

A DISCOURSE OF THANKFULNESS

WHICH IS DUE TO GOD FOR HIS BENEFITS AND BLESSINGS.

Be thankful to him.—Ps. C. 4.

WHAT thankfulness is, I will explain to you by these few questions :

First, How being thankful differs from glorifying God, for they are made to differ, Rom. i. 21 : ‘ They glorified not God, neither were thankful.’ Thankfulness being in the general taken, as it is here, for the whole duty of man to God, is for substance all one as to glorify him, for in the same thing wherein we glorify him, we also give thanks to him. And therefore, Luke xvii. 18, Christ speaking of that leper’s thankfulness, saith, ‘ None but he returned to give glory to God,’ that is, to be thankful to him. I know, indeed, thanksgiving is a peculiar branch of God’s worship, when it is taken strictly ; but thankfulness is larger, and extends itself to all duties, which, when they are done to God as an acknowledgment of his mercies and our love, they may be termed thankfulness. And so, though in the same duties wherein we glorify God, we are thankful also, yet in several considerations, and as coming from us upon several grounds, those duties are sometimes called glorifying God, and sometimes being thankful. As if a friend, a son, or a servant should do all the same thing for a man ; in the servant that act might be called doing him service, in the son doing his duty and an act of obedience, and in the friend a kindness. So here we, standing towards God in all relations, and in regard of all those relations, obedience being due to him as he is a Father, all that we do to him is called *honour*, Mal. i. 6. As he is a master and lord, it is called *fear* in the same place ; as he is a God, gracious, that loads us with benefits, it is called *thankfulness* ; as he is a glorious God in himself, to whom glory and power is due, all is called *glorifying* him. Thus, Ps. l. 14, 15, 23, thanksgiving is put for his whole worship, and glorifying him so many ways ; and so in many relations we are tied in obedience unto God, as we can never want motives to draw obedience from us, and, therefore, so many aggravations are there of neglect and want of performance of them.

To come, then, to the difference between these two. God being so glorious a God, we are to do all to him and for him, and obey him in all, and make him the end of all, which is called glorifying him. Suppose we were no way beholden to him, all this were a due to his excellency and glory,

which might challenge it from us, might extort it, Ps. xxix. 2: 'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;' that alone would challenge all the service, all the praise that you do or could make to him; but now we all are, upon a further ground, to do all to him and for him, because of all the many mercies we receive from him. Now to return all in this relation is called thankfulness. To do all out of a sense of his excellency and glory that is in himself, this is to glorify him. But to do all out of a sense of his mercies to us, and our obligation unto him, this is thankfulness. So that, Rom. i. 21, it is brought in as a further aggravation, that though the Gentiles did, as it is in the verse before, read many characters of his glorious power and wisdom in the creation and governing the world (the heavens declaring his glory, Ps. xix.), that though they knew this, yet they glorified him not—gave not the glory which is due unto his name. But, secondly, not only so, but though they knew they themselves had all from him, and that he loaded them with mercies (so Acts xiv. 17, speaking of the Gentiles, he saith, that notwithstanding their ignorance, yet God left not himself without witness, 'in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness,' all which are witnesses and testimonies of God's love and bounty), yet they, though they knew all this, and that they lived at his cost, were disobedient; and, therefore, their disobedience is aggravated here by this, that they were unthankful.

The second question is, What thankfulness is? It is a free rendering to God the glory of his goodness, principally to the end we may glorify it, and testify our love to him.

First, It is a rendering, and in that act doth the nature of thankfulness consist, and hereby it is expressed, and this act hath reference and relation to something received. If I give any one any thing never so freely, if it be not in relation to something received from him, it hath not the nature of thankfulness; it is giving, not thanksgiving; but when a man begins first to consider with himself what he hath received from God, and upon that ground he returns an acknowledgment of the mercy, that which he doth return to him is thankfulness; and this you may see in David, Ps. cxvi. 12: 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?' Ye see how he considers the benefits received, thinks what to return again, and upon what ground.

And, therefore, for application, would you know whether you do all you do out of thankfulness; I ask you whether it is a rendering to God? That is, do you look upon God as the author of all the good things you do enjoy? And thereupon, do you bring forth all your obedience, and look upon it when you have done, but as a rendering to God again, even as all the rivers come from the sea and return to it again. So do your hearts but as it were return to God all you have first received from him? Otherwise, if you should do never so much for God, and not look upon it as a rendering to him, it were not thankfulness, if it came not from you upon that ground; for if you think in your hearts, though never so secretly, that you have added anything to him; if you think with yourselves thus: Why, have I not prayed? and I have fasted; as, Isa. lviii. 2, they began to murmur. Thus to glory in anything, as if you had not received it (1 Cor. iv. 7), as men are apt to do, and as they at the last day will do, who heap kindness upon Christ: 'Have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils?' as if he were beholden to them. So men think that God is beholden to them if they repent, and do think everything they do for God to be a great matter; such popery is in men's hearts. This is not thankfulness; but your behaviour is as if you had given to him first. Whereas, says God, Job xli. 11: 'Who hath pre-

vented him, that I should repay him,' that is, who is aforehand with me in anything he hath done? There were other thoughts in David when he gave so largely to the building of the temple, 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14, 'We thank thee,' saith he, 'of thine own have we given thee,' we have but rendered what was thine; given, indeed, it was, because willingly, ver. 14, but yet 'of thine own;' so he looks upon it, and therefore it was thanksgiving. For, says David, 'All things are of thee, even this my thanksgiving,' and all.

