

1. Come to Christ, and if gold and silver be for thy advantage, thou shalt have it literally accomplished 2. I say ye shall have as much contentment in Jesus Christ, as if ye had this house full of gold. 3. I will say this to thee, Christ will be thy gold and silver, according to that word in the 26 verse, which is most remarkable, yea, 'the Almighty shall be thy defence,' or as it is in the original, 'shall be thy gold,' speaking of the promise of gold before. *Secondly*, Ye say, I would have this, that what I propose might be accomplished: I say come to Christ, and ye shall have that likewise, Job xxii. 28. Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be accomplished unto thee; which I conceive doth not only take in these spiritual degrees, but likewise those that relate to temporal enjoyments. But there is a *third* thing I would have, say ye, and I would come to Christ, and that is, that I might have all the desires of my heart. I say, O man! and O woman! come to Christ, and thou shalt have what thou desirest: this is clear from Psalm xxxvii. 4. 'Delight thyself in God, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.' What can ye have, man, but it is there? Would ye have any thing of Christ? He putteth a blank in your hand, and saith that word which is said to Solomon, ask, 'what would ye have, and I shall give you.' Christ, as it were, putteth his name to the foot of a clean sheet of paper, and he desireth you to ask what ye would have: and is not this an excellent bargain? O niggard! what would ye have, which ye will not get in Christ? And be persuaded, that ye who refuse and will not take him, the eternal curse of all that is in heaven will return upon thy head, the eternal curse of all the expectants of heaven, and heirs of life will return upon the head of that person who will not take Christ. And cursed, cursed shall that person be, who will not take Christ, and one day all the congregation in heaven and earth shall say, *Amen*.

THREE SERMONS

CONCERNING THE

FAITH OF ASSURANCE.

SERMON I.

2 COR. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

ASSURANCE is a precious gift, which many who live in these days do undervalue, and tread under foot. Do not the Christians of these times go halting between two opinions, be-

ing neither positive that they are received 'into the adoption of children:' nor yet positive that they are in a state of alienation, and 'enemies in their own mind by wicked works?' Yea, and (that which is worse) there are many among us that walk with much contentment under their uncertainty. I think it is a fault to be condemned in many, they pursue more to satisfy their sense for the present, than to have a solid well grounded assurance for the time to come. I could wish that all the debates and questions of these days, that take up so much of our time, and so much of our thoughts from better things, were happily drowned in these four excellent questions, which, without controversy, are of the greatest importance. 1. Where shall I rest all night, when the long shadows of the everlasting evening shall be stretched out upon me? And whether or not hath Christ gone to prepare a place for me in his Father's house? 2. It is a soul concerning question. 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' To be asking at him who can sweetly resolve you.

And 3. Not to rest there, but to be crying forth in the morning, 'what shall I do to be saved!' And to be crying out in the evening, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

4. It is sweet to be asking seriously, 'saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' There is much of our time spent in asking news from court, and from abroad, concerning the revolutions of states and kingdoms. But I suppose it were better to ask, what news from heaven concerning thyself? What news from within, and what news of thy bridegroom coming? For these are great courts, I mean the court of heaven, and the court of conscience, the affairs of which a Christian should endeavour to know.

5. It is a soul-concerning question, that a Christian should be much in proposing to himself, 'what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?'

It is certain that our faith and assurance, and all our other mercies, are from him: and yet, alas! we are negligent in praises. We may, with Tamar, rent our garments of 'divers colours,' even the 'garments of the king's daughter,' because of spiritual whoredom against God, and ingratitude to him.

Now, having spoken unto you, at so great a length, of the precious and fundamental grace of faith, we have thought fit to shut up all in speaking a little upon these words we have now read, concerning the evidence and assurance of faith.

The apostle, in this chapter, is vindicating his ministry and apostleship from the contempt that was cast upon it; he prove he was a minister of the New Testament, called and sent of God,

by the blessing and success he had among them, in that he had not plowed nor threshed in vain, and they being so much in censuring his way, and seeking an account of his ministry in these words, he doth (as it were) draw them off by holy diversion unto another business; as if he had said unto them, "O Corinthians! I will divert you from the exercise of judging me, and will lead you into one that is more divine and profitable." Be much in judging and examining yourselves; and indeed it is a truth worth our observation, "That if we were more in judging of ourselves, we would be less in judging others;" but alas! there are some of us, who are so much abroad, that we cannot be much at home.

In these words there are six considerable things; *First*, That there is such a thing attainable by a Christian while he is here, as a distinct persuasion and assurance that he is in the faith, and hath an interest in Christ by being in the faith: here it is not to be understood, a being in the doctrine of faith only, but it is to be understood principally, being indeed, and really united unto Christ by faith.

Secondly, The seeking after assurance is a necessary commanded duty; for ye see here the words are very imperative, 'examine yourselves, prove your own selves.'

Thirdly, That there are many mistakes and delusions among people concerning that noble and excellent thing assurance. There are many who keep a fast hope, which Christ shall discountenance and sweep away like a 'spider's web;' and this is imported in these words, 'Examine yourselves;' or as the words may be rendered, 'take an accurate and an experimented search of yourselves, try yourselves,' or 'prove yourselves;' it is a word that is borrowed from goldsmiths refining and trying of gold: and so his putting the Corinthians to so accurate a search of themselves, saith this clearly to us, there are many mistakes concerning this thing, many do pass a decree in their own favour, before Christ hath passed his approbation of them.

Fourthly, Take notice of this from the words, that there is much, and exceeding much advantage, by trying and searching whether we be in the faith or not. This is imported in his doubling the exhortation.

Fifthly, That one most excellent and spiritual way of attaining assurance, whether we be in the faith or not, is self-examination, and putting ourselves to the trial. As if he had said, would you have a distinct persuasion that ye are in Christ? then be much in the exercise of self-examination; for the rest of the words of the verse we intend not to handle.

As to the *first*, That there is such a thing attainable, I shall

only propose these reasons unto you to make it evident, 1. It is known in scripture, that the saints of old did in an ordinary way attained to a distinct persuasion of their interest in Christ, Song vi. 3. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' And Rom. viii. 38. 'I am persuaded, (saith the apostle) that neither death nor life, &c. shall be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ.' And 2 Cor. v. 1. 'For we know, if this our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house with God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

2. It is the great scope of many scriptures, to show how Christians may attain unto assurance, 1 John i. 13. 'These things I write unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.' The great end and design of John's writing in these epistles, is to make a soul acquainted with Christ, and to make them accept of him, and to give them a distinct assurance that Christ hath accepted them.

3. There are many commands in scripture for Christians to be serious in searching after assurance, 2 Pet. i. 10. "Wherefore, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

4. It is the blessed end of God's oath in the everlasting covenant, that a Christian might get assurance. What was the great ground and end, that God confirmed his covenant with an oath? Was it not, Heb. vi. 18. "That by two immutable things, where-in it was impossible for God to lie, ye might have strong consolation?"

5. If assurance of our interest in Christ were not attainable, then these precious graces of joy and love could not be well exercised. If a Christian was constantly in the dark concerning his interest in Christ, he could not give obedience to that exhortation, 'Rejoice evermore; again, I say, rejoice.'

6. The scripture hath set down the means by which a Christian may win to assurance; as is clear, 1 John iii. 18, 19. 2 Pet. iv. 5. compared with verse 10. where the apostle Peter, pressing the doctrine of making our calling and election sure, setteth down these excellent means by which we may win to it; and doubtless, the marks and evidences that are registrate in the scripture of a gracious state, do assure us that assurance is attainable.

7. What are the ends of the sacraments, but that our assurance may be confirmed, and that our faith may be strengthened? The two sacraments are the two great seals of heaven, that are put to the charter of the covenant.

Now, as to the application, and the more full improvement of this *First* point, I shall only offer these considerations: 1. I

would have it taken notice of, that though grace and assurance be two lovers, yet there is no such bond of union between them, that the one cannot exist without the other. A Christian may have the real grace of God, and yet walk in darkness, and have no light. A Christian may be going to heaven, and yet that word oftentimes in his mouth, 'I am cut off from thy sight.' Yea, are there not even some, who have had assurance, and some times have been permitted to draw this conclusion, 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me,' who are now under darkness concerning their interest, and, in much bitterness of spirit, do sometimes cry out, 'my hope, and my strength is perished from the Lord?' But, therefore, let me say this one word, both to weak ones, who never had assurance, and deserted ones, who have lost it, when ye miss assurance, beware of drawing such negative conclusions concerning your graces; but when ye sit in darkness, and see no light, 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay yourselves upon your God;' that is, when ye cannot reach the faith of assurance, be much in maintaining of adherence; remember Job's divinity, 'though thou should kill me, yet will I trust in thee;' and consider that sweet word, he will keep them in perfect peace, whose hearts are staid on him.

My *second* consideration is, that since assurance is attainable, ye would study to find out and remove those things that do hinder you from attaining it. And that we may help you in this, we conceive, that the obstructions of a Christian's assurance are especially in these two:

First, Our mistaking of the Lord's dealing towards us. And, *secondly*, Our untender and unsuitable dealing towards him. Of the *first* sort we shall lay before you these five.

