

AN

E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

SECOND EPISTLE

OF

ST. PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS.

Completed by Mr. D. Mayo.

IN his former epistle, the apostle had signified his intentions of *coming to Corinth, as he passed through Macedonia*, (*ch. 16. 6.*) but being providentially hindered for some time, he writes his second epistle to them about a year after the former; and there seem to be these two great urgent occasions: 1. The case of the incestuous person, who lay under censure, required that with all speed he should be restored and received again into communion. This therefore he gives directions about; (*ch. 2.*) and afterward, (*ch. 7.*) he declares the satisfaction he had upon the intelligence he received of their good behaviour in that affair. 2. There was a contribution now making for the poor saints at Jerusalem, which he exhorts the Corinthians to join in, *ch. 8, 9.*

There are divers other things very observable in this epistle:

- I. The account the apostle gives of his labours and success in preaching the gospel in several places, *ch. 2.*
 - II. The comparison he makes between the Old and New Testament dispensation, *ch. 3.*
 - III. The manifold sufferings that he and his fellow-labourers met with, and the motives and encouragements for their diligence and patience, *ch. 4, 5.*
 - IV. The caution he gives the Corinthians against mingling themselves with unbelievers, *ch. 6.*
 - V. The way and manner in which he justifies himself and his apostleship from the opprobrious insinuations and accusations of false teachers, who endeavoured to ruin his reputation at Corinth, (*ch. 10—12.*) and throughout the whole epistle.
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II. CORINTHIANS, I.

CHAP. I.

After the introduction, (*v. 1, 2.*) the apostle begins with the narrative of his troubles and God's goodness, which he had met with in Asia, by way of thanksgiving to God, (*v. 3... 6.*) and for the edification of the Corinthians, *v. 7... 11.* Then he attests his and his fellow-labourers' integrity, (*v. 12... 14.*) and afterwards vindicates himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy, *v. 15... 24.*

I. PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: 2. Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the introduction to this epistle; in which we have,

1. The inscription: and therein, (1.) The person from whom it was sent, that is, Paul, who calls himself *an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.*

The apostleship itself was ordained by Jesus Christ, according to the will of God; and Paul was called to it by Jesus Christ, according to the will of God. He joins Timothy with himself, in writing this epistle; not because he needed his assistance, but that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established; and his dignifying Timothy with the title of *brother*, (either in the common faith, or in the work of the ministry,) shews the humility of this great apostle, and his desire to recommend Timothy (though he was then a young man) to the esteem of the Corinthians, and give him a reputation among the churches. (2.) The persons to whom this epistle was sent, that is, *the church of God at Corinth*: and not only to them, but also *to all the saints in all Achaia*, that is, to all the Christians who lived in the region round about. Note, In Christ Jesus no distinction is made between the inhabitants of city or country; all Achaia stands upon a level, in his account.

2. The salutation, or apostolical benediction, which is the same as in his former epistle: and

then in the apostle desires the two great and comprehensive blessings, grace and peace, for those Corinthians. These two benefits are fitly joined together, because there is no good and lasting peace without true grace; and both of them come *from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*, who is the Procurer and Dispenser of these benefits to fallen man, and is prayed to as God.

3. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4. Who comforteth us in our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. 6. And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

After the foregoing preface, the apostle begins with the narrative of God's goodness to him and his fellow-labourers in their manifold tribulations; which he speaks of, by way of thanksgiving to God, and to advance the divine glory; (v. 3—6.) and it is fit that in all things, and in the first place, God be glorified. Observe,

1. The Object of the apostle's thanksgiving, to whom he offers up blessing and praise, namely, the blessed God, who only is to be praised, whom he describes by several glorious and amiable titles. (1.) *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. God is the Father of Christ's divine nature by eternal generation; of his human nature by miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin; and of Christ, as God-man, and our Redeemer, by covenant-relation; and in and through him as Mediator, our God, and our Father, John 20. 17. In the Old Testament we often meet with this title, *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob*, to denote God's covenant-relation to them and their seed; and in the New Testament God is styled *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to denote his covenant-relation to the Mediator and his spiritual seed, Gal. 3. 16. (2.) *The Father of mercies*. There are a multitude of tender mercies in God essentially, and all mercies are from God originally: mercy is his genuine offspring, and his delight. *He delighteth in mercy*, Mic. 7. 18. (3.) *The God of all comfort*; from him proceedeth the COMFORTER, John 15. 26. He giveth the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, v. 20. All our comforts come from God, and our sweetest comforts are in him.