Secondly, It is a free rendering, and that is an essential property of thanksgiving. What is restored must be restored willingly. If it be for slavish fear, though a man render never so much to God, it is service, not thankfulness; for thankfulness hath relation to bounty, and consists in a likeness to it. Now one among many conditions, as I observed, in bounty, was that it should be free and willing; now, therefore, therein thankfulness must answer to it, as rendering must be done in relation to giving, as I said. So look how it is given, so it must be rendered; it is not bounty unless it be freely given; it is not thanks unless it be freely rendered, Mat. x. 8: 'Freely you have received, freely give,' as Christ saith in another case. Yea, willingness is more required and looked at, than the thing rendered, in matter of thanks. So it is also in bounty, and so Paul makes it in the bounty of the saints to their brethren, 1 Cor. viii. 10: 'That they began not only to do, but to be willing a year ago.' It is brought in as a greater matter than to do: *Non tam effectus æstimatur quam affectus*. And so in like manner in matter of thanks: *Non tam requiritur æqualitas rerum quam voluntatum*, saith the school. The woman that cast in her mite, Christ says, had cast in more than they all; it was her freeness made it accounted so. Therefore David in the forenamed place, in rendering to God, put the emphasis, not in that he had rendered, but in that he had given so willingly, and after this sort. Wouldst thou know whether thou art truly thankful or no, and desirest to be so, and to have it so taken? Look not only upon what thou hast rendered again to God, or how much, but how willingly; as what willing entertainment have all good motions for God and the advancement of his glory in thy heart? how came they off from thee? Dost thou follow thy calling not willingly, but by constraint, as Peter speaks of preachers, 1 Pet. v. 2, because thou knowest not how else to live? Dost thou pray to God, but yet art haled to it by thy conscience, as a beast to the stake, to avoid a whipping by conscience that night thou omittest it? Then it is not out of thankfulness. Dost thou keep in upon the sabbath day, and write and note the sermon, and repeat it, but thinkest thy Master's house or thy study a prison all the while, and wouldst gladly be taking other liberties, but that thy tutor or master commands thee otherwise; and all that while thou lookest at them as thy jailors? If so, thou art then unthankful, though thou renderest and dost never so much for God.

Thirdly, The third thing to be considered concerning thankfulness to God is the thing which is to be rendered, and that is glory; that thing thou renderest must be such, as thou art sure his glory doth arise out of it. So 2 Cor. iv. 15, 'That through thanksgiving it may redound to the glory of God.' So saith the apostle there, and that is it God looks for in thy thanksgiving, and the word *redounding* is to be observed, because all that we can do adds no essential glory to God; it redounds to it only, and manifests it. The reason is, because nothing else will be accepted at thy hands; it is an excellent rule Aristotle hath, speaking of the matter of thankfulness: what is it to be rendered? It is *retributio, superexcellenti, honoris; indigenti, lucrī*, that is, if he be one who is far superior above thee, and stands in need of nothing thou hast, then thy only and best way is to honour him all thou

canst for his bounty; restore honour to him, and he looks for nothing else; but if he be one that stands in need, then thy best way to shew thy thankfulness, is to recompense him some other way, give him of thy substance and relieve his want. And now to this purpose, see what God himself says in Ps. l. 12, 'If I were hungry I would not tell thee' (says God to the formalist, who thought to please him with sacrifice, with killing oxen and goats), 'I have no need of thee;' but instead of these, ver. 14, 15, he says, 'Offer to me thanksgiving and glorify me.' So also, ver. 23, they are put together, 'Whoso offers praise glorifies me;' it is the praise of his glory that is to be rendered, if thou wilt shew thyself thankful. He doth not always require of thee again the things themselves which he hath given thee for the substance of them, but the glory of them all; all comforts thou hast, he is content thou shalt enjoy them, and rejoice in them, so thou give him the glory of them all. Men equal to yourselves, you are thankful to, by giving them like for like; if they invite you, you invite them, but not so to God. 'Go thy ways, therefore,' as Solomon says, 'and eat thy meat with a merry heart, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth,' only acknowledge thou hast all from him, and that he gave all; and return the strength of all to do his will, and thou givest glory and thanks to him, when thou usest all to him, and for him'; so Rom. xiv. 6. To eat to the Lord is linked with giving thanks.

Only I add this, that if the glory of God need thy wealth, and anything thou hast, so as thou must part with them or dishonour him; if the Lord need thy ass, as Christ bade the messenger tell him—so doth God sometimes condescend to do,—then let him have all; let goods, and life, and all go, even the things themselves in such a case; so if the profession of his truth call for thy life, let him have it; if his honour calls for thy credit, let him have it; so, if his church need thy estate, or any business whereby his glory, gospel, may be advanced and enlarged, let him have it freely.

But yet, fourthly, this is to be limited in the point of thankfulness to the glory of his goodness, it must be that which we principally render; when we give him and reflect upon him the glory of his wisdom, justice, power, &c. we praise him in those relations, but are thankful to him in relation of his goodness only. There may be a rendering of glory in the other, but yet it is simply a due in justice; but when we do this in relation to the goodness which is in him, it is a further thing, and is due upon a further ground. We honour and reverence many men whom we are no way beholden to, and we are bound to do it; it is a duty, and a duty of justice, and is called observance; so Rom. xiii. 7, 'Render to all their dues, honour to whom honour, tribute to whom tribute.' There you see, it is a rendering which is not thankfulness, it being otherwise a due in justice; but when being obliged to men for the kindness and goodness that is received from them, we therefore honour them and serve them, this is thankfulness. And so when upon that ground we honour God, this is thankfulness; and therefore here it is made a distinct thing from glorifying of God. Only this is to be added, that if at any time his goodness be the ground and motive of giving him glory, then, though we praise any other attribute in him or the effect of it, as set a-work by his goodness, it may be termed thankfulness; then it is thanksgiving when we praise the Lord for his goodness (as it is said Ps. cvii. 8), or when his goodness is the ground of it in our hearts, and it spring thence.