The *first* is, want of favourable returns of prayer. This often maketh a Christian to debate his interest, and call in question evidences, Lam. iii. 8. compared with verse 18. 'I cry and shout, but he shutteth out my prayers;' and this is the conclusion of that dispensation, 'My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord;' and this is especially occasioned, when the Christian is most serious and fervent in prayer, and when he meeteth not with a return, this maketh them exceedingly debate their interest. And I confess, it is a sad dispensation to meet with a silent Christ in prayer; but yet, that needeth not to make a believer question all, and debate the reality of his interest in God, since the dearest of all the children of the kingdom have been so dealt with, even as David. Psalm xxii. 2. cried night and day without silence, and is not heard, but crieth out, 'Why art thou so far from helping, and from the words of my roaring?' Yea, that passage may relate to him who was 'the riot and off-spring of Da-

vid,' for even he was so dealt with, and had not presently a sensible return, when he had prayed thrice, 'that the cup might pass from me.'

Secondly, The want of sensible enlargement and liberty in prayer, that he never goeth to his knees but his heart beginneth to die within him, then he cryeth forth that word, 2 Cor. iii. 17. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; and sure, if I had the Spirit of the Lord, I would have liberty in the exercise of prayer: and that this is a rise of the disputing of our interest, is clear from Psalm xxvii. 4. compared with verse 7, 9, saith David, 'I am sore troubled, that I cannot speak. I have no liberty in prayer, I never go to God in prayer, but, as it were, my tongue sticketh to the roof of my mouth. He from hence draweth this conclusion, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and hath he in wrath shut up his tender mercies for ever?"

I confess, this also is a sad dispensation, to meet with an absent and veiled Christ in prayer; so that we can never go to seek God in secret, but we may write this upon our prayers, 'he is gone, he is gone:' especially when we have lost that liberty which formerly we have had; and therefore is David's perplexity much heightened, verse 5, 6. 'from his remembering his song in the night, and his calling to mind the years of ancient times; yet we may remember how soon David wrote his retractions as to that conclusion, 'I said, this is my infirmity, verse 10. And so should we do, when upon every straitening in prayer, we began to question the Lord's kindness towards us.

A *third* objection of assurance is, a Christian's wrestling with his corruptions painfully and seriously, and yet not meeting with any sensible victory over them; but, on the contrary, their corruptions seem to be stronger, and they themselves seem to be weaker, and then it is they strengthen their misbelief with that word, 1 John iii. 3. 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.' And indeed, this is a knot that is not easily loosed; but when he seeth idols and corruptions prevailing over him, he will cry out, 'I am gone, and there is no hope in Israel concerning this thing. And yet this also is a word in haste. Paul had registrate himself a standing witness, even after he was a chosen vessel, Rom. vii. How strangely a child of God may be borne down with a 'body of death,' even under most serious wrestling against it: and therefore if you seriously maintain that combat, though you do not sensibly prevail, thou hast no reason upon that ground to weaken thy assurance.

Fourthly. When a Christian is put to more than ordinary outward afflictions, when God dispenseth sadly unto them in out-

ward things, they then begin to call in question their interest, and dispute their assurance. This is clear by comparing Lam. iii. 18. with the preceding words, where speaking of the sad dispensations they meet with, he draweth this in verse 18. 'My hope, and my strength is perished from the Lord.' And Job ii. 4. where he draweth this conclusion from such a promise, 'I am now cast out of thy sight.' The devil taketh Eliphaz's divinity, and presents it to a Christian, 'Call now if there be any to answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou go?' as if he had said, did you ever know a Christian afflicted as thou art? And so he would have Job to quit his integrity. But yet we know that all these blessed ones, for all their afflictions, were dear unto the Lord, and had their interest secure in him: yea, 'as many as he loveth he doth rebuke and chasten.' And it is the bastards, and not sons, on whom he will not bestow a rod; and therefore, we ought not to question our interest because of afflictions.

And *lastly*, The rise of a Christian's discouragement, and that which hindereth their assurance, is when their former experience of the manifestations of God doth not relish to them, and when the promises upon which they have built, become tasteless unto them as the white of an egg, and when they meet not with God in ordinances, but these become lifeless.' When these three rise together upon them, their case oftentimes becomes very perplexed. And this also seems to have been David's case. Psalm lxxvii. when he 'remembered his song in the night, and the days of old,' and yet had no sweetness in them, then he breaketh forth into those bitter complaints which are there expressed: but yet (as we said before) this was his infirmity, and there is no reason for a Christian to question his interest upon such account, because the ordinances are not at all times alike lively even to the best, and the Lord is not always present? but though sometimes the candle of the Lord doth shine upon his head, yet at other times he is necessitated to cry out, 'O that it were with me as in months past?

The *second* sort of obstructions of a Christian's assurance, I mean, such as flow from our untender dealing towards God, are.

First, A guilty conscience. That is a remarkable word, 1 Tim. iii. 9. 'Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' It telleth us, that this excellent grace of faith cannot dwell but in a cleanly lodging, even *in a pure conscience*; and when a Christian setteth about to believe, he will know how a guilty conscience will flee in his face, and cry out, O adventure not to believe, dare thou believe? The guiltiness of a Christian's conscience maketh him oft to cry out, 'Touch not the mountain, lest thou be

thrust through.' And I will tell you three disadvantages of a guilty conscience.

1. It obstructeth a Christian's boldness in making application to Christ; his heart saith, *close*, and his necessity saith, *close*; but his guilty conscience crieth out, *O! stand back and do not close*.

2. A guilty conscience often hindereth the discoveries of Christ to the soul, and doth so affright and terrify us; yea, it will so sting and bite us, that when he revealeth himself, we cannot take notice; when he would lay on a plaister, our souls will tear it off, 'and refuse to be comforted.'

3. It doth exceedingly obstruct our going about duty: O! but our souls move slowly in the paths of God, when we are under the power of a guilty conscience.

The *second* obstruction is, that we are not much in the exercise of tenderness: O! but if a Christian were tender, and if in every step of his life he desired 'to set Christ before his eyes,' he would easily win to much assurance; according to that word, *Iſa. lxiv. 5.* 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, and these that remember thee in thy ways.' Would ye know the assured Christian? It is the tender Christian. That Christian who doth not crucify convictions, the Christian that breaketh not resolutions, the Christian that doth not sit calls and opportunities to prayer, the Christian that saith not of any sin, 'it is a little one;' or, the Christian that searcheth always, watcheth always, examineth always, and is always casting out sin, and that is the assured Christian.

The *third* obstruction is, the want of the exercise of the grace of fear. We are not much under this disposition, to fear the Lord and his goodness. This is clear from *Psalm xxv. 14.* 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.'

I think there are these two great evidences, that much of the power of godliness is gone from some of our hearts, 1. We fear God no more than if he were our companion. And 2. We fear ourselves no more than if we had not a deceitful heart within us; we neither fear God nor ourselves; and that speaketh, that much of the life of religion is lost amongst us.

The *fifth* thing that doth obstruct our assurance, is too much worldly-mindedness, and eager pursuit after the things of a present life. That is remarkable, *2 Cor. iv. ult.* compared with *2 Cor. v. i.* 'We look not into the things that are seen,' that is, we are not much taken up with the things of a present world, which the men of the world seek and delight themselves in; and it is subjoined, 'For we know, that if this our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house not made

with hands.' So we see assurance and mortification of the world are much knit together. Would ye know where to find our hearts? The most of us are conversing with the idols of the world. Would ye know where to find our hearts? They are among the vanities of the world. O! how true is that word, Psalm xxxix. 'Man walks in a vain show?' What is man in all his actings, but 'as one walking in a long gallery that is adorned with pictures, gazing on these things, and saluting them all, as if they were living kings and queens, and great persons that could do him good; and so our pursuing after the world is nothing else but a *dead shadow*; pursuing after *dead shadows*; a man that is but a short living shadow, pursuing after vanity and nothing, and thus he fools away his time, forgetting to make sure 'the one thing necessary.'

5. Want of distinct apprehension of these three, 1. The infinite love of Christ. 2. The infinite power of Christ. And 3. The infinite wisdom of Christ. There is not an objection, O Christians! that ye have from the multitude of your sins, but it may be drowned in infinite love. There is not an objection that ye have from the strength of your idols, but it may be drowned in the immense ocean of the infinite power of Christ. There is not an objection that ye have from your wants, or about your evil nature. but ye may drown it in the infinite wisdom and goodness of Christ. And there can be nothing against your assurance, but which may be answered from these, if rightly applied, taken up, and rested upon by the soul.

The *last* thing which hindereth our assurance is, the smallness of the measure of grace that we have attained. When grace is small, it is hardly to be discerned; and therefore, if ye would have assurance, learn not to lye still and dispute, but rise up and increase your stock, and then ye shall know you are rich; 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God; *and by this* ye shall know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.'

