises after he hath been so long at school, this shames him. For a grown Christian to be disguised with a corruption, and when his hair is grown, to have it shaven off, as David's messengers were ashamed of it, so how doth it shame and humble him! Thus Hezekiah, though he was much humbled by a sickness to death, but because he was not humbled enough, and so far as God meant to bring him, therefore God let loose pride on him, and then he further humbleth himself and all Israel, as it is 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. Upon some men God shews his free grace in keeping them from sin; upon others he spends it in pardoning them. These are but two several ways he hath of laying it out. And so sometimes he shews his grace in keeping those of less grace, and again in letting those of more to struggle with their lusts: and such sicknesses are not to death or to weaken them, but for the glory of God and their further growth; for this will be the effect and consequent of such stirrings in grown Christians, that as their fits of corruptions stirring are great, so their humblings will be greater. Grace being much in them, will shew itself that way; great fits of sinning have intermingled with them great exercises of repentings, and the growth of their grace will shew itself in them, and appear in them. Even as in men that are cheerful naturally, but sometimes oppressed with melancholy, when those pressures are over they are most merry, their spirits breaking forth, being at liberty, they shew themselves as much on the contrary in mirth; so is it here when grace gets above again. As it is in the body when the spirits are not weak, but only are kept under by humours, when they do once get up, they then shew their strength in causing the body to grow the more,—as in many young men after a sickness, where strength of nature is,—and so thereby they become after often the better, and more lively; but if the natural spirits be weak, it is not so.

(2.) A second limitation is, that though one of less growth in mortification may sometimes by watchfulness keep under his lusts more, and act that little grace he hath, more than haply he doth who hath yet radically more grace; therefore says the Apostle, 'Stir up the gift that is in thee.' To Timothy he speaks it, and he exhorts, Gal. v., even young Christians 'to walk in the spirit;' that is, to have the spirit kept above the flesh, so as a man shall have great hand over his corruptions, that they break not forth.

Now, I say that this exhortation doth belong unto and concerneth the youngest Christians; for he speaks to all that have spiritual life begun in them: ver. 25, 'If we live in the spirit, let us,' says he, 'walk in the spirit,' and then 'we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh,' ver. 16. A weak body, though weak, yet if he useth care, may keep himself from distempers as much as some man who is strong, but grows careless and neglects his health. But yet though one of less grace be thus actually more watchful, yet he may discern the want of growth by this:—

[1.] First, that still his lusts rise oftener, and that with delight, and are apter to catch fire presently, although they be smothered as fast as they catch. His case then is as if there were a heap of straw in a room where fire is, where sparks fly about, still taking fire upon every occasion; but he that keeps the straw is careful still to put it out.

[2.] And, secondly, in this case they shall find the strength of their corruptions in privative workings against grace, and distracting and disturbing them, deadening their hearts in duties; and therefore when the Apostle had exhorted such to 'walk in the spirit, so as not to fulfil the lusts,' mark what follows: Yet, says he, the flesh will discover itself in 'lusting against the spirit,' take what care you will, so as a man 'shall not be able to do what he would,' Gal. v. 16, 17; and the more strong it is, the more it will shew itself strong in disturbing: so as Christians not grown up, that are very watchful over their hearts, do keep as it were but negative Sabbaths, and are therein like unto those watchers and keepers of good rule in great churches, where there are many sleepers; they have so much to do to watch those boys that sleep and are idle at church, as they cannot attend the sermon. For though, by reason of watchfulness, corruption may be kept from discovering itself in open unruliness much, yet it can never, by all the watchfulness in the world, be brought on to duties, but so much as is in the heart will discover itself either in opposition to them or a hypocritical joining in them. Although the Papists may be kept by a waking State from venting that malice of their hearts in rebellion, yet they cannot be brought to join with us in holy duties; no more will corruption, unless in hypocrisy; and therefore so much as is doth still discover itself in them.

CHAPTER VI.

Five cautions more to prevent such misjudgings.