Fifthly, The fifth thing to be considered, are the ends of thankfulness, which must necessarily be added to all this, and they are two: 1st, principally to acknowledge that his goodness; and 2dly, to testify our love. Though we strive to render to him the glory of his goodness never so much,

never so long, and never so many ways as ample as can be devised, yet if the end be not principally to glorify it and testify our love, it is not thankfulness. If it be with an eye to reward, principally, to hook more in, it is not thankfulness, it is buying and selling rather; for thankfulness still hath relation unto, and must resemble his goodness and bounty, and answer to it; now that is true bounty which gives, looking for no recompense, or not principally aiming at it. So Aristotle defines it, 2 Rhet. cap. vii.: *Gratia est per quam gratis aliquid quis facit, non ut sibi quicquam subveniat, sed cui facit*, bounty doing a kindness freely, not to benefit themselves, but the party it is done unto, and so God doth; for even the thanks he looks for is for your good, Deut. x. 13; therefore now, if you have hearts truly thankful, all you do for the glory of his goodness, will principally be to glorify that goodness; and this was David's utmost end in that thanksgiving of his, 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14, 'Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. And what am I, that I should offer so willingly after this sort?' praising God that he was able willing to thank him, and to testify his love. See the holy disposition of this thankful man, when he had earnestly and willingly rendered unto God, his thanks are his next thoughts, when he had done. What reward will God give me again? No; but he falls a-praising God afresh, that he was able to do what he did, and, therefore, thus to glorify God and thank him; this was in itself his utmost end; therein he rejoiced more than in anything else. So it is said, ver. 17, 'I have seen it with joy,' says he, 'and thou that knowest the heart knowest I have done it in uprightness willingly;' both are put in, not willingly only. So these that do all for reward, may be very willing and forward, but we must be thankful in uprightness also, that is, principally arguing to glorify God's goodness, for therein lies uprightness of heart principally; it lies in our ends, which then are upright, when God is principally aimed at. David thought this the greatest mercy, that he was able to be thankful, though he ran most into debt when he went about to pay it.

I add, and couple with this, his other end also, namely, that we ought to do all to testify our love; because love being the spring and root whence true thankfulness springs, therefore his end, that is truly thankful, is to manifest that his love; therefore, in Ps. cxvi. (which is a psalm made on purpose, and wherein David's heart is exceedingly enlarged with thankfulness for hearing his prayer, that he knows not again what to render to him, ver. 12) he begins it thus, 'I love the Lord because he hath heard my prayer.' He makes profession of his love to God, for all the love he had shewn him, as the ground of the ensuing thankfulness, that being the thing that in his thankfulness he would have God especially take notice of, because he that knows what true love is, knows that it desires to be paid in its own coin chiefly; and therefore receiving all from free love, he endeavours to return all again out of free love; his obedience therefore comes not from him simply to satisfy a debt of thankfulness he owes (as many men do when they requite kindnesses, who return all but as a debt, only to discharge themselves of a duty and obligation they owe, and so do many men's consciences discharge themselves of duties to God, and are glad they are soon done); but he, as a thankful man, hath a further aim than simply to discharge a debt of it, and to have it taken notice of that such a thing is done, further to declare the willingness that was in his heart, when he did it, that especially he desires to shew he hath a design. As he takes notice of God's free love principally to him in all, and thanks him for it more than for all the things he hath given him, so he desires that God would regard his love in it rather

than the performance, and rather desires he should take notice of it than reward him again.

Having thus defined what thankfulness is, I will add these few things further to illustrate the definition. If further you will ask (which makes a third question), What ways you are to shew your thankfulness? I answer out of the definition given, look how many ways God may come to have the glory of his goodness from you, so many ways are you to shew yourselves thankful. As,

First, In acknowledging his mere goodness in all, as the ground of all, which hath two things in it.

1st, That all ye are, or have, come from him, as David doth acknowledge, 1 Chron. xxix. 14-16, 'All (O Lord, as he confesseth there) is of thine hand, and is thine, not ours.' For we in ourselves are strangers here, brought into the world, first made by thee, and therefore possess nothing but thy gift, and therefore all is thine; and so Deut. viii. 17, 18. If thou hast wealth, say not, My power or the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth; but remember the Lord thy God, for it is he giveth thee power to get wealth; consider it is he bestows all, which, because we are apt to forget, he gives you a *memento*, to remember to ascribe nothing to yourselves; to get humble hearts, to glory in nothing, as if we had not received, 1 Cor. iv. 7; to look on ourselves, if we have more wit, or wealth, or grace, but as the purse that hath more money in it than another; but both, [purse] and money and all is God's.

2dly, And, also, we must not only thus acknowledge that all we have is his, and from him, but also that all comes in mere goodness to us, and for nothing in us; so David doth, 2 Sam vii. 18, where, acknowledging the reason why God gave him so much and not another, he says it was not for any difference in him; but for his word's sake, which he had promised to David, and according to his own heart had he done those great things; there were no other motives but his goodness, and what is in and comes from himself out of his own heart; he hath a great heart, and therefore doth great things.

But, secondly, we must not only acknowledge his mere goodness, but also our own unworthiness of any. This casts a further shadow upon his goodness, and as a foil further illustrates it. One that hath deserved to be cast out of favour, is more bound to be thankful than one that never offended; and therefore Jacob lays that as the foundation whereupon he reareth his thankfulness, Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am less than the least of thy mercies.' Where, 1st, he acknowledgeth that everything he now had was mercy; it was not simply bounty, as to Adam, but mercy, which adds to bounty; 2dly, says he, I am less than the least. Take the least bit of bread he did eat, even his staff, he was not only unworthy of it, but unworthier than it. Always an humble heart is a thankful heart; study your own baseness if you would be thankful.

Thirdly, This his goodness, and thy baseness, must not only be apprehended by thee, and conceived in thy heart, but it must be acknowledged in words, though it is necessary that our hearts should be sensible of both. And, accordingly, we are therein to bless God also, 1 Cor. xiv. 16; we are to bless with our spirits; 'all within me,' says David, Ps. ciii. 1, 2. The heart and affection within are the instrument the music is made on. Thanks is called melody, Eph. v. 19, in the heart; yet when the heart is thus filled with a sense of God's goodness and our unworthiness, it must be acknowledged with the tongue also. And thanks is the 'fruit of the lips,' Heb. xiii. 15; and 'calves of lips,' Hosea xiv. 2. God's praise is too big for the heart; acknowledge all therefore privately in thy prayers to God; and not only so,

but also to others, Exod. xviii. 8. When God had delivered the Israelites, Moses tells Jethro what he had done for them. David bids them come to him, and he would tell them what he had done for his soul. Christ's reward of the leper for healing him was, 'Go and tell what is done for thee.' Instead of foolish jesting, which our mouths are full of, rather give thanks, Eph. v. 4; and if the heart were full, the mouth would be filled with praise.