The *third* consideration is, that assurance is not bestowed at all times. There are some special times and seasons when God giveth a Christian a broad sight of his interest; and I shall but name these.

The *first* time is, when he is first converted, and Christ and he joins hands together, even then sometimes the best robe is put upon the prodigal son, and the fattest calf is killed, and a ring is put upon his hand, and shoes upon his feet. Acts ix. 17. Paul met with assurance immediately after his conversion. 1 John ii. 12, 13. 'I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father;' and before that, in the 12 verse, 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven

you.' When a Christian is brought unto Christ, he will, as it were, lead them to the registers of heaven, and say, 'Friend, come and see, here is your name written from eternity:' but do not mistake me, I do not say this is always so, but those whom Christ converteth through the thunderings of the law, most frequently meet with intimation of the pardon of their sins, and peace with God, even at their first acquaintance. I know there are some Christians, if ye ask at them when they were begotten unto a lively hope, they would say that word, that the blind man once said, 'one thing I know, I was once blind, but now I see; but for the time and for the day, I know not when it was.'

The *second* time is, when they are wrestling with God like princes in prayer, and watching unto that exercise, Dan. ix. 23. compared with the preceding verse, he being much and serious in prayer, doth meet with that word from heaven, 'O man! greatly beloved,' or as the word is, 'O man of desires:' and Acts x. 2, 3, 4. when Cornelius was much in the exercise of watching and prayer, he seeth a vision, and getteth intimation of peace with God: and Jacob, when he was wrestling with God, Gen. xxxii. 28. hath this testimony given him, 'Thou hast as a prince wrestled with God and prevailed.'

The *third* time is, when a Christian is passing through the gates of death, and is upon the borders of eternity, I desire not to be mistaken in this neither, I know some Christians are led to heaven through a dark trance, so that they never see a blink of the countenance of Christ, until the day when they get him in their arms eternally within his Father's house. Some Christians, when they go through the gates of death, may be disputing this question, 'Where am I going? But this is certain, that sometimes, yea, oftentimes, Christ will dispense a broad sight of a Christian's interest unto him at the day of death, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. When was it that David sang that song which hath strengthened thousands in the very jaws of death, 'God hath made with me an everlasting covenant?' Was it not when death was shaking hands with him? And 2 Tim. iv. 8. when was it that Paul sang that song, 'I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!' Was it not even then when he was ready to depart, 'and to be offered up?' And when was it when old Simeon did sing that blessed song, Luke ii. 29. 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation?' Was it not within a step of death? He, as it were, went to heaven with Christ in his arms, or rather in his heart, he carried Christ with him, and found Christ before him; and so death to Simeon was a change of his place, and not a change of his company.

The *fourth* time is, when he is put to some hard and difficult duty. Before Abraham be made to forsake his native land, and become a stranger and a wanderer, he meeteth with sweet intimations of his interest, Gen. xii. 2. 'I will make of thee a great nation;' and verse 7. 'The Lord appeared unto Abraham.' And before Jeremiah be sent a preacher unto a rebellious people, he had this word spoken unto him, 'I knew thee before thou wast brought forth.'

The *fifth* time is, when a Christian hath done some singular act of obedience. When Abraham had obeyed the Lord, and was content to offer up Isaac, he met with a sight of his interest, and the covenant was renewed to him with an oath, Gen. xxii. 16; 17. 'By myself have I sworn, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee as the stars of heaven.'

The *sixth* time is, when a Christian is to meet with hard trials, difficulties, and afflictions in the world, then they usually meet with assurance; and so Gen. xxviii. 14, 15, 16. before Jacob go to serve Laban, he meeteth with intimation of his peace with God.

The *seventh* time is, when a Christian is under sad persecution and affliction, then will the Lord give a word from heaven to comfort him, and assure him of his Fatherly love and mercy. When was it that Christ left that noble legacy to his disciples, John xiv. 27. 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you?' Was it not when he himself was to leave them to troublesome and sorrowful days in a persecuting world?

The *eighth* time is, at some solemn ordinances and approaches to God. The days of a communion to a tender Christian have been sweet days, when Christ hath come to his soul, and said, 'Behold me, behold me.' I think, the eleven apostles met with much assurance of their interest in Christ, at the communion they were at with him. O! what sweet intimations were these, 'This is my body, which is broken for you; and this cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you?' And a little after, 'You are they, which have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint unto you a kingdom.'

We come now to the *second* point which we proposed from the words, *viz.* That as assurance is a thing which may be attained, so to seek after it is a necessary duty. Let me not be mistaken, as if I had said, the having of assurance was simply necessary to salvation; no, that was a doctrine as comfortless, upon the one hand, as the Popish doctrine of impossibility of assurance is upon the other; but the thing, I say, is, that the

Christian's seeking after assurance, and his real endeavouring to attain unto it, is a necessary command of God, which he hath bound upon the consciences of his children, among other gospel duties. And certainly, we need go no further for the clearing of this, than to the text itself; what meaneth these peremptory injunctions, 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith or not, prove your own selves, know ye not?' &c. But if ye will, ye may add that word, 2 Pet. i. 5, and 10. compared, what can be more expressly commanded, and more strongly pressed, than that Christians should use their utmost endeavours to obtain the blessed condition of assurance? 'Give all diligence; yea, give all diligence; yea, the rather give all diligence, to make your calling and election sure.'

From this we shall only lay before you these considerations, 1. If the seeking after assurance be a necessary duty; then these three things are most lamentable; *First*, that there are so many in this generation, who are so pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their iniquity. They flatter themselves with a rotten assurance, that hath no other foundation but their own imagination; they never knew, since the first day they were baptized, and did begin to profess Christ, what it was to mortify one lust, nor seriously to wrestle against one temptation, and yet they want not a strong persuasion of their interest in Christ; but ah! will ye stand in awe, lest ye meet with such a dreadful disappointment, as when ye think ye are in the very gate of heaven, even then to fall backward to the very bottom of hell; and when ye expect a kindly welcome from the Lord of glory, as one who thinks you have been in a covenant with him for many years, ye meet with this dreadful summons, 'depart from me, ye cursed, I know you not.'

2. How sad may we be upon this account, that howbeit assurance be an attainable thing, and a great many dare not say they have attained it; yet so little diligence is used in pursuing after it. Is it not very lamentable, that many of you, to whom I am speaking, since first you gave up your names to Christ in a visible way, and were reputed amongst the generation of the seekers of his face, scarcely ever set a day, or an hour apart to examine whether ever indeed you were in Christ or not? Alas, is heaven of so little moment? Is the having or wanting all the enjoyments which are there of so small concernment to you that ye will not be at the pains as once to enquire after your interest in the matter? What if any of you were but possessors of a thousand pounds, and your interest or right unto it uncertain and questionable, would not your sleep depart from you, and your rest be unquiet till you had made it more secure?

What think you shall the men of this generation answer in the day of the Lord, for neglecting 'that one thing necessary;' when they have been so vexing themselves 'about many things,' and have been so serious in so many consultations to make such a worm-eaten portion in a perishing world, that the whole wit of men and angels cannot secure for one moment? It is certain, the root of all slothfulness is atheism. It is not possible that we believe as really there is a heaven, as we believe there is an earth, or that the world to come is as real as that which is present; or else it must be a strange power in the lusts that keeps us captive, that we are never suffered to think upon eternity, nor to ask where we must lodge when this cottage we carry about shall fall about our ears. O will you think upon it! how serious and pressing that command is, 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' When the Lord saith, 'Give all diligence,' will ye give no diligence? And when he saith, 'make your calling and election sure,' will ye leave all upon uncertainty? 'I said to the foolish, deal not so foolishly.'

3. It is most lamentable, that since assurance is attainable, yet men live contentedly under the want thereof. How strange is it, that many are so seldom on their knees complaining of their uncertainty? If Christ were precious unto you, would it be so? I am sure there are some here who have had the name of Christians, I know not how long, that never had one sad thought about the want of assurance. When we look upon the desolations, devastations, and plundering in the world, how many of us can cry out, 'they have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' But when we speak of heaven, we care not who deprive us of our portion there. I will not limit the Lord, nor determine what he may do, but believe it, it is one to a thousand, if many Christians of this age have a pleasant night, and comfortable closing of their eyes, they are such undervaluers of assurance; I may fear that lamentation shall be heard upon the death-beds of many, O poor wretched wandering soul! where art thou going? And it is no wonder it come to this, when we are so long in beginning to ask this question. And now I close with this one thing, that I think, beyond all question, the souls that live contentedly under the want of assurance; are the careless daughters that dwell at ease: Christ and they are at a remarkable distance, it must be a cold winter and dark night, at best, as to their present fellowship with God.

A *second* consideration from this point is, that if the seeking after assurance be so necessary a duty, then let me beseech you to ponder with yourselves, what means are fit for you to use that ye may attain it; and if ye enquire what these means are, I shall only lay before you a few.