3. A THIRD caution to prevent misjudging: If a man will not be mistaken in judging his growth in mortification comparatively with others or with himself, he must consider his occasions and opportunities to draw him out. Thus, a man when he had more corruption, yet less occasions and provocations to sin, may have corruption less stirring in him than when he is more grown up in grace, if his temptations were then greater. The same tree standing in the shade, where also the rain comes not to it, when transplanted where both sun and rain fall upon it, may be more fruitful than formerly. David, when under afflictions in the wilderness, and wanting opportunities, how strict was he, and 'kept himself from his iniquity!' Ps. xviii. 23. But when he came to the delicacies of a kingdom, though he was grown up more and more in grace, yet how did he fall! As to aggravate the sin of not growing more, the proportion of means every one hath had is to be considered; and for one who hath had much means to grow much, for him is less than one who hath less means: so in the stirring or declining of sin, opportunities and occasions are also to be considered; as if a man be transplanted out of a full condition into an empty, if then many of his lusts do not stir so much as before, no wonder. Even as if a man when cast into a sweat by reason of multitude of clothes, it is no marvel if, when clothes are taken off, he sweat less.

4. A fourth thing to be considered, to keep us from mistakes herein, is, that he whose spirit is naturally active, his lusts, though weaker than another man's whose spirit is slower, may be yet more quick and apt to break forth more than his. Peter was of a bold spirit, and so spake often rashly, and vented corruption more than the other disciples, insomuch as he once provoked Christ to call him Satan, not that he had less grace, but a more active spirit. Yea, he might have more grace, and less of corruption stirred in him, only a more forward natural spirit, that was apt to put itself forth. As an angry man, whose spirit is quick, may soon be stirred, and in the forwardness of his spirit to action, give a man a blow, when one given to malice will scarce give you an ill word, whose lusts of revenge yet burn inwardly more. Gunpowder will take and fall into a blaze sooner than lime, yet lime hath more innate heat, and burns more within; some have speedier vent. Those two brethren, John and James, 'sons of thunder,' as Christ calls them, how soon was their choler up! They had quick and hot spirits, as Christ tells them, 'Ye know not what spirit ye are of,' Luke ix. 55.

5. Fifthly, if we would judge aright what measure of true mortification is in us, we must not take into the reckoning what restraining grace doth in us, but observe that apart, and cast that up in a sum by itself. For this you must know, that even in the regenerate, all their abstinence from sins is not from mere mortification, but restraining grace continues even after rege-

neration to contribute to it, and so make mortification seem the greater. It was not merely and only mortification of the lust of anger that made Moses so meek; for at another time, when he was left, what a chafe was he in, when he called them all rebels, and said in a heat that he must fetch water out of the rock for them! It was his temper and disposition of nature helped to make him so eminent in ruling that passion above any other, that he is said to be 'the meekest man on earth.' It was not simply, merely mortification that made that great apostle, Paul, so eminently chaste; but over and besides what mortification helped him in it, he had a 'peculiar gift,' as he calls it, 1 Cor. vii. 7; he speaks of it as of a gift, not a grace, such as might be in reprobates. 'For,' says he there, 'every one hath his proper gift.' So it was not mere mortification that made Luther never troubled with covetousness, but the freeness and generousness of his spirit that helped him in it.

Now, if all these would have cast up what grace and mortification they had attained to, they must have reckoned restraining grace by itself, (which may be observed by what our virtues were before conversion,) which though now sanctified,—that is, helping forward sanctification, and making the abstinence easier,—yet is not to be reckoned true sanctification. As goldsmiths mingle in all the silver they work some other metals to make it more malleable, so are those common graces mingled with true in this life, where sanctification is imperfect, which do help them and eke them out. Grace set in a good nature seems a great deal more, and goes further than in a bad. Wine that is of itself somewhat pleasant, a little sugar will make it sweeter to the taste than a great deal of sugar will do sour wine. Therefore let every one consider what natural ingenuity, and modesty, and education did in him before conversion; and let him know that, now he hath true grace, these help him still, and stand him in stead as much as ever, although he hath a further new principle of grace in him beyond these. Grace in this life, and whilst imperfect, takes not away such common gifts, but sanctifieth and useth them, as the reasonable soul doth a quick fancy or memory, which are sensitive faculties, and do make his ability to abstain from such and such sins more easy. Indeed all such gifts will be swallowed up in glory. And therefore many who have less grace, yet seem in many carriages more mortified than those who have more grace, they will be less impatient in a cross, less stirred and provoked with an injury. A man who hath been less helped by restraining grace before conversion, and had his lusts more outrageous, if he hath them now under, it is a sign he hath much more mortification in him than one who was naturally civil. And I appeal to every godly man's conscience, it is not only simply mortification that makes him always to abstain from sins, but shame, modesty, terrors of conscience strike in at a pinch, when strength of mortification had failed him else; and many accidental things, ordered by God's providence, hinder and keep God's people from sinning. And as David was fain to make use of Goliath's sword, and take in discontented persons that had not the same ends that he had, to strengthen himself against Saul; so is grace fain to take in fleshly dislikes and discontents against sin, to help it in a pinch, till it hath got the victory. For instance, it was not Judah's grace so much kept him from killing Joseph, for then he would not have consented to sell him, but nature wrought in him, and made him abhor the killing him: 'Is it not our brother, and our flesh? and what profit is it to kill him?' Gen. xxxvii. 26. So God prevented David in his murdering Nabal's family by an external means, whenas his grace else had not kept him from revenging himself causelessly upon his