But yet, fourthly, if we would shew ourselves truly thankful, and give him the true glory of his goodness, we must not think to render it in words only; but if the glory of his goodness may be any other way rendered, we must also endeavour to do it; for all we can do is too little. Therefore, Ps. l. 23, he speaking of true thankfulness, says, 'He that offereth praise, glorifieth me;' and he adds, 'He that ordereth his conversation aright,' he offereth the truest praise, and glorifies his goodness most. The mercies of God call for another sacrifice besides the calves of our lips: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies,' that is, your whole man, 'a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice.' Now, because they might mistake him, he shews how they must sacrifice themselves, which is (says he) your reasonable service: 1st, dedicating themselves to the service; and, 2dly, that service squared to the word (for so the words in the original signify). This is better than sacrificing thy thousand rivers of oil, yea, or thy life. Thus David, in that famous psalm of thanksgiving, Ps. cxvi., resolves to walk before the Lord, ver. 8, that is, to order all his course so as God might be glorified and advanced; and 'I will pay my vows,' ver. 14, that is, all the covenants he had made. 1st, he resolved that the consideration of God's mercies should quicken him to the performance of them, as his vows in sickness, vows in distress, vows in sacraments. And, ver. 16, 'I am thy servant;' that is, I dedicate myself for ever to thee, as one that owed him all he had or could do. Every man should think with himself as that king concerning Mordecai: These and these mercies I have received from God; but what has been done for him? As, first, what sins have I left? (for therein thankfulness is to be shewn.) Sin no more, says Christ to him that was healed. Shall I be so unthankful, so unkind? Shall I requite the Lord thus, to be unclean, to be negligent in my calling, dead to holy duties? Do you thus requite the Lord? Who hath made you, established you, delivered you, as Moses argues, Deut. xxxii. 6? So also when a man quickeneth up his heart to abound with holy duties, and says with himself, I have received more wealth, wit, credit than others, what therefore shall I do for him more than others? When a man considers the sins God hath pardoned, the prayers God hath heard, the long time in the world God hath given him, and thinks he owes him his life for every mercy; even as 'long as I live,' says David, Ps. cxvi. 21. A thousand lives if he had them, though he should never receive more mercy, yet for those he hath had. 'I am thy servant,' says David, ver. 16; 'for thou hast loosed my bonds, and therefore I will enter into new bonds to serve thee,'—looking on every mercy as a new indenture betwixt God and him. When a man repeats God's mercies over, and every one of them makes his soul to bleed for his sins, as Nathan did to David, to cause him to mourn: 'Have I given thee thy master's house, and wife, and wilt thou serve me thus?' this is to be thankful, even in mourning for sin.

Fifthly, A fifth way to shew thanks is to honour God with thy substance, Prov. iii. 9; to do good with thy gifts, to profit others, 1 Cor. xii. 7; to spend thy sweetness and thy fitness for the good of God and man, and to consecrate all thy learning, wit, wealth, to God, to use, and call for, and command, as if they were his own; this is to be thankful. And for this purpose, con-

sider how much of their estates the Jews, under the ceremonial law, bestowed upon God and holy uses; besides their yearly tithes, they paid first-fruits, brought sacrifices and offerings upon all occasions. These you are freed from; but yet thou art obliged to do good to his saints; either their souls or bodies, with that thou hast received; as David did require, if none of Jonathan's seed were alive he might shew kindness unto, 2 Sam. ix. 1. So do thou say, where is a poor saint I may do good unto; whose bowels of soul or of their bodies I may refresh? And do it as God hath enabled thee. If thou hast not gold or silver, yet such as thou hast give them, as Peter did, and as Christ bade them, Mat. x. 8. They having received their gifts freely of healing and preaching, freely gave; and do all this to this end, that others may thank God for thee more than thank thee, which is Paul's motive to their bounty, 2 Cor. ix. 11, 12. You being enriched (says he) to all bountifulness, 'which causeth through us thanksgiving to God, and you to rejoice,' that others are set a-work to glorify God's goodness in thee, by thine to them; for that should be the main motive, as appears by his following words: 'For hereby,' says he, 'not only the want of the saints is supplied' (which pity may cause you to do), 'but furthermore it is abundant, by many thanksgivings to God.'

The fourth question is, for what you must give thanks and be thankful? I answer, All things. For look how far his goodness reaches; so far our thanks should. Now his goodness runs through all things, so we must give thanks for all, Eph. v. 20, 1 Thes. v. 18, 'in all, and for all;' that is, in all things, so far as God's goodness is seen in them. And so even for afflictions, as they come out of love and faithfulness, Ps. cxix., and are appointed and ordered for our good, though in themselves they are not to be thanked for; so Job blesseth God in the midst of all, for he found God blessing him in them; for as we love not God, but he loves us first, so neither can we bless him till he blesseth us. Praise him for all his dealings; for though thou seest not how they are all mercy and truth, yet thou shalt see them to be so in the end.

Praise him for temporal mercies; every creature is to be received with thanksgiving.

Magnify him for mercies past, as well as those to come. Eaten bread must not be forgotten, but praise him especially for spiritual, Eph. i. 3, for these do sweeten all the other, and his goodness is more seen in these. Bless him for his giving Christ for thee, and thee to him, and him to thee, and all things with him.

For public mercies also, as well as private; as of all duties, thankfulness becomes you most who are saints, Ps. xxxiii. 1, so to be thankful for public mercies to the state you live in, is especially expected of you; for godly men have public spirits, and also public mercies are principally intended by God for you; for all things are yours, the world, all deliverances and peace, which a people have, 1 Cor. iii., last verses; and public mercies redound more to God's glory, 2 Cor. iv. 15. And your first petition is, 'Hallowed be thy name.' So also be thankful for mercies to come, as David praiseth God for the great things laid up in store for those that fear him, Ps. xxxi. 19, as well as those he had then wrought for them. So also David praiseth God, 1 Sam. vii. 17-19, for the long time to come that he had promised to his seed the kingdom, as a greater matter than his present enjoying it.