1. That ye would be much in the exercise of faith, I mean the direct acts of faith, whereby the sinner, from the sense and feeling of his wants, layeth hold on Jesus Christ, closing with him, and leaning upon him for a full supply out of his fulness; for indeed there are two great faults among the Lord's people. 1. Some do seek 'assurance of faith,' before ever they seek to have *faith*. 2. Some are much more taken up in debating their evidences, whether they be real or not, than they are in strengthening them; so that most of their time is spent in questioning. O! is this a real evidence of assurance? Whereas more actual believing in Christ, and gripping to the promises, and less disputing, were the shorter and surer way. That word is most clear, Eph. i. 13. 'After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise;' that is, ye got assurance, but not before ye believed. And ye know it is said, Matth. ix. 2. 'And when Jesus saw their faith, he said, be of good comfort; thy sins are forgiven thee.' So then it is clear, that to be much in believing, is the nearest way to assurance.

2. Ye would be much in believing the general truth and promises of the gospel, and frequently meditating on them. All assurance is, by practical syllogism, the first whereof must needs be a scripture truth; and certainly, the firm assent of that truth, and the soul's delightful meditation on it, is often blessed of the Lord, as a special mean whereby the conscience is helped to make the assumption, and also to bring forth the conclusion; for instance, we see with what strength of affection Paul acteth his faith on that word, 1 Tim. i. 15. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners;' and presently see what followeth on it, 'of whom I am the chief;' there is his assurance, for doubtless he meant, that he was 'the chief of saved sinners.' Yea, certainly, a sinner thus exercising himself, will often find so much sweetness in the general truths, that he cannot but put to his own name.

3. Be diligent in the exercise of all spiritual graces and Christian duties. That this is amongst the best means of attaining assurance, is manifest from 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' for indeed it is very observable, that the diligence there mentioned, is not a diligence in disputing and questioning about our election, but a diligence in the practice of duties and graces; as is clear from verse 6. 'Give all diligence (saith the apostle); whereto? In adding to your faith, virtue; to your virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance,' &c. And then verse 8. 'If ye do all these things, ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;' he doth not say, 'in the know-

ledge of the Lord Jesus Christ' simply, but, 'of our Lord Jesus;' importing, that the result of diligence in these graces shall be in the knowledge of Christ as ours, and of our interest in him. And then he addeth (upon the other hand), he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see afar off; that is, he cannot see far in any spiritual matter. and so not in the matter of his interest. O, therefore, think not that ye will get assurance by lying down with the sluggard upon your bed, or by your formal prayer, or your anxious debates; but if ever ye come to assurance, ye must be striving as in an agony; for so the word importeth, which is used to express our diligence in Christian duties.

4. As ye should be diligent, so, if ever ye would come to assurance, ye should be tender and circumspect in your walking. That is a clear word, Psalm 1. last verse. 'To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God;' and Isa. xxxii. 'The effects of righteousness is peace and assurance for ever.' Ah, the untender walk that many of us have, it is no wonder to see us walk in darkness, the gross vapours that ariseth from our conversation but engendereth clouds, which hinder us from seeing God; and certainly such pearls as assurance are not given to dogs and swine, lest they tread upon them.

SERMON II.

2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

THERE are two great balances in which men weigh themselves, 1. There are some who weigh themselves in the balance of deceit, who think that in all their labour there is no iniquity to be found; yet God, who is the weigher of the spirit, when he shall weigh them, will engrave upon the forehead, 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found light.' O but there are many that approve themselves, whom Christ shall never approve: there are many that call God Father, whom he will not call children: and many that call Christ husband, whom he will not call spouse. 1. There are some who weigh themselves in the balance of the sanctuary, who, upon solid and spiritual grounds, do draw this conclusion, 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me;' who can with boldness and confidence look Christ in the face, and say, *thou art mine*; and with much spiritual confidence take him in their arms, and cry out, *he shall be eternally mine*; and sure there is not a more pleasant life than

to be taking him every day in our arms, and to be crying out, 'am I not made up in him? am I not made up in him?'

Before I come to the words, there are three great and most soul-concerning errors amongst the Christians of these days, which we desire you to consider; 1. There are many who are more desirous to know what they are, than what they should do: there are some who are more taken up to know whether they be justified and sanctified, than to be indeed justified and sanctified: and they are more desirous to know if they be in Christ, than indeed to be in him; and therefore we find many who spend a great deal more time disputing this question, whether am I in Christ or not, than they do in using the means by which real union and communion with him may be attained. But, oh! if you would study more to be in him, that would be the shortest way to attain the knowledge of your being in him. The *second* great error is, that some are more desirous to know what they should do, than to do what they know. Are there not many of us who have this question, 'wherewith shall I come before the Lord?' And yet we do not know his commandment is with us, that we 'should do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.' A *third* error is, that we are more in talking of Christ, than in believing in him, or closing with him; some of us think to win to heaven by discourses, if we can talk of Christ, we think all is without debate or controversy; but, alas! there are many who were sweet talkers of Christ, that are cursing him this day in hell. And I would only say this by the way, if there be any of you, that have win to any soul-persuasion of your interest in Christ, I entreat you, if ye can put the conclusion upon record, that in such a day of such a month, and such a year of God, you did win then to cry out, 'I am my beloved's, and he is mine;' it seemeth to have been David's practice, Psalm xvi. 2. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord." And it was Jeremiah's practice, Lam. iii. 24. 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.' I say, ye should even mark that conclusion as they did that when temptations come, and begin to assault, you may look on your record that ye have set down, and be ashamed to misbelieve. It is true, that for a little while our assurance at best will be but ebbing and flowing; but I hope ere long we shall be above the reach of misbelief, and above the reach of fears; I hope ere long we shall dispute no more, we shall be jealous no more, we shall question our interest no more, when all our disputings and questionings shall be sweetly drowned in that infinite ocean of eternal delight and fruition of God. O expectants of heaven, expectants of heaven, are ye not looking after this day? Are ye looking

after it? I know not what we do hear, if we be not walking forward every day; he is upon his way. O to see him! we would even stand and wonder at him; I hope the day is coming when we shall never lose our hold of Christ. He is coming, he is coming; and I think, if Christ would give a pass, we would long to go hence. O! what streets are those that are there? Is there any here who are groaning for heaven? Be of good comfort, I hope ere long he shall come; he shall come, and wash away all tears from our eyes.

Now, at the last occasion, when we spake upon these words, we told you, that there were five or six things which we intended to consider in them. The *first* was, That such a thing as a distinct and well-grounded persuasion of our interest in Christ was attainable: and of this we have already spoken. The *second* thing is, That concerning the noble and excellent thing assurance, there are many mistakes among the people of God; and to make this evident, it is clear, 1. In this text, from that serious and accurate search in this matter, which the Apostle putteth these people unto; as we cleared unto you from the force of the words, and his doubting of the exhortations, "try your own selves, prove your own selves." 2. From the many commands which the Lord hath left upon record, that we should not be mistaken concerning our assurance, 1 Cor. iii. 18. 'Let no man deceive himself;' Gal. vi. 3. "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself;" and therefore doth the apostle add. 'Let every one prove his own works;' and ver. 7. 'Be not deceived.' 3. The point is clear from this, that we find in scripture many who have been mistaken most dreadfully in the matter of their assurance, Hosea viii. 2. 'Israel shall cry unto me, my God, we know thee.' And yet Israel was in a great mistake, for in the words following, ver. 3. "Israel had cast off the thing that was good." And Prov. xxx. 12. we find there a generation that were pure in their own eyes, and yet were not washed from their iniquities." 4. It is clear from this, that it is a great design of Satan, the great deceiver, that we might be mistaken about that noble and weighty point of our assurance of being in Christ. Is there not a power given unto him from Christ to deceive the nations? I may say, that in no point doth he more prevail to deceive us, than in this; if profanity kills its thousands, delusion kills ten thousands, and this delusion its twenty thousands. *Lastly*, Doth not this prove how much a Christian may be mistaken in the matter of his assurance, even that name which is given to our hearts, Jer. xvii. 9. "It is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" No doubt this may shew us, (though there were no more) how ready our

hearts are to deceive us, making us to entertain a delusion instead of truth, and embrace a shadow instead of substance.

The next thing that we have to speak to you upon this point is, to show you where these mistakes lye, and what are the false grounds by which so many deceive their own souls in this matter; and here there are two sorts of persons whom we must inform. 1. There are some, who upon most unwarrantable grounds do conclude, that their interest in Christ is sure, when indeed it is not. 2. There are some, upon the other hand, who from sad mistakes of themselves, and the Lord's dealing towards them, deny that they have an interest, when indeed they have. The first sort are the worst, and in the most dangerous condition; and they build upon these six foundations, which we beseech them to consider.