family, for they were in no fault; his grace alone had not done it, for his passion was up, and he in a rage, and fully resolved to do it. But God used another means, and sent Abigail submissively to meet him; and her lowly submission and elegant oration won him, and cooled him: though this David acknowledgeth God's hand in it, and was glad he was so kept, as a godly man will, and hath cause, when he is hindered of his purpose in sinning. As he says, Phil. i. 18, 'I rejoice that Christ is preached, though out of envy,' so if sin be abstained from, though by any means; yet God did rather by this means restrain him than by his fear of God, or the grace in his heart; but God kept him by her coming, 1 Sam. xxv. 34. 'For in very deed,' says David, 'as the Lord liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and met me, surely there had not been left a man unto Nabal.' So shame moved Judah. Fear of being destroyed moved Jacob to reprove the sin of his sons, and is all the argument he useth, Gen. xxxiv. 30. So that in an evening, when thou castest up thy abstinences of that day, think not how much thou hast abstained from sin or denied thyself, but how much out of hatred of it, and the spirit of mortification, how much of that there is in thy abstinence, and accordingly measure thy growth in it.

6. Sixthly, another false rule is, when men judge of their mortification, and the measure of it, by their present listlessness of the heart to sin: which though it be true, that where true mortification is there is a listlessness and a deadness, and so much mortification, so much deadness, Rom. vi. 2, 'How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?'—and indeed, to live in it is to take pleasure in it;—but yet this you must know, there are many things which in a godly man may add to his deadness to sin besides true mortification, and so make it seem greater than it is in truth; and therefore it may be a false rule to judge by, if it be not warily considered and distinguished. Sickness breeds a listlessness; when we are sick, our lusts are sick together with us; and as we gather strength, they gather up their crumbs again: Job xxxiii. 19, 20, then his 'soul abhors dainty food.' Suppose he be a glutton, old age brings a listlessness: Eccles. xii. 1, 'When the evil days come, wherein a man says he hath no pleasure in them;' as Barzillai had no taste in his meat, by reason of old age. So when our expectations or desires are crossed, or are like to be, and we begin to fail of those main props of the comfort of our lives, we are apt to have a listlessness to all other pleasures; when some one thing that was a sauce to all the rest is gone, or like to go, we then have no stomach to all the rest, and we are weary of living, as David was when Absalom was gone: 'Would I had died for thee!' Some great cross coming may, like thunder, sour all our joys and delights, and make them stale to us, and as dead drink to the stomach. Terror of conscience may, like an eclipse, overspread our spirits, and then all things lose their beauty and lustre, as things in the dark use to do; as Job says of himself in his desertion, that his soul had no more sweetness in all comforts than in 'the white of an egg.' For such occasions as these do draw the intention another way, and do take the mind up about God's wrath, or the afflictions we are in, so as it cannot run out to sin; and intention, you know, is the cause of all pleasure. As therefore, when by study the spirits are drawn up to the head, a man's stomach decays to that meat he most loved, so when terrors drink up the spirits, as Job speaks; but when that heat is over, and intention dismissed, a man recovers his stomach again: and so do men their appetites to sin, when they come forth of terrors.