The fifth question you will ask, When we are to be thankful? I answer, At all times; for, look what time his goodness is extended, which is at all times, then also must thy thankfulness be returned; therefore that is added, Eph. v. 20, 'always, and for all things.' As he said to the queen, that when

she left giving, he would leave begging; so, I say, when God leaves giving, then leave thou, shewing thyself thankful to him; but his mercies are renewed every moment; as the rivers are as continually running to the sea as they are from it, so let thy thanks flow to him, as his mercies always flow to thee. All his works are for ever; and so his works of mercy, and every one, is to be thanked for ever. If thou hadst received no more but thy creation, if he gives thee being and life, resolve to be thankful whilst thou hast a being, as David: Ps. civ. 33, 'I will praise him as long as I live, and whilst I have any being.' As sin is an eternal guilt, so every mercy is an eternal obligation; as they, therefore, are ever punished in hell, because they can never pay the utmost farthing; so we in heaven shall be thankful ever, because we can never be thankful enough. He loads us with benefits daily, Ps. lxxiii. 19, therefore we should praise him daily, as David, Ps. lxxi. 15, resolves to do.

The last thing to be added is, that look in whom God shews and extends his goodness, in and through him give you thanks, and return the glory of it, and that is Jesus Christ; so Eph. v. 20, for thanks are sacrifices, called the fruits of the lips, and calves of your lips, Heb. xiii. 15, that is, they are instead of those sacrifices and offerings of fruits under the law; therefore bring them to the priest to offer (as Heb. xiii. 15); for you must offer nothing without a priest. Again, all is from God, through Christ, and therefore return all to God through him also, and give thanks for him above all, for he is all in all.

And so now, in the last place, I will shew you the causes of true thankfulness, which you may take and consider as helps to it; and they are,

First, A true consideration of God's benefits received by us, which must of necessity be done, or else there can be no true thankfulness, as *ignoti cupido nulla*, so *gratiæ nulla pro ignotis*: so then you must labour to know them, and that they are yours: Ps. cxxxix. 14, 'I will praise thee,' saith David, 'for thy wonderful works, which my soul knows right well;' that is, makes full consideration of them, which makes me thankful therefor; for want of this, unreasonable creatures are incapable of thankfulness, because of understanding; and yet wicked men are worse; for, Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knoweth his owner that feeds him, but my people do not consider;' that is, regards not, takes no notice of, and into consideration, the great things I have done for them; and, therefore, Deut. xxxii. 6, their unthankfulness is ascribed to folly, 'a foolish people, and unwise,' *stultus semper est ingratus*: therefore, get a heart that takes notice of every mercy. If thou prayest, watch how God doth answer thy prayers: Col. iv. 2, 'Watch in prayer with thanksgiving;' as if he had said, Still see how many requests God grants. Watch to see how your prayers come in, and it will afford much and plentiful matter of thankfulness: to this end, take notice of small mercies as well as great; that is a true sign of a thankful heart, and a means to increase mercies. In every passage of the day, in every petition of thy prayers, thou seest mercy, and an answer. God takes this kindly at thy hands, and he sees that none is lost. It is a motive to him to give thee more; it is a sign thou art little in thine own eyes, when every small mercy is great to thee, as it was to Jacob. 'Forget not all his benefits,' saith David, Ps. ciii. 1; not all, not one if it were possible; as when we would work our hearts to godly sorrow, we use to go over particular sins; so if we would work our hearts to thankfulness, go over particular mercies, and labour to take notice of them, and know them; so also remember them, which is but an iteration of consideration; and, indeed, this is so necessary, that forgetfulness is put for unthankfulness; and so David, Ps. ciii., lays a solemn

charge upon his soul : ' My soul, forget not all his benefits.' He doth give himself a charge to remember them ; and we had need have a charge laid on us to do this, for nothing sooner waxeth old than kindnesses. Injuries are written on our hearts with a pen of iron, but mercies are written as in water, Ps. cvi. 13. ' They soon forgot his works' ; as Pharaoh's butler forgot Joseph, so we forget God.

Secondly, A second help and cause of thankfulness, is a true esteem and valuation of God's mercies, which is to be added to the other ; and to this end we are to consider the greatness, and the number, and all the aggravations of them ; for some circumstances in mercies make them great. When Paul would express his great thanks, 2 Cor. ix., that thing which he gives thanks for, he calls unspeakable ; and in 1 Thes. iii. 9, ' What thanks shall I give,' saith he, ' for all the joy we have for your sakes before God ?' He thought it so great a mercy, as no thanks were great enough ; the gift so unspeakable, that as his groans in prayer, so in thanks also were unutterable. Now, if you would have such large hearts, get a large esteem of God's mercies. See how Ezra esteemed the mercy shewed his people, chap. ix. 13, such a mercy as this ; so think thou of the peculiarness of every mercy to thee ; how God hath not dealt so with others of thy brethren ; as he in the psalm, ' not so with any nation ;' to this purpose also cast up the number of them. So David did, Ps. xl. 5, ' Thy thoughts (speaking of thoughts of mercy) are more than I can reckon up to thee ;' so Ps. lxxi. 15, ' I will praise thee always, for I know not the number of thy mercies ;' and add to that a right esteem of thine own vileness, that thou deservest nothing, but art less than the least, and then every mercy will be mercy indeed ; nothing hinders thankfulness more than pride. Hezekiah rendered not, because his heart was lifted up, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25 ; for a proud man thinks every thing is due to him ; but a beggar is thankful for a penny. The people of Israel having proud hearts, thought scorn of the good land, Ps. cvi. 24 ; thought it not good enough for them, who were too bad for hell. We have nothing but this manna, say they ; yet it was angels' food, and came from heaven without their labour ; and take heed of contemning these mercies thou enjoyest, which because thou hast not what thou wouldst have, thou art apt to do. There is no mercy almost here, which in this life is a pure mercy, but something is wanting still, because indeed in our works unto God, there is still something wanting, and we are wayward creatures ; and because things do not come off adequately to our minds, and so fully as we would have them, we therefore undervalue them. Such peevish things are our lusts, that unless all be pleased, none are pleased.