The *first* is, their supposed sensible enjoyments. Some Christians, in these times especially, do meet with some flashes of light and joy, which they have not been, it may be, acquainted with before, or at least not in such a measure, or in such a sensible manner, and upon this they presently cry forth, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' I shall not dispute with such about the reality of their enjoyments, or how they come to know that they are such as proceed from a saving work of the Spirit of grace; but waving that, give me leave to say this much of all enjoyments and sensible manifestations, (as to the point in hand) they may be sometimes a good supporter to underprop a Christian's assurance when it tottereth, but never a good foundation whereon he may lay the first stone of that building: and therefore he is the wiser Christian, who first trieth the reality of his interest in Christ by other blessed fruits of righteousness and holiness, before he trusts the reality of sensible enjoyments, how sweet or comfortable soever they may seem to be. 2. Some build their assurance upon the number and bulk of their duties, without considering the frame of their spirit, and the principle from which they flow. They use prayer and reading, and conference; they wait upon ordinances, and are always there where the means are thought to be most powerful. And upon this they take up themselves in their own arms, blessing themselves, as that poor man, Luke xviii. 12. 'Fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess;' but, alas! they do not consider, that they 'do but build their houses upon the sand,' which the first blast of a temptation will overturn; because not only all our duties, when weighed in the balance, will be found light, but when put to the trial, may be found empty, dead and lifeless things, wherein the Lord can have no pleasure.

3. Some are mistaken in the matter of their assurance, by

judging themselves by the law, not knowing or not regarding the spiritual meaning thereof. Paul was a gallant man, (in his own apprehension) when he was without the law; that is, when he knew not the spiritual meaning thereof, he thought himself the most eminent saint in all his nation; and as he sheweth us, Philp. iii. he could compare with any of them; but when the Lord opened his eyes, we see he puts himself last in the roll of saints, and first in the roll of sinners, Rom. viii. 9. 'He was alive without the law;' that is, he thought himself living and reigning above his sins; but, 'when the commandment came;' that is, when it came to his knowledge, and when he saw the spirituality of it, 'sin revived, and he died; he then saw that he had triumphed before the victory, he saw all his sins alive, and, as it were, risen from the dead, and himself a dead man, lost and undone in the estate he was in. O! how many are there amongst us in Paul's first condition? 'Alive without the law.' O! how many destroy themselves with this, they think there is not a sin forbidden in all the law of God but only ten? But, alas! thou fool, thou 'errest in this, not knowing the scripture; shouldst thou not judge thyself by the spiritual extent of the meaning of the law, and that divine commentary which the apostle James hath upon it, wherein he sheweth thee, 'That if thou be guilty of the breach of one point, thou art guilty of all?' And by that infallible exposition which Christ himself, the blessed lawgiver, hath set down, Matth. vi. whereby he discovereth adultery in the heart, and in the eye? O atheist, thou must take up the ten commandments, and subscribe guilty to them all. And let me tell you this, if ye will subscribe the law to Christ, he will subscribe the gospel to you; if thou wilt sincerely say, I am guilty, he will as sincerely say, I have pardoned, 'son, or daughter, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

Some build their assurance upon the apprehensions of their hatred to some particular sin, that albeit it was sometimes as their right hand, or their eye, yet now they can pluck it out, or cut it off. But, oh! wilt thou but consider, some sins may be made weak, and the soul (though not upon a right principle) brought to hate it, and to cry unto it, get you hence; and yet the interest of Satan may be strong in the heart.

The *fifth* mistake is, of many who judge themselves, because they go to a greater length than the former, and are kept free from all gross out-breaking sins. How many are there who go sleeping down to hell with this, "I am no drunkard, nor adulterer, nor murderer, nor thief, nor whore? Thus long have I lived in the town, and they were never born that can say, I have wronged them;" and so they venture their souls upon this,

“they never committed any gross sins.” I beseech you, be not deceived, remember how that wretched man spake, Luke xviii. 11. ‘I am no extortioner, nor adulterer, nor even as this publican,’ &c. Poor creature that he was, Christ giveth not a testimonial to every one who take it for themselves. And I must tell you, that there may be desperate atheists, without God, and without Christ in the world, who yet may be free from gross out-breaking sins. I do not think, but many of those who crucified the Lord of glory, were kept from other gross sins. What knowest thou, O man, that there is more favour shown to thee, (in that thou art kept from some gross sins, when yet thou hast a desperately wicked heart.) than is shown to the devil when some links of his chain are taken in, and restraining power keeping him from his utmost bounds? God will sometimes restrain a hypocrite, or a heathen, as it was said of Abimelech; ‘and God restrained him.’ There may be a cord put upon thy jaws, when thou art far from having the power of conquering grace. It may also be, that all thy abstaining from outward outbreakings, proceedeth but from outward disadvantages, and not from any fear of God, or respect to him; yea, not so much as from the fear of eternal punishment. Are there not many amongst us, believe it, there are many, that take away shame, and church censure, or civil punishment, and other inconveniencies of that sort, and set a thousand hells before them, they would not be kept back from one sin, but would take their hazard of them all? Yea, is it not want of temptation, and nothing else, that hindereth many from gross out-breakings? If Satan would come but with a kindled match, there wanteth no more to set tongue and hands, and all on fire of hell. O wretched soul! do but ask thyself, “How often thou hast tempted Satan when he would not tempt thee? and now often thou hast followed a temptation, when it fled from thee? Yea, when the Lord hath hedged up thy ways, that thou could not overtake thy lovers, how many a long look hast thou sent after them? and what lustings of thy spirit within? And do ye think that heart sins are nothing, although thou had no out-breakings? What were the matter of that?” If thou had not a tongue, thou would break the third command, and ‘curse God in thy heart;’ if thou had not an eye, thou could commit ‘adultery in thy heart;’ if thou had not an hand, thou might commit ‘murder in thy heart.’ O therefore, build not thy assurance upon this, that thou hast made clean the out-side of the platter, when yet all filthiness is within.

The *sixth* false foundation upon which I am sure too many build their assurance is, their gifts and parts; especially upon

these two, the gift of prayer, and the gift of knowledge. But believe it, it is not much to be a Christian in tongue: but it is much to be a Christian in heart; know you not, that this will cast out many, 'we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils!' No doubt, these had been excellent flourishes, and if the tongue would have done it, they had been highly advanced: but yet ye see these men meet with a 'depart from me, I know you not.' Ah! think upon it, he is not the best Christian, who is the best orator. Religion that is pure and undefiled, consisteth more in the affection, than in the tongue, and more in practice than in profession. I beseech you, when you cast up your evidences of assurance, consider how well you have done, and not how well you have spoken.

The *seventh* false ground whereby many do mis-judge themselves is, their supposed peace of conscience. O! saith one, "My conscience doth not charge me with any thing, I thank God, I have a quiet mind, and nothing troubles me." But, ah! poor wretch, wilt thou tell me, may not the strong man be within, and therefore all is at peace? A dumb conscience, and a seared conscience, is a dreadful plague. Knowest thou not that many say, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart? And because they say so, the Lord shall not spare them, but all the curses in his book shall lye upon them.

The *eighth* false ground is, the approbation of other Christians; so that if they have the approbation of some such exercised Christians, or if they have the approbation of such a minister, that is enough to silence their disputings. O! cursed be the person that putteth his trust in men, who are liars. O man, or woman, let me assure you of this, if ye had a testimonial to present to Christ, subscribed by every Christian that ever ye were acquainted with, this will be enough for Christ to reject you, and it both, 'I know you not, and therefore depart from me.' There is an emphasis in that word, 'I know you not:' as if he had said, 'It is not much though all other know you, if I know you not.'

The *ninth* false ground is, their diligent observing ordinances: their going to preachings, and to communions, and running to and fro, pretending this end, 'that knowledge may be increased.' But know there are many who have sat at a table with Christ here, that shall never sit down with him at the higher table hereafter. Are there not many who shall say unto Christ in the great day, 'have we not eaten and drunken in thy presence,' unto whom Christ shall say, 'depart from me, I know you not.'

The *tenth* false foundation, which is the strong delusion of

atheists, of which, no doubt, there are many here to-day, is the building of their eternal happiness upon this, I never meet with a cross, I never knew what it was to have a sad day. But to thee I shall only say, it may be thou never had a joyful day neither in all thy sinful pleasures under the sun. But let me tell thee, it is bad divinity to conclude, therefore I am in the way to heaven. It may be, it were better reasoning, (and though I will not say, yet it cometh nearer truth) I had never a cross, therefore I am going on in the way to hell. O! wilt thou but consider, what if he be heaping coals upon thy head, and fattening thee to the day of slaughter? What if this word be your portion, 'eat, drink, and be merry while you are here, for to-morrow thou must certainly die? What are all your pleasures? and what are all your honours? and what are all your possessions? What are they all? Are they not a bone cast unto a dog? The Lord valueth them not. What if they be the fattening of you to the day of slaughter?

Now as to those who deny that they had an interest in Christ, when indeed they have, they commonly deceive themselves, and vex their spirits upon some of these mistakes: 1. Some judge of their estate by their present state and condition; so that if they be in an evil frame, they begin and raze the foundation. To such I would only say, that every change of condition doth not speak a change of estate. A child of God may be in much darkness, and under much deadness, and yet a child of God still, Psalm lxxiii. It was an evil frame to be as a beast before God, and yet even then he kept grips, and holdeth him by the right hand. Job was often in a very evil frame, and yet he holdeth fast his integrity; and why then should thou upon that account cast away thine?