And this will help you to find out the true reason why that young Chris-

tians are often more dead to all pleasures of sin than those who are grown up, or than themselves are when grown up. They are often then altogether dead to all mirth and other contentments, and yet they are not more mortified than afterwards, for then legal humiliation adds to their deadness. And besides that first deadly blow which Christ gave their lusts then in part, the law also and the bitterness of sin did lay that part of their lusts which remained unkilld in a swoon, that one would think all were dead. 'Sin revived,' saith Paul, 'and I died,' Rom. vii. 9. He speaks of that time when he lay humbled for sin, during which time, we read in the Acts, he fasted. He had no mind to meat nor drink; for three days he forgot all. And again, as then they are usually so taken up about pardon of sin, and the obtaining thereof, that all the spirits retire to the heart to relieve it, and to encourage it to seek out for pardon, and so sin is left in a swoon, and it seems quite dead; but by degrees men come out of that swoon, and sin revives, and then men think they decay in mortification. Again, young Christians sometimes, and others afterwards, for some honeymoons of their lives, are entertained with raptures and ravishments, joy unspeakable and glorious, and then they seem in a manner wholly dead to sin, and walk so; but as the others are in a swoon, so they are in an ecstasy; but when they are out of it, then sin comes to itself again. Those joys, whilst they last, make a man's actual present deadness to sin seem more than habitually and radically it is indeed. As a man that hath tasted some sweet thing, whilst the impression upon his palate lasteth he hath no relish of meat, so whilst the impressions of spiritual joy; but when their mouths are washed once, and their sense of that sweetness gone, they find their wonted relish of them. Thus spiritual joys do, for the time they are upon the heart, much alter the taste; but yet much of that alteration is adventitious and not wholly radical, or altering the sinful faculty itself; though it doth add much that way, yet not so much as they seem to do at that present, the sense of that sweetness is fresh in his heart.

Now therefore, to give a help or two to difference what is real and true mortification from this seeming listlessness and deadness to it:—

(1.) First, true mortification makes a man not only listless to sin, but to have a quick hatred against it, a hatred aiming at the destruction of it; but false listlessness takes but the heart off it, doth not set it against it. How often are these yoked together in Ps. cxix., 'I hate sin, and every false way,' with this, 'Thy law do I love!' The heart being quickened with love to God and to his law, is carried out against sin, and not only taken off from it to have no mind to it, but to have a mind against it to destroy it. There is the same difference between mortification and listlessness that there is between true patience and senselessness. Senselessness is a dull, stupid bearing of pains, but patience is joined with a quick sense of them, which ariseth from strength of spirits, that, being quick and vigorous, are the more sensible of pain or pleasure; so true mortification is joined with an active hatred that flies out against sin, which comes from liveliness of affection to the contrary.

(2.) Secondly, true mortification is joined with activeness and life in the contrary duties: Rom. vi. 11, 'Reckon yourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto God.' That false listlessness is but a dead palsy that doth take these members of sin, but true mortification is with a new life, a resurrection, strengthening a man to walk so much the more nimbly in the ways of God, Rom. vi. 4, 5. Young Christians, and such as have a false listlessness and deadness, you shall find them complain that their mortification is more than vivification; they will find they are more dead to the world than quickened to God. True mortification doth not dull the spirits, but sets them at liberty, as purg-

ing the humours out doth. It makes the body more light and nimble ; whereas false listlessness causeth a deadness, a dulness to everything else. Those false causes of listlessness contract the mind, as a bladder that is clung, and dried, and 'hung up in the smoke,' as David compared his condition in terrors of conscience ; but mortification empties it of the sin, and fills it with grace, so as the mind is as full and wide as before, only filled with grace now instead of sin.