Thirdly, There must be added to this a sense of God's love to your persons in every mercy, or at leastwise there must be a heart in thee that seeks after that love in and above all other mercies, and rests not in them without it. And such a heart only is a thankful heart ; for if the heart be jealous of the want of his love in all he gives, it will not be thankful, as the children of Israel were not. They thought God brought them out of Egypt to destroy them, and therefore murmured rather than gave thanks. And if the heart be not sensible of God's love, great mercies are little worth to us ; for love is that which makes them mercies. A dinner of herbs in love is better than a stalled ox without love. As when thou sittest down with a great man, whose heart thou fearest is not with thee, as Prov. xxiii., thou wilt have no great heart to thank him for his cheer ; so also, if thou fearest that God's heart is not with thee, therefore, Ps. lxxiii. 3, David makes this the ground of his praise, because he tasted his loving-kindness to be better than life. Neither is it requisite only that the heart should know that the mercies come

from God, but also that they come out of love. The Gentiles knew that all they had was from him, Acts xiv. 17. He left not himself without witness; but they tasted not his love in all as better than life, and so were unthankful; therefore get faith and assurance of his love in all, and that will make every mercy a great mercy, because flowing out of an eternal love in Christ; so Col. ii. 7, 'Be you rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith, abounding with thanksgiving;' and then every dinner of herbs, yea, every cross, is interpreted in love, and made a love-token; all his ways accounted mercy and truth.

Fourthly, A fourth help to thankfulness is love again to God, which is wrought by the sense of his love. This is necessary, for love is the ground-song of this melody, as the apostle calls it. Therefore David makes it the foundation of all his thankfulness, Ps. cxvi. 1, and so Ps. xviii. 13, for love enlargeth the heart, and it is the very form and essence of thankfulness, and therefore the chiefest cause of it; and therefore contrarily self-love is the greatest hindrance of it, and also love to the creature hinders it too, for self-love keeps all to itself, and improveth all to itself; it contracteth the heart. Therefore, in 2 Tim. iii. 3, it is said men shall be lovers of themselves, and because such, therefore unthankful also; that follows, for that makes them content to take all kindnesses, but to return none; and therefore that goodness in nature (as we call it in men), which makes them thankful, is but so much ingenuity as restraining grace hath gained from self-love. And so likewise love to the creatures, if inordinate, is an hindrance. *Nullum habet malum cupiditas majus quam quod ingrata est*, for like dogs that are greedy, cast one sop to them they swallow it down, and then look you on the face for another, so do men possessed with lusts.

Fifthly, A fifth help is joy in God's goodness, as when Hannah praised God for Samuel, 1 Sam. ii. 1; she begins her song thus, 'My heart rejoiceth in the Lord.' When you entertain God's blessings with fulness,* you cannot give thanks for them; therefore upon days of thanksgiving a liberal use of the creature is allowed us, in the 8th of Nehemiah; 'for the joy of the Lord is your strength'; for joy dilateth the heart and opens the mouth; turns it and winds it up; and so, Luke i. 46, 47, 'My soul magnifieth the Lord, and rejoiceth in God my Saviour.' And David also, when he gave thanks, 1 Chron. xxix. 17, he rejoiced exceedingly that day. Only you must joy in God's goodness; for if you carnally rejoice in the creature, spiritual joy is damped, and then thanksgiving is damped also: Deut. viii. 10, 11, 'Lest thou be full and forget me.' They in the 14th of the Acts, ver. 17, had their hearts filled with gladness, but yet walked in their own ways, because it was gladness in the creature, not in God. Preserve spiritual joy therefore, and delight thyself in the Almighty.

Sixthly, We freely render to God the glory of goodness, by acknowledging his goodness and our baseness, and by yielding ourselves, and all we have, to his service, and in all things, at all times, principally to this end, to glorify that his goodness, and to testify our love; and all this to the name of Christ.

Use. The first use is to exhort you to this duty of thankfulness, unto which, as you have the greatest motive drawn from the object of it, the riches of God's goodness,—of all cords the cords of love are the sweetest,—so also from the goodness and excellency of the duty itself; which indeed hath all kinds of goodness met in it; for all good things the philosopher reduceth to three heads: 1, things honest; 2, things profitable; 3, things pleasant, and all these three meet in this duty, a perfect trinity of goodness; so you

* That is, 'satiety.'—Ed.

have, Ps. cxlvii., 'Praise the Lord, for it is good'; that is, it is profitable; so v. 7, 'and it is pleasant, and praise is comely'; and therefore by the rule of contraries, all kind of evil is contained and met in unthankfulness, to which even the very heathen bear witness, *ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris*; all evil is spoken in this one word, viz., unthankfulness.

First, Thankfulness to God is most profitable: 1. Because it is the way to get more, and unthankfulness is the way to lose all we have; therefore, Philip. iv. 6, 7, 'Let your requests be made known with thanksgiving,' otherwise requests alone will not move God. It is not earnestness only for what thou wantest, but withal thanks for what thou hast, must prevail. As you use to put water into the pump to fetch more, so return thanks to fetch more mercies; whereas the want of thankfulness, and returning all to God again, forfeits all the blessings you have: Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, 'Because you served not the Lord with gladness of heart in abundance of all things, you shall serve your enemies in want, &c. Enemies are opposed to God, a bountiful master; abundance, to penury; and gladness, to grief and sorrow of heart. Great odds you see therein; yet this unthankfulness brings, Hosea ii. 14, 'I will take my corn away,' says God, when they were unthankful.

Secondly, It is profitable, because even the creature and blessings you have are blessed to you by it, and thereby made good, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 'The creatures are good if received with thanksgiving; mark it, he puts in that *if*, for otherwise God's curse goeth with them, which thankfulness removed.