2. Christians judge of their estate by dispensations, they think every change of dispensations speaketh a change of estate; and if Christ do not smile always, we know not what it is to keep up the faith of our interest; and indeed, this is a great fault among Christians, that when they cannot read love in the beautiful face of Christ, they think it is not in his heart. What though he change his dispensations, doth that speak forth a change of thy estate? Christ cannot change his voice to us, but we think he changeth his heart; Christ cannot speak to us in the whirlwind, but we cry out 'why art thou become unto us as an enemy?' O! shall precious Christ be thus mistaken?

The *third* ground of mistake about our interest in Christ is, that we judge of our estate by what we are in ourselves, and not by what we are in Christ. When a Christian beginneth to judge and search himself, he can find nothing in himself but what is

the matter of doubting; and therefore thinks it high presumption to think himself a believer. But, O fool! can thou not look to Christ, and cry out, 'though in myself I be nothing, yet in him I am all.' O! if Christians knew to judge of themselves by what they are in Christ, and not by what they are in themselves, with one eye they might look to themselves, and cry out, 'I am undone; and with the other look to Christ, and cry out, 'there is hope in Israel concerning me;' that is, with one eye they might look to themselves, and blush; and with the other they might look to Christ, and hope: that with one eye they might look to themselves and weep; and with the other they might look to Christ and rejoice. O Christian, wilt thou always judge of thyself by what thou art in Christ, and not by what thou art in thyself; yea, I would say this to thee by the way, when thou meetest temptations that putteth thee to dispute thy interest, do but send them to Christ to get an answer, and say, O precious Christ, answer this temptation. For this is Christ's way with the soul; the law must bring us back to Christ, and Christ must send us back to the law, and deliver us over to it, not to the condemning power of it as before, but the directing and guiding power of it as a rule of holiness; so that a Christian's whole life must be a sweet and constant travelling between Christ and the law. When thou hast broken the law, flee unto Christ to take away guilt; and when thou hast closed with Christ, come running out again in his strength, to perform the law.

The *fourth* mistake is, that Christians judge of their estate by the measure of their graces, more than by the sincerity of them. Some Christians, if they find not love in such a degree, and if they find not repentance in such a degree, immediately they begin and raze the foundation, and call their enjoyments delusions, their faith presumption, and their mortification hypocrisy; but I must say this to thee, we should not only weigh our graces in the balance, but try them also by the touch-stone, for the smallest piece of gold is gold, and the least degree of faith is alike precious with what the apostle themselves had.

The *fifth* ground of mistake among Christians is, that they compare themselves more unto the saints, than they judge of themselves by the word. O! saith one, "If I were like David, I would believe; but I am not like David, nor Job, nor Hezekiah, and therefore there is none of the saints to which I should go; and if I should call, there is none to answer, and why then should I believe?" I would only say to thee whose objection that is, it is even David's objection, Psalm xxii. 5, 6. 'Our fathers trusted in thee.' O! they were excellent men, but what a man am I? 'a worm, and not a man; and yet he was put

from that objection, and I would say this, are ye below him? in what? I hope ye are not below David in necessity. Now, though ye be below him in grace, if ye be not below him in necessity, ye have so much the more right to believe; for as we have said before, necessity giveth you a right, and the more necessity, the greater right to believe.

The *sixth* ground is, that Christians judge of their estate by Christ's part of the covenant, and not by their own: rather examining themselves by what Christ hath promised to do for them, than by what is left them to do; which thing, if it be heeded, would put an end to many of our mistakes and disputings.

Having now laid out some mistakes upon either hand, the next we would do, is to propose some considerations to press you to guard against these mistakes, especially the first.

And the *First* consideration is, that mistakes about one's interest in Christ, and assurance, is a most universal and popular evil: it is not one of a city, nor wo of a family, but many are mistaken in their interest in Christ, according to that word, Prov. xxx. 12. 'There are a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet they are not cleansed from their iniquity.' It is not one or two that are under this mistake, but it is a generation. And I suppose, there are many of us that are of this tribe and generation, Math. vii. 22. he saith, 'Many in that day shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, and have we not prophesied? and yet he shall say unto them, I know you not.' Since it is so universal a mistake, I intreat you, be much in the search of yourselves, search your own selves. Certainly, I think, if there were but one within this church that was under this mistake, it should put us all to this, 'Master, is it I? Master, is it I?' But how much more, since there is a generation of mistakers, should it not be our exercise every day to cry out, 'is it I?'

The *second* consideration is, that as it is most universal, so also it is a most irrecoverable mistake. O! if ye mistake about your being in Christ, there is no making up of that mistake, if once ye pass the borders of time with this lie in your right-hand, 'I am in Christ,' there is no hope of recovery, eternity will cut off access to make up mistakes. I intreat you go not down to your grave with this, 'I am in Christ,' when yet Christ may say, 'I know you not.' I believe it, if ye could have a testimonial subscribed by all the hands of the most eminent and tender Christians that ye have known, that ye are indeed a saint; and if all the ministers that ever you spoke to, should praise you in the gate, and declare you to be a son and daughter of Abraham; yet when you shall bring up your testimonial to heaven, and the Father shall read it, and shall ask you, 'Where is my Son's name?' If

that be not here, it will certainly be rejected, and cast over the bar.

Thirdly, It is a soul-destroying delusion. This mistake about one's interest in Christ, is the very ruin of the immortal soul, according to that word, Isa. xlv. 20. 'A deceived heart hath led him aside.' And what is the fruit of it? 'So that he cannot deliver his soul.' And by consequence it may be said, that they destroy their soul. I believe it, there are many that go to hell in a chariot of delusion; we know some Christ guideth to heaven by the gates of hell, and letteth them not see life, till they be in sight of hell. But it is true also, there are others whom the devil guideth to hell by the very borders of heaven, he maketh them believe they are dwelling in the gates of heaven all their days, and yet at last they are thrust down to those habitations that are prepared for the devil and his angels.

Fourthly, If once a person be mistaken about their interest in Christ, they will have these three notable disadvantages attending upon them. 1. As long as he is under this mistake, he is without all reach of profiting by the ordinances; for when he heareth preaching, he will apply promises when he should apply threatenings; and, upon the other hand, applying threatenings, when he should apply promises, and so that which should be his medicine, becometh poison to him. 2. As long as he is under this mistake, it maketh him that he cannot pity, nor have compassion upon himself, that though he be the most suitable object of compassion, yet he knows not what it is to weep over his own ruin. 3. Readily all his graces are but delusions; all his good motions are but flames, and all his mortifications counterfeit, and all his tenderness is but the mother of stupidity: and therefore, I intreat you to guard against mistakes about your interest in Christ.

Fifthly, Consider that mistakes about one's interest is a most abiding and constant mistake. Believe it, if once we mistake in this, it is one to a hundred if ever we come right again. This is clear, Jer. viii. 5. 'They hold fast deceit,' they keep with their hands. And Isa. xlv. 20. 'There is a lie in their right hand;' that is, they hold the lie, and they keep it with all their power. I say, if once one be mistaken concerning their interest in Christ, it is hard to put them from it; yea, delusion is such an abiding thing, that we find Christ speaketh of it, as if it would wait upon one before the judgment-seat of Christ; and as if some would never quit their hope of heaven, till Christ pronounce that word, 'Depart from me, I know you not.' Delusion may carry us over the borders of time, and lead us into eternity.

Sixthly, There is much counterfeit religion in these days; that is, there is a painted faith, there is a painted love, there is a

painted mortification, and there is a painted tenderness. Some love shadows and pictures, and yet they do not love the very shadow of Christ; and are there not many, who think they are embracing Christ, and yet are only embracing a delusion and a fancy?

That which, *thirdly*, we would speak to from this point is, to give you some evidences by which ye may know if the assurance ye have of your being in Christ, be right or not. Believe it, there are many who draw that conclusion, 'I am in Christ,' which the devil and their own deceitful heart hath drawn, and Christ never gave consent to it. And I shall propose these seven or eight evidences of real assurance, by which ye may discern.

First, A real assurance is a purifying and sanctifying assurance. This is clear, 1 John iii. 3. 'Every man that hath this hope in him;' that is, persuaded of him that he shall come to heaven, 'will purify himself, even as he is pure.' And 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.'

O! when a Christian getteth Christ in his arms, he cannot but cry out, 'what have I any more to do with idols?' When he hath once gotten Christ in his arms, he will answer every temptation that he meeteth, with this, 'I am not mine own, I am bought with a price.' I cannot now dispose of myself. And if your assurance of going to heaven be not a purifying assurance, be persuaded of it, it is but the devil's pillow sewed over your arm-holes. Is it possible a person can be assured of heaven, and not study holiness? Can such a delusion as this overtake you?