7. Seventhly, a man is not to judge of his growth in mortification simply by the keenness of his affection against sin, though that is good and blessed, but by his strength against it. As there is a fond love, which is not so strong and solid, which will not do so much for one, or hold, if it come to the trial and be put to it, that yet hath a more seeming edge in it ; so there is a keenness of hatred that hath not so much strength. A man that is angry seems to have more keenness of affection against him he falls out with, and in his rage vows never to be reconciled, and could eat him up ; whenas yet a malicious man hates more strongly. So do young Christians their sins, having lately felt the bitterness of them ; and then many other inconveniences, besides the contrariety of them to God, do egg on and provoke their spirits against them ; but like as a sharp knife that is weak, the edge is soon turned and blunted, so in a temptation, they are for all their edge soon overcome. For all those concurring inconveniences and apprehensions of their hurt by them makes their spleen indeed greater, but it adds not to their strength and courage to resist them ; like a stomachful boy, that cries he cannot have the victory, yet is weak, and easily laid on his back ; his stomach is more than his strength. The hurt that comes by sin to us at first lately felt, helps to sharpen the edge, but adds no metal, and so our weapons are beaten to our heads again when we use them. What an edge of spirit had Peter raised up against denying Christ ! He would die rather ; he spake then as he thought, and he would have died in the quarrel, for he drew his sword, but afterwards he wanted strength to his stomach ; how easily was he overcome, being yet but weak in grace ! Therefore judge of your growth herein by your strength to resist. Hence the Apostle prays, 'they may have strength in the inward man,' Eph. iii. 16 ; and in chap. vi. 13, he speaks of 'ability to stand in the evil day.' Although this let me add, that every man should keep up his heart in this continual keenness and edge of spirit against sin, and whet his heart against it ; for that will cause a man to use his strength the more against it, and to put it forth. A man that keeps his heart in a revengeful, vexed, spleenful spirit against sin, he will easier cut through a temptation : and though if a Christian want metal, though he hath an edge, he may be foiled ; yet when edge and metal both meet, **a man walks above his lusts.** If either be wanting, a man may be foiled.

PART III.

RESOLVING SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING GROWTH IN *MORTIFICATION*
AND *VIVIFICATION*.

CHAPTER I.

Two questions resolved concerning growth in mortification.

I WILL now conclude this discourse about growth in grace with answering some questions which may be made concerning this our growth, both about mortification and about increase in positive graces; which I did reserve to this last place, that I might handle them together.

Quest. 1.—The first question concerning the purging out of sin is, Whether every new degree of mortification, and purging out of sin, be always universal, extending itself to every sin? So as the meaning of this, that God goes on to purge, should be, not only that he goes on first to purge forth one sin, then another, but that he goes on to purge out, by every new degree of mortification, every sin together; so as when any one sin is more weakened, all the rest in a proportion grow weak also.

Ans.—To this I answer affirmatively, that every new degree of mortification is universal. Because when the Scripture speaks of our growth therein, he speaks of it as extending itself to every sin. So, Eph. iv. 22, when he exhorts the Ephesians, who were mortified already, to a further progress in it, he exhorts them to ‘put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.’ It is not one lust that is the object of mortification, and the growth of it, although he mentions particular lusts afterwards, but the whole man that is corrupt, and all its lusts. And thus he there speaks of daily growth therein; for of that he had spoken in the former verses, from the 12th verse, and goes on to speak of it and exhort to it. Thus, in like manner, Gal. v. 24, it is called ‘crucifying the flesh with the lusts:’ not one lust, but the flesh, the whole bundle, the cluster of them all; and in that it is called crucifying, it implies it also, for of all deaths that did work upon every part, it did stretch every nerve, sinew, and vein, and put all the parts to pain: and this going on to mortify sin is called, Rom. vi., ‘the destroying of the body of sin,’ of the whole body. It is not the consumption of one member, of the lungs, or liver, &c., but it is *consumptio totius*, a consumption of the whole body of sin, so as every new degree of mortification is the consuming of the whole. And therefore also, Col. iii., where in like manner he exhorts to growth therein, he exhorts to ‘mortify earthly members’—every member. And the reasons hereof are, because—

(1.) First, true mortification strikes at the root, and so causeth every branch to wither : for all sinful dispositions are rooted in one, namely, in 'love of pleasure more than of God ;' and all true mortification deadens a man to the pleasure of sin, by bringing the heart more into communion and into love with God ; and therefore the deadening to any sin must needs be general and universal to every sin. It is as the dying of the heart, which causeth all the members to die with it ; for that is the difference between restraining grace, which cuts off but branches, and so lops the tree, but true mortification strikes every blow at the root.

(2.) Secondly, every new degree of true mortification purgeth out a sin, *as it is sin*, and works against it under that consideration ; and if against it as sin, then the same power that works out any sin works against every sin in the heart also. Now that every new degree works against a sin, as it is sin, is plain by this, because if it be purged out upon any other respect, it is not mortification.