The second thing is, it is pleasant also both to God and man. 1. Pleasant to God, Eph. v. 18, 20: 'Sing psalms, making melody to God in your hearts;' giving thanks, for that is the ditty; so, Ps. lxxix. 30, 31, 'I will magnify the Lord with thanksgiving. This shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.' As it is pleasant to God, so, 2dly, to man, for joy is always the ground of it. We never thank God truly, but our hearts are warmed with his love, and we rejoice in him; therefore, Luke i. 46, 47, when Mary praised God, she said, 'My spirit doth magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God my Saviour;' and as joy is the ground of it, so the consequent and the issue of it. When you thank God most heartily, then God fills your hearts with peace; so Philip. iv. 6, 7, 'Let your requests be made known with thanksgiving, and the peace of God shall rule your hearts.' Christians find it so; and those blessings are sweetest to them, which they are most thankful for; that are won with prayers, and worn with thanks. Lastly, it is also comely, for it is paying a debt, 2 Thes. i. 3, we are bound, and it is meet to give thanks (says Paul there); it is all God requires, and all we can do. So in 2 Sam. vii. 19, 20, when he had repeated those great mercies, and now, 'O Lord (says he) what can thy servant say more?' It was all he could do; he could but thank him, and out of thankfulness serve him; and this is all God requires: 1 Thes. v., about the 18th ver., 'This is the will of God concerning you.' Therefore as it is comely, as being the giving but a due, and less than his due, and yet all we can; so also honourable, yea, more honourable than praying is, *præstantius est dare quam accipere*; so to return than beg; therefore the service of the world to come, and of angels in heaven, is set forth by this.

Secondly, By way of use, then, let me shew you your unthankfulness to God, and let you see what unthankfulness is. I will briefly set it forth to you in three degrees of it, which I will apply to you. The first degree of unthankfulness is: 1, when you want true thankfulness in expressing your thankfulness, as when you want the true grounds and ends of it. Among men there is no greater falsehood and dissemblance than in the matter of

thankfulness one to another, and much more to God. There are often the matter, the duties, the tokens, the expressions of it, both in word and deed, when as yet the life and soul of thankfulness is wanting; for as you pray amiss (as James says), so also you may be thankful amiss. See you an example for this, Luke xviii. 11, 'I thank God' (says the pharisee) 'I am not like other men.' Here is one outwardly thankful, when yet he wanted the power of true thankfulness; for he gave not God the glory of what he was, but in his heart took it himself; he rendered an acknowledgment indeed, as unto God, but yet gloried as if he had not received it from him. Some men will commend their own worth and gifts to others, by way of thankfulness to God, when they aim more at glorifying themselves than glorifying of him.

So also when men are thankful for mercies, which indeed they have not received from God, nor have no assurance and evidence of. It is an ordinary thing for men to give thanks for election, and the work of grace, when inwardly their hearts tell them they have no assurance of neither. To thank God for mercies you have not, is to mock him, as the other gloried in what he had received, as if he had not received it; so some give thanks for what they have not received, as if they had received it.

So also when men seem to be thankful, and say, We bless God for the means of grace, and blessed preaching we live under, and for the company of God's people, and yet their hearts are affected more with a value and esteem of their corn, and wine, and oil, and of their quails more than manna, all this is unthankfulness. So when men seem to be very stirring for God, forward of duties, and fearful of injuries and wrongs to him, and yet do not this out of thankfulness, this is unthankfulness, when it is not his goodness they fear most in abstaining from sin, as Hosea iii. 5. They forbear not wronging him because he hath been kind to them, not because the love of God and his goodness constrains them to duties, neither is that they do for him in relation to what is passed, and what he hath done for them; but still they look to things to come only, what dependences they have on him, considering rather how they are in his danger than in his debt, not so much to requite him, who hath done so much for them; but lest he should reward them for all they have done against him. If in this case, and on these grounds only, you should offer rivers of oil to him, and give your bodies to be burned for him, yet you might be termed unthankful. Thankfulness hath no greater end than itself; as when a man looks upon God as one who hath saved him from hanging in hell, and one he owes his life unto, and so would be content to do or suffer anything for him upon this ground, and is glad if God will but use him or call him to either, is greedy of opportunities of rendering to him, and glad of an occasion wherein he may show himself to love him; is thankful for nothing more than that he is able to do anything that pleaseth him, and may be accepted; this man is a thankful man. So much of this as you have in your hearts, so much thankfulness you have. That man who endeavours to quicken up his heart, and says, I have received these and these mercies more from God than any of my equals, as Paul did, more wit and parts, and learning, and credit, and opportunities, what shall I therefore do for him more than other men? And so serves him; this is a thankful man.

The second degree of unthankfulness I would convince you of, is much more than the former, viz., not rendering at all; not only rendering amiss, but not rendering at all, or not in any proportionable measure to the mercies received. Herod had received much assistance in the making an eloquent oration, and God had made it take, but he gave not glory to God; that was

his sin, he rendered not again; and so Hezekiah, a good man; he had received a great mercy, he had the lease of his life renewed for fifteen years, and of his kingdom with it, and a deliverance from Sennacherib; and this, at that time, when the rest of the tribes were carried away captive, and had a miracle wrought for his sake which made him famous all the world over, namely, the going back of the sun, and which made him to be thought dear to the God of heaven, who, beyond the course of nature, lengthened the day to show he meant to lengthen his life; yet, 2 Chron. xxii. 25, he is taxed, that he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him. His heart was not wrought upon to be so much better after so great a mercy, according to that proportion which might be expected; and so Solomon is taxed for this kind of ungratitude, 1 Kings xi. 9. God had been exceeding merciful unto him, not only in giving him the kingdom, though a younger brother, but in appearing unto him, and assuring him thereby of his love, and acceptation of him that he was his God. Now, says the text, by way of aggravation of his sin, 'He turned away from the Lord his God,' 1 Kings xi. 9, who had appeared unto him twice. Is there any man here had often appearings from God (for when after any extraordinary manner he draws nigh to you, it may be so called)? And have not your hearts been turned more to God after? Then these appearings will be set upon your score of unthankfulness; so have you had much cost bestowed on you, much means by the Lord of the harvest, and dresser of the ground, and have you not brought forth meet fruits, not only fruits, but meet fruits? Heb. vi. 7. You may be called unthankful persons, because you render not again according to the benefits.