Secondly, A real assurance putteth the Christian to a pressing and earnest pursuit after communion and fellowship with God. Is it possible for one to be assured, and not to be saying, 'he is sick of love?' This is clear, Song ii. 15, 17. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his;' and immediately followeth, 'Turn thou, O my beloved, and be thou like a young roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.' And it is clear, Song vii. 10, 11. 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me.' And what followeth upon that? he cometh and inviteth Christ, 'O come down with me to the fields, let us lodge in the villages.'

O when gave you Christ such an invitation as this? O precious Christ, let us lodge in the villages, and go down to the secret places of the field. And Psalm lxxiii. 1. *My God*; there is his assurance. And immediately followeth upon that, 'early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as in a dry and parched land, where no waters is.' There is a pressing desire after communion. But I would ask you, are there not many here who have the hope of heaven, (in their apprehension) and yet

the desire of communion with Christ was never with them? I desire to say to thee, (be who thou wilt) 'be not deceived, God is not mocked, that which thou sowest, thou shalt also reap. I think there are some of us, who would let Christ live in heaven many days without giving him one visit, if he would let us alone. But, O! if we were within sight of our interest in Christ, how often would this be our complaint, when he was absent, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him?' Or, my idol hath carried me away from him, and I know not where to find him.

Thirdly, Assurance of our being in Christ will put us to the exercise of praise. Believe it, I think this is one of the most searching evidences of assurance. There are some Christians who will be convinced for the neglect of the duty of prayer, but for the neglect of the duty of praise, they never have one conviction; and I will tell you the reason of it, prayer is a selfish grace, (so to speak) but praise is a denying grace; prayer seeketh, but praise giveth, Exod. xv. 2. 'He is my God, I will prepare him an habitation; my Father's God, and I will exalt him.' Psalm cxviii. 28. He is my God, and I will praise him; he is my God, I will exalt him.' What needeth David these repetitions, might not one serve? No, saith he, I would even spend my days in this, 'my God, my God?' and there is much of heaven in that word, *God*, and love committeth many sweet tautologies. Now, I say to thee, wast thou ever put to the heart-exercise of praise by this assurance thou hast? This is an evidence indeed: but alas! many of us cannot say it.

Fourthly, A person that liveth within sight of his interest, Christ is matchless unto him; as is clear, Song ii. 3. 'I sat down under his shadow;' there is faith and assurance of it: and what accomplisheth that? 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.' Christ hath not a match, saith the spouse, in his sweetness, his power, his beauty, and his usefulness is above all.

Fifthly, Real assurance is a humbling thing, the assurance of a Christian maketh him to sit low in the dust. Was not Jacob low in his own eyes, when he cried out, 'I am less than the least of all thy mercies?' What, was not David low in his own eyes when he spake that word, 'What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' Was not Paul a low man in his own eyes, Eph. iii. 8. 'I am less than the least of all thy saints?' and when he cried out, 'I am the chief of all sinners?' The assurance that is real, will make a Christian sit down in the dust, and cry out, 'Wo is me, I am a man of polluted lips.'

Sixthly, Real assurance will make him to take much pleasure and delight in the going about of duties. That word, Psalm xl. 8. *My God*, saith he; that is his assurance; and presently he subjoineth, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' This he speaketh of himself, as himself, and likewise as a type of Christ, Psalm cxix. 115. 'Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.' I believe the love of Christ, when it is in lively exercise, will constrain us to our duty; and therefore this proud transporting assurance in these days, that setteth men above duties and ordinances, and maketh them count the gospel, as well as the law, 'but beggarly rudiments,' and cry out to their neighbours, 'stand back, for I am holier than thou,' must needs be a delusion.

Lastly, There are these three properties of real assurance: 1. It is a begotten assurance. 2. It is a living assurance. And 3. It is a constraining assurance.

The *first* two properties of it are set down in 1 Pet. i. 3. 'He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.' Who begat that assurance in thee? I suppose some have assurance, and it was begotten without travail: but if Christ be not the Father of thy assurance, it will vanish and pass away. And, *secondly*, it must be a living assurance. Some hearts are dead, and yet they say they have the hope of heaven. And, *thirdly*, it must be a constraining assurance, it will put the Christian to do what he commands; yea, if it were the most pleasant Isaac that we have, if he commandeth us to sacrifice it, we would put a knife to the throat of it, and be willing to offer it up.

Now, after all these evidences, I desire to have a report from you concerning your estate; what think ye of yourselves, are ye in Christ or not? I suppose if Christ should come here to-day, and put us all to the door, but only those who are in Christ, we would have a thin assembly. I confess, I wonder that that word does not make us to walk with sadness, 'many are called, but few are chosen.' Now, I ask this question at all, as in the sight of God, and as you will one day answer unto him who will be your Judge, what think ye of yourselves? is there none here that can give a present positive answer to this, are ye in Christ? I suppose, if I were to go round them that are here, and ask, Are ye in Christ? Are ye in Christ? O! I doubt much, if there should be many negative answers within the doors: we have so strong a faith, some of us, that since we were born, we never doubted it. But I think, (without condemning doubting) I may say, the faith that thou never doubted of, is too like a delusion; and the faith that thou never took pains to keep, and yet it kept itself, that too is like a delusion. But let me close with

this, be your estate what it will, search and come away. I think that is one of the greatest gospel-invitations that is in all the scriptures, Lam. iii. 40. 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord.' When thou hast searched, come away; for I tell thee this, there will be nothing that will commend thee to Christ so much as necessity: and I hope there is none of you but have enough of this. And I know it, if ye will not come to Christ, he will compel you to come, but it shall not be for your advantage to stay away till ye be compelled. O persons that are out of Christ, come away; O persons that are in Christ, come away. We must preach that word, come away, unto you, as long as you are here, till ye come and be 'fixed as a pillar in the house of God,' and go no more out. O study to be near him. O Christian, didst thou never think upon this, and say with thyself, oh! when shall I have immediate embraces of blessed Christ, when there shall be nothing between my heart and him? Till then, we never get Christ near enough, there is always something between him and us, till we be above the clouds. O these immediate soul-infoldings and embracings of Christ! are ye never sending a messenger to heaven, desiring a pass to go away, that ye may enjoy them? And are ye not longing for the day, when the waters of Jordan shall divide themselves, and the ransomed of the Lord shall pass through? Now, let us 'sing praises to our king, sing praises, for he hath gone up with a shout, and shall come again, sing praises to our king, sing praises.'

SERMON III.

2 COR. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

I THINK there are many who pass under the name of professors, that the very atheist, when he beholdeth their walk, may cry out, art thou also become like unto one of us? Are there not many here, that are in a golden dream, and in a fool's paradise, that dream they eat, and behold, when they wake, they shall be hungry? Therefore I think it is incumbent upon us, to search and examine our state and condition; profanity hath slain its thousands, but delusion and presumption hath slain their ten thousands. It was an ancient complaint of Christ, Luke xii. 57. 'And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' I am persuaded of this, there are many decrees of peace past upon earth, that are never ratified in heaven: there are many that

cry out, the bitterness of death is past, whom yet God, by the sword of his justice, shall hew in pieces before our eyes. We told you, at the last occasion that we spake upon these words, that there were six things we intended to speak from them; of the first three we have already spoken.

That which we intend to speak to at this time is, that there is much soul-advantage and spiritual gain that doth redound to the Christian by the distinct persuasion of his interest in Christ. This we gathered from Paul's doubling the command of searching and trying themselves; as if he had said, it is a business that will be so much for your advantage, that it is incumbent for you to search and try diligently. And for further clearing of the point, I shall only give these three places, Rev. ii. 17, 'I will give unto them a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.' By the *new name*, and the *white stone*, is understood assurance, and the intimation of it to the soul. This indeed is such a mercy, that I defy any to make language of it, no man knoweth it, much less can he express it, but he that is the possessor of it. And that place, Isa. lxii. 2. 'I will give them a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name?' O what a name must that be, which the mouth of the Lord shall name? I think what he giveth, must be one of the noblest names that ever was given; all the styles and titles under heaven cannot equal it. And, *thirdly*, we see David, in the eighteenth Psalm, found much sweetness and advantage in this, when nine times he hath that word, 'My strength, my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength and my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. O! David, what needeth all these *mys*? David would answer, O! he is sweet in himself, but, oh! much sweeter to me when I put to that positive note, *my*.