(3.) Thirdly, the Spirit, and the virtue that comes from Christ, which are the efficient causes of this purging out a sin, do also work against every sin, when they work against any one ; and they have a contrariety to every lust ; they search into every vein, and draw from all parts. Physicians may give elective purges, as they call them, which will purge out one humour, and not another ; but Christ's physic works generally, it takes away all sorts of distempers.

Obj.—And whereas the objection against this may be, that then all lusts will come to be equally mortified—

Ans.—I answer, No, for all lusts were never equally alive in a man ; some are stronger, some weaker by custom, through disposition of body and spirit ; and therefore, though mortification extends itself to all, yet there being an inequality in the life and growth of these sins in us, hence some remain still more, some less mortified : as when a flood of water is left to flow into a field, where many hills are of differing height, though the water overflows all equally, yet some are more above water than others, because they were higher before of themselves. And hence it is that some sins, when the power of grace comes, may be in a manner wholly subdued,—namely, those which proceed out of the abundance of naughtiness in the heart, as swearing, malice against the truth ; and these the children of God are usually wholly freed from, and they seem wholly dead ; being as the excrements of other members, and being as the nails and the hair, they are wholly pared off, as was the manner to a proselyte woman ; the power of grace takes them away, though other members continue vigorous. And therefore of swearing Christ says, 'What is more than Yea, yea, and Nay, nay, is ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ,' out of a profane heart. As when a man is a-dying, some members are stiff and cold, and clean dead long afore, as the feet, whilst others continue to have some life and heat in them ; so in the mortification of a Christian, some lusts that are more remote are wholly stiff and stark, when others retain much life in them.

Quest. 2.—The second question is, Whether, when I apply Christ, and the promise with the virtue of Christ, for the mortification of some one particular lust or other, and do use those right means, as prayer, fasting, &c., for the special mortification of some one lust, whether that lust thereby doth not become more mortified than other lusts do ?

Ans.—I answer, Yes, yet so as in a proportion this work of mortification runs through all the rest ; for as in washing out the great stains of a cloth, the lesser stains are washed out also with the same labour, so it is here. There-

fore the Apostle in all his exhortations to mortification, both Eph. iv. and Gal. v. and Col. iii., though he exhorts to 'the putting off the old man,' the whole body of sin, yet instances in particular sins, because a man is particularly to endeavour the mortification of particulars, as it were apart; and yet because in getting them mortified the whole body of sin is destroyed, therefore he mentions both the whole body and particular members thereof apart, as the object of mortification. And to that end also doth God exercise his children, first with one lust, then with another, that they may make trial of the virtue of Christ's death upon every one. And therefore Christ bids us to 'pull out an eye,' and 'cut off a hand,' if they offend us: for mortification is to be by us directed against particular members; yet so as withal, in a proportion, all the rest receive a further degree of destruction. For as a particular act of sin, be it uncleanness, or the like, when committed, doth increase a disposition to every sin, yet so as it leaves a present greater disposition to that particular sin than any other, and increaseth it most *in potentia proxima*, though all the rest *in potentia remota* · so in every act of mortification, though the common stock be increased, yet the particular lust we aimed at hath a greater share in the mortification endeavoured, as in ministering physic to cure the head, the whole body is often purged; yet so as the head, the party affected, is yet chiefly purged, and more than the rest.

CHAPTER II.

Three questions resolved concerning positive growth.

OTHER questions there are concerning that other part of our growth, namely, in positive graces and the fruits thereof.

Quest. 1.—As, first, Whether every new degree of grace runs through all the faculties?

Ans.—I answer, Yes : for as every new degree of light in the air runs through the whole hemisphere, when the sun shines clearer and clearer to the perfect day, which is Solomon's comparison in the Proverbs ; so every new degree of grace runs through, and is diffused through the whole man. And therefore also, 1 Thess. v. 23, when the Apostle there prays for increase of grace, he prays they may be 'sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit.' And every new degree, though it begins at the spirit, the understanding, yet goes through all ; for so, Eph. iv. 23, 24, 'Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man :' it runs therefore through the whole man, having renewed the mind ; as the work of grace at first, so after still continually 'leaveneth the whole lump.'