So it is unthankfulness when Christians are always whining and complaining, and discontented for what they want, but never praising God for what they have, still a-begging more, not considering what is past; indeed, in duties, you are to look to what is before, and not to what is behind; but contrary in mercies, to what is past more than to what is to come, and if so much as you fall short in rendering as you might, so much unthankfulness, much more are they unthankful that render not according to the benefit received, but not at all, as many do not, but do take all they can get from God, but he gets nothing of them again; they have houses to dwell in of his building, but pay him no rent; pray not to him, nor worship him in their families, and so as to make a church in their houses; have credit in the world, and interest in men's hearts, but are loath to spend never so little of it for God and a good cause, and to make use of their interest in men for his advantage, but improve all to their own ends only; that have power put into their hands (which the apostle says is God's, and from him) and yet do not think with themselves how to employ it best for him, in the suppressing of any sin, or the advancing of his gospel; have bodies and souls that are of his buying and finding, but yet endeavour not to glorify God with either, as Paul exhorts upon that ground in 1 Cor. vi. 20, do not begin to say in their hearts as God taxeth them: Jer. v. 24, 'Let us fear the Lord who giveth rain, both the former and the latter in their season.' Nay, pay him not so much as good words for all his mercies, much less study not how to render and to be really thankful; nay, sacrifice to their own nets, Hab. i. 16, and say in their hearts, their wit, and power, and industry, hath got them; their wealth and their learning (Deut. viii. 14, 17) they think hath got them their credit; their friends have got them their preferment,—all these are unthankful persons; the earth rendereth fruit to him that dresseth it; the clouds return the rain they receive from the earth; the rivers empty themselves into the sea, from whence they had their streams; the body of

man returns to the earth, whence it was taken, and the spirit to God that gave it, only in your hearts and in your lives, you return nothing again to the glory of God's goodness.

The third and highest degree of unthankfulness is not only rendering or not rendering at all, but requiting and rendering evil and disobedience for the good received, which is the highest degree of unthankfulness. Such was in the children of Israel, and is in all impenitent persons, who, Luke iii. 35, are called evil and unthankful. So Neh. ix. 25, 26, 'They took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, &c.; and did eat, and were filled, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their back, and killed the prophets, and wrought great provocations.' 'So Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked,' Deut. xxxii. 15, like full fed heifers, who, when fat and lusty, kick at the owner when he comes to yoke them for his service.

Thus David's sin is aggravated, though a good man: 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8, 'Did not I anoint thee king, and deliver thee from Saul; and gave thee thy master's house, and wives? and if this had been too little, would have given thee more.' For God makes one mercy the foundation of a greater. 'And why hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?' Why hast thou used me thus, and set light by me? Is this thy requital? This is the case of all impenitent persons, whom God out of the riches of his patience affords time to live here, as space to repent, Rev. ii. 2; yet this his patience puts them from repentance, and in the end repentance so far off from them, that they can never meet: Eccles. viii. 11, 'Because sentence against an evil work is not presently executed, therefore their hearts are set to do evil.' Because God defers punishing and cutting them off, they defer repenting, going on in hardness of heart, despising the riches of his patience, which leadeth them to repentance. Deferrers of repentance are unthankful persons; therefore in the highest degree they think to spend the best and most precious of their youth, and to live in pleasures, and give God the dregs and the last sands when the glass is run; neither would they then repent, but that they needs must; and will it be accepted, thinkest thou? No.

All the blessings God in the mean time vouchsafeth them, they have used them against him, and they increase but the fire of their lusts, as God complains, Ezek. xvi. from the 15th, and so on, 'Thou takest my gold and silver' (so God calls them) 'and makest idols of them.' So I may say of all your covetous worldlings, God's silver and gold you have made idols of, and fallen down and worshipped them, and sacrificed all unto them; and ver. 19, 'My meat I give thee.' Thou art a glutton, thou hast sacrificed to thy lusts, made thy belly thy god; that strong drink and wine God gave thee, thou hast sacrificed to drunkenness; that strength to women, consumed all on thy lusts (as James speaks); the wealth you have had, which you should serve God with, you have but made use of it to live at a higher rate of sinning, and procuring the sweetest and daintiest of pleasures, and the daintiest and comeliest sins; that wit thou hast had, thou hast used it not in giving thanks, which the apostle rather commands, Eph. v., but in foolish jests, abusing the Scripture, mocking his saints; that power and preferment thou hast is made use of by these* perhaps to persecute God's children and ministers. So also thy body, that God hath at a dear rate bought, thou hast dishonoured him with, and made the members of it members of a harlot; thou hast eyes full of adultery, and thy strength to pour down drink; nay,

* Qu. 'thou' ?—Ed

thou canst not give him so much as a good word, but hast his name up in every company, profaning it by swearing, &c. Art thou not unthankful? God, by giving these blessings, hath made thee more able to offend him, hath strengthened an enemy, and by sparing thee so long, hath but made thee more bold to do it, and daring in it; and all his mercies have but fortified thy hard heart to hold out siege against him; all the creatures he set to woo thee to him, have got thy love away from him themselves. Do you requite the Lord thus, O ye foolish and unkind, as Moses expostulates the case, Deut. xxxii. 6; as Christ said, 'For which of these good works do ye stone me?' So I say, for which of all his mercies do you go on thus to sin against him? What, to fight against him with his own weapons, his own strength, to betray all he gives thee into thy enemies' hands, what can be worse? What iniquity have you ever found in him? When did he ever do you any hurt?

God will one day expostulate his cause with you, and heap coals of fire upon your heads if you turn not, because you rendered him evil for good; all the mercies abused will be so many more coals to make hell fire the hotter, and therefore all of you consider what good things you have received and enjoy from the Lord, and how unthankful you have been; and humble yourselves and turn to him, for know, that nothing will condemn you more than sinning against light and mercies.