Now, to speak more particular to these advantages of assurance; The *first* is, That a person that is assured of his interest in Christ, he is much in desiring communion with Christ, Song i. 7. 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, (there is his assurance) where thou feedest, where thou maketh thy flock to rest at noon?' There is desire of communion. And Song vii. 10, 11. 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me;' there is this assurance; and immediately followeth, 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages;' there is her desire of communion. And Song ii. 16, 17. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his;' and what followeth upon that? 'he feedeth among the lilies, until the day break, and the shadows flee away: turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel;' that is, in short, let me have sweet correspondence and

fellowship with thee till the day of eternity shall come. I think the desires of an assured Christian are like the grave, they cry continually, 'Give, give,' and they never say, 'it is enough. What is the reason ye seek so little after fellowship with Christ? It is even this, ye are not persuaded of your interest in him. Believe it. if once ye had attained to this blessed length, as to cry out, 'Christ is mine, it would be a hell upon earth for you to live at such a distance from him, as you do for the most part. O! but assurance maketh absence from Christ an unsupportable burden, Psalm xxii. 1. 'My God, my God;' there is assurance; and immediately followeth this complaint, 'why hidest thou thyself from me?' Song iii. 1, 2, 3. that word, 'Him whom my soul loveth,' made her to weep so much under absence from Christ. And John xx. 13. when the angel asked the question at Mary, 'Woman, why weepest thou? I think she thought it a needless question, and she tells the cause of it, 'they have taken away my Lord:' I think her heart was at her mouth, when she pronounced these two words, *my Lord*, she spake them with a great deal of emphasis and force. Could ye re-ent absence from Christ so little. if ye were sure he was yours? I confess it is no wonder, when persons lose that which is not their own, that they weep not much for the loss of it: but, oh! to lose that which is our own, maketh it a cross and a burden to us.

Secondly, It maketh the soul to have a high and matchless esteem of precious Christ, Song v. 10. "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." O! saith the spouse, I never saw his like, and I shall never see his like again: there is much in that, *my*; interest maketh her look upon Christ with another eye nor she would have done; strangers look upon him as a tree planted upon the sand, 1 Pet. ii. 7. 'To you that believe, Christ is precious,' not every one. And Song ii. 3. 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight;' the reason is, interest in the words going before, 'As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.' Yea, assurance will make every thing in Christ exceeding pleasant to the soul; as is clear, Song v. 6. 'My beloved is altogether lovely;' or 'he is all desires.' I tell you what assurance will do, it will make Christ's person pleasant and precious to the soul, it will make Christ's nature pleasant to the soul, it will make Christ's offices pleasant to the soul, and it will make Christ's promises pleasant to the soul, it will make threatenings pleasant to the soul, it will make the smell of Christ's garments pleasant to the soul, and it will make the kisses of his mouth pleasant to the soul. O! saith the assured Christian, there is nothing in Christ but is most pleasant, and is all desires: his threatenings are pleasant, they are the wounds

of a friend; and his kisses are pleasant, they are better than wine; his name is pleasant, 'it is as precious ointment poured forth,' his smilings are most delightful, 'Whose countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars:' O to embrace a married Christ! how pleasant is it to the soul? What maketh you have so low thoughts of Christ? Even this, the want of assurance that he is your husband.

Thirdly, Assurance will make the Christian patiently submit to every cross and sad dispensation he meeteth with. This is clear, Heb. x. 34. 'They took with joy the spoiling of their goods.' And what made them do so? 'they hoped for a better inheritance, and a more enduring substance.' I tell you assurance will answer all crosses with this; *Christ is mine*; when they are afflicted, assurance will lift up its voice and cry out, *Christ is mine*; and when they are reproached, they will comfort themselves with this, 'Christ is mine; I can put on the Lord Jesus.'

Fourthly, Assurance will keep you from apostacy and defection from Christ, 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Make your calling and election sure; and if ye do this (saith he) ye shall never fall,' Heb. iii. 12. It is there set down as a fault of the evil heart of *misbelief*, it maketh us 'depart from the living God:' but, on the contrary, assurance knitteth the soul to Christ by a threefold cord, which is not easily broken. Believe it, the assured Christian can cry out with much confidence of faith, 'my mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved.' The assured Christian can cry out with much cheerfulness, 'In God will I praise his word, in God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what flesh can do unto me.' Yea, he can sweetly sing in the very mouth of danger, 'The Lord is my light, and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' Psalm xxvii. 1.

Fifthly, Assurance keepeth all the graces of the Spirit green and flourishing, it is a refreshful dew upon our branches, which maketh every grace sweetly to blossom in its season. 1. It stirreth up the exercise of love. O! how vigorous are the actings of love, when a Christian can cry out, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his?' Song ii. 16. 'My beloved (there is here assurance), he is a bundle of myrrh, and shall lie all night betwixt my breasts,' Song i. 13. That is as long as time shall last, I shall never have Christ out of my heart; there is love, 1 John iv. 19. 'We loved him, because he first loved us:' our hearts are naturally cold, but love kindled love. The sense of his love to us, putteth our hearts into a heavenly flame towards him again. 1. Assurance keeps up the exercise of prayer; it is the assured Christian that can pray best, and to the best advantage: and in these three things especially is prayer helped by assurance. 1. It helpeth in

the point of boldness; O, but the assured Christian can go boldly to the throne of grace, crying, 'Abba Father, and my Lord, and my God.' 2. It helpeth our diligence in prayer, Psalm lxiii. 1. 'O my God,' here is assurance, 'early will I seek thee,' there is his diligence as the fruit thereof. 3. It helpeth the fervency of prayer, as in that same place, 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee;' there is fervency as another fruit of his assurance. 4. Assurance keepeth in exercise and life the grace of mortification, as is clear by comparing 2 Cor. iv. 18. with 2 Cor. v. 1. 'We look not at the things which are seen: O Paul! what aileth you, may ye not take a look of the world? O! saith Paul, and would you know the ground of it? 'We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;' my house and my treasure is in heaven: I must have my heart there, and mine eyes also. Would you know what would stay your pursuit after the world? Study to have the assurance of your interest in Christ continually with you. And 5. It keepeth in exercise the grace of humility. There is nothing will keep Christians so humble as assurance, Gal. ii. 20. 'I live; yet not I. but Christ liveth in me.' Eph. iii. 8. There he is all in exalting grace, and debasing himself. It is the misbeliever and discouraged person, that dwelleth nearest pride. Believe it, misbelief is big with child of pride and apostacy; these are two children which that fruitful mother will bring forth. And 6. It will help the grace of repentance. Would you know what would make the Christian to repent? It is even this, to take Christ in our arms and call him ours. Zech. xii. 10. 'They shall look upon him; (that is their faith), and they shall mourn, as one mourneth for his only son.' I think it is known by experience, the soul never weeps more tenderly under the conviction of sin, than when he hath Christ in his arms, and can say, *he is mine*; O! how sweetly do they then complain? There is not a sight of Christ as their own, when they have offended, but it breaks their heart in pieces; and it is as a sword piercing into the bones, when they cry out O what a fool was I to offend such a precious one, in whom I had so much interest? Was it not a sense of interest, that made Mary wash the feet of Christ with her tears? *Lastly*, It will keep in exercise the grace of joy, 1 Pet. i. 3. It is faith which maketh one to rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Would ye know why your graces are withered? Would you know why all the pleasant plants of God within your soul are decayed? It is this, ye live without sight of your interest in Christ. Believe it, (if so I may speak) assurance will be a watering to your graces every morning, and refresh them every hour; it being a channel through which divine

influence is conveyed to the increase of grace, and especially of joy.

The *sixth* advantage that cometh unto the Christian by the assurance of his interest in Christ is, that it maketh death pleasant and comfortable unto the soul. What maketh death *the king of terrors?* and what maketh it so to us? Is it not this, we go to heaven under a cloud? The assured Christian can take death in his arms, and cry out, welcome, O friend! The assured Christian, when he seeth the chariots his Father sends for him, doth with old Jacob rejoice. And Psalm xxiii. 4. 'When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.' What brought you that length, David? I will tell you why, saith he, *for God is with me.* I think I need not fear any thing when I have God in my company. It is the assured Christian that can cry out, 'Why should I fear death?' Should I not laugh at destruction? I think, indeed, the assured Christian needeth not fear death, because death to him is the death of all his lusts, the funeral of all his sorrows. And is not the day of death, his coronation-day, his marriage-day, the day of his triumph, and of his entering unto rest; and why then should he fear it.

The *seventh* advantage is, that a Christian's being in the state of assurance, can put the highest account upon the smallest mercy that he meets with from God. The assured Christian looketh upon every mercy as a wonder: it is the assured Christian that crieth out 'I am less than the least of all thy mercies:' there is not a mercy he meeteth with, were it but a drop of cold water, but if he can read this on it, that it came from my husband, and from my Father, it will be better to him than the sweetest wine.

Lastly, Assurance doth exceedingly help us to cheerfulness in obedience. O that is a remarkable connection that Paul hath Acts xxvii. 23. The Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve. That passage also, 2 Cor. v. 14. is very observable, 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' &c. Why art thou so painful a minister, Paul? Why? knowest thou no man after the flesh, are not led by carnal interests nor affections? Art so busy and diligent, as all the world counteth thee mad: Why? saith he, love will not let me rest; if I would be lazy, or carnal, or fold my hands to sleep, the love of Christ doth always sound that in my ears, 'That I was dead, and he hath died for me, that henceforth I should not live unto myself, but unto him that died for me. Now unto him who is the first, and the last, who was dead, and is alive for evermore,' we give praise.