Quest. 2.—Whether one grace may not grow more than another?

Ans. 1.—I answer, first, that it is certain that when a man grows up in one grace, he doth grow in all ; they grow and thrive together. Therefore, in Eph. iv. 15, we are said to 'grow up into him *in all things*.' Growth from Christ is general ; as true growth in the body is in every part, so this in every grace. Therefore, 2 Cor. iii. 18, we are said to be 'changed into the same image from glory to glory.' Every increase stamps a further degree of the whole image of Christ upon the heart. So the Thessalonians, their faith and their love did both overflow, 2 Thess. i. 3.

Ans. 2.—Yet, secondly, so as one grace may grow more than some other :—

(1.) Because some are more radical graces, as faith and love, therefore of the Thessalonians' faith the Apostle says, 2 Thess. i. 3, that it did 'grow exceedingly ;' and then it follows, their love 'did overflow.'

(2.) Some graces are more exercised, and if so, they abound more ; as though both arms do grow, yet that which a man useth is the stronger and the bigger, so is it in graces. In birds, their wings, which have been used most, are sweetest to the taste. As in the body, though the exercise of one member maketh the body generally more healthful, yet so as that member which is exercised will be freest from humours itself ; so it is here. So 'tribulation worketh patience, patience experience,' Rom. v. Many sufferings make patience the less difficult, and much experience, many experiments, make hope greater.

(3.) Again, thirdly, that some graces are more in some than others, appears hence ; for what is it makes the differing gifts that are in Christians but a several constitution of graces, though all have every grace in them ? As now in the body every member hath all singular parts in it, as flesh,

bones, sinews, veins, blood, spirits in it, but yet so some members have more of flesh, less of sinews and veins, &c., whence ariseth a several office in every member, according as such or such similar parts do more or less abound in a member. The hand, because it hath more nerves and joints in it than another member, though less flesh, yet how strong is it, and fit for many offices ! The foot is not so. So in Christians, by reason of the several constitution of graces, and the temper of them more or less, have they several offices in the church, and are fitted for several employments. Some have more love, and fit for offices of charity ; some more knowledge, and are fit to instruct ; some more patience, and are fitter to suffer ; some for self-denial, and accordingly do grow in these more specially.

Quest. 3.—The third question is, Whether this increase be only by radicating the same grace more, or by a new addition ?

Ans.—I answer, that by adding a new degree of grace, as in making candles, which is done by addition ; when a candle is put anew into the fat of boiled tallow, every time it is put in it comes out bigger, with a new addition ; or as a cloth dipped in the dye comes out upon every new dipping in with a deeper dye. And this is done by a new act of creation, put forth by God. Therefore when David, being fallen, prayed for increase of grace, he says, 'Create in me a new heart.' And therefore, Eph. iv. 24, when the Apostle exhorts to further putting on the new man, and speaketh of growth, he adds, 'which is created ;' for every new degree is created as well as the first infusion, which shews the difference between natural growth and this. In natural growth there needs not a new creation, but an ordinary concurrence ; but it is not so in this : that God that begun the work, by the same power perfects it. And therefore, Eph. i. 19, he prays that the believing Ephesians might see that power that continued to work in them to be no less than that which raised up Christ : for though natural life may with a natural concurrence increase itself, because the *terminus à quo*, the term from whence it springs, is but from a less degree of life to a greater ; yet it is otherwise in this life, and our growth in this is from a greater degree of death to a further degree of life. And therefore, Phil. iii. 11, the Apostle calls growing in grace a going on 'to attain the resurrection from the dead.' And therefore the same power that raised up Christ must go along to work it. Hence also every new degree of grace is called a new conversion,—'Except ye be converted,' says Christ to his disciples converted already,—because the same power that wrought to conversion goes still to this. And therefore it is said that 'God gives the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 7 ; and it is called 'the increasing of God,' Col. ii. 19 ; so, Hos. xiv., shewing the ground why they grow so fast, 'Thy fruit is found in me,' says God, ver. 7. Although this is to be added by way of caution and difference, that therein God doth proportion his influence to our endeavours, which in conversion at first he doth not. Therefore we are said to be fellow-workers with him, although it be he that gives the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6-8 ; the same you have also Rom. viii., 'We by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh.' We, as co-workers with the Spirit.