2. The reasons of the apostle's thanksgivings, which are these.

(1.) The benefits that he himself and his companions had received from God; for God *had comforted them in all their tribulations*, v. 4. In the world they had trouble, but in Christ they had peace. The apostles met with many tribulations, but they found comfort in them all: their sufferings (which are called *the sufferings of Christ*, (v. 5.) because Christ sympathized with his members when suffering for his sake) did abound, but their consolation by Christ did abound also. Note, [1.] *Then* are we qualified to receive the comfort of God's mercies, when we set ourselves to give him the glory of them [2.] *Then* we speak best of God and

his goodness, when we speak from our own experience, and, in telling others, tell God also what he has done for our souls.

(2.) The advantage which others might receive; for God intended that they *should be able to comfort others* in trouble, (v. 4.) by communicating to them their experiences of the divine goodness and mercy; and the sufferings of good men have a tendency to this good end, (v. 6.) when they are ended with faith and patience. Note, [1.] What favours God bestows on us, are intended not only to make us cheerful ourselves, but also that we may be useful to others. [2.] If we do imitate the faith and patience of good men in their afflictions, we may hope to partake of their consolations here, and their salvation hereafter.

7. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation. 8. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: 9. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raiseth the dead: 19. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us: 11. Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

In these verses the apostle speaks for the encouragement and edification of the Corinthians; and tells them (v. 7.) of his persuasion, or steadfast hope, that they should receive benefit by the troubles he and his companions in labour and travel had met with; that their faith should not be weakened, but their consolations increased. In order to this, he tells them,

1. What their sufferings had been; (v. 8.) *We would not have you ignorant of our trouble*. It was convenient for the churches to know what were the sufferings of their ministers. It is not certain what particular troubles in Asia are here referred to; whether the tumult raised by Demetrius at Ephesus, mentioned Acts 19. or the fight with beasts at Ephesus, mentioned in the former epistle, (ch. 15.) or some other trouble; for the apostle was in *deaths often*. This however is evident—they were great tribulations. They were *pushed out of measure*, to a very extraordinary degree, *above the common strength* of men, or of ordinary Christians, to bear up under them, insomuch that they *despaired even of life*, (v. 8.) and thought they should have been killed, or have fainted away and expired.

2. What they did in their distress; *They trusted in God*. And therefore they were brought to that extremity, that they should not trust in themselves, but in God, v. 9. Note, God often brings his people into great straits, that they may apprehend their own *insufficiency* to help themselves, and may be induced to place their trust and hope in his *all-sufficiency*. Our extremity is God's opportunity. *In the mount will the Lord be seen*; and we may safely trust in God, who raiseth the dead, v. 9. God's raising the dead is a proof of his almighty power. He that can do *that*, can do *any* thing, can do *all* things, and is worthy to be trusted in *at all times*

Abraham's faith fastened upon this instance of the divine power; *He believed God, who quickeneth the dead*, Rom. 4. 17. If we should be brought so low as to *despair even of life*, yet we may then trust in God, who can bring back not only from the gates, but from the jaws of death.

3. What the deliverance was, that they had obtained; and this was seasonable and continued. Their hope and trust were not in vain, nor shall any who trust in him be ashamed. God *had delivered them, and did still deliver them*, v. 10. *Having obtained help of God, they continued to that day*, Acts 26. 22.

4. What use they made of this deliverance; *We trust that he will yet deliver us*; (v. 10.) that God will deliver to the end, and *preserve to his heavenly kingdom*. Note, Past experiences are great encouragements to faith and hope, and they lay great obligations to trust in God for time to come. We reprove our experiences, if we distrust God in future straits, who hath delivered us in former troubles. David, even when a young man, and when he had but a small stock of experiences, argued after the manner of the apostle here, 1 Sam. 17. 37.

5. What was desired of the Corinthians upon this account; *That they would help together by prayer for them*, (v. 11.) by social prayer, agreeing and joining together in prayer on their behalf. Note, Our trusting in God must not supersede the use of any proper and appointed means; and prayer is one of those means. We should pray for ourselves and for one another. The apostle had himself a great interest in the throne of grace, yet he desires the help of others' prayers. If we thus help one another by our prayers, we may hope for an occasion of *giving thanks by many* for answer of prayer. And it is our duty not only to help one another with prayer, but in praise and thanksgiving, and thereby to make suitable returns for benefits received.

12. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. 13. For we write no other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; 14. As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are our's in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The apostle in these verses attests their integrity by the sincerity of their conversation. This he does not in a way of boasting and vain-glory, but as one good reason the more comfortably to trust in God, (Heb. 13. 18.) and for the necessary vindication of himself from the aspersions of some persons at Corinth, who reproached his person and questioned his apostleship. Here,

1. He appeals to the testimony of *conscience*, with *rejoicing*, v. 12. In which observe,

(1.) The *witness* appealed to, namely, *conscience*, which is instead of a thousand witnesses. This is God's deputy in the soul, and the voice of conscience is the voice of God. They *rejoiced* in the testimony of conscience, when their enemies reproached them, and were enraged against them. Note, The testimony of conscience for us, if that be right and upon good grounds, will be matter of rejoicing, at all times and in all conditions.

(2.) The *testimony* this witness gave. And here take notice, Conscience witnessed, [1.] Concerning

their *conversation*, their constant course and tenour of life: by that we may judge of ourselves, and not by this or that single act. [2.] Concerning the *nature or manner* of their conversation; that it was in *simplicity and godly sincerity*. This blessed apostle was a true Israelite, a man of plain dealing; you might know where to have him. He was not a man who seemed to be one thing, and *was* another, but a man of sincerity. [3.] Concerning the *principle* they acted from in all their conversation, both in the world, and toward these Corinthians; and that was not *fleshly wisdom*, or carnal politics and worldly views, but it was the *grace of God*, a vital gracious principle in their hearts, that cometh from God, and tendeth to God. Then will our conversation be well ordered, when we live and act under the influence and command of such a gracious principle in the heart.

2. He appeals to the knowledge of the Corinthians with hope and *confidence*, v. 13, 14.

Their conversation did in part fall under the observation of the Corinthians; and these knew how they behaved themselves, *how holily, and justly, and unblameably*; they never found any thing in them unbecoming an honest man. This they had *acknowledged in part* already, and he doubted not but they would still do so *to the end*, that they should never have any good reason to think or say otherwise of him, but that he was an honest man. And so there would be mutual rejoicing in one another. *We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are our's in the day of the Lord Jesus*. Note, It is happy when ministers and people do rejoice in each other here; and this joy will be complete in *that day* when the great Shepherd of the sheep shall appear.

15. And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; 16. And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. 17. When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? 18. But *as God is true*, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 19. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus*, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. 20. For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. 21. Now he who stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is God*; 22. Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. 23. Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. 24. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

The apostle vindicates himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy, in that he did not hold his purpose of coming to them at Corinth. His adversaries there sought all occasions to blemish his character, and reflect upon his conduct; and, it seemed, they took hold of this handle to reproach

his person and discredit his ministry. Now, for his justification,

1. He avers the sincerity of his intention; (v. 15-17.) and he does this in confidence of their good opinion of him, and that they would believe him, when he assured them he *was minded*, or did really intend, *to come to them*; and with the design, not that *he* might receive, but that *they* might receive, a *second benefit*, some further advantage by his ministry. He tells them that he had not herein used *lightness*; (v. 17.) that, as he aimed not at any secular advantage to himself, (for his purpose was not according to the flesh, that is, with carnal views and aims,) so it was not a rash and inconsiderate resolution that he had taken up, for he had laid his measures thus of *passing by them to Macedonia*, and *coming again to them from Macedonia in his way to Judea*, (v. 16.) and therefore they might conclude that it was for some weighty reasons that he had altered his purpose; and that with him there was not yea, yea, and nay, nay, v. 17. He was not to be accused of levity and inconstancy, or a contradiction between his words and intentions. Note, Good men should be careful to preserve the reputation of sincerity and constancy; they *should* not resolve but upon mature deliberation, and they *will* not change their resolves but for weighty reasons.

2. He would not have the Corinthians to infer that his gospel was false or uncertain, or that it was contradictory in itself, or unto truth, v. 18, 19. For if it had been so, that he had been fickle in his purposes, or even false in the promises he made of coming to them, (which he was not justly to be accused of, and so some understand this expression, (v. 18.) *Our word toward you was not yea and nay*;) yet it would not follow that the gospel preached not only by him, but also by others in full agreement with him, was either false or doubtful. For *God is true*, and the *Son of God, Jesus Christ*, is true. The true God, and eternal life. Jesus Christ, whom the apostle preached, is not yea and nay, but in him was yea, (v. 19.) nothing but infallible truth. And the promises of God in Christ are not yea and nay, but yea and amen, v. 20. There is an inviolable constancy and unquestionable sincerity and certainty in all the parts of the gospel of Christ. If in the promises that the ministers of the gospel make as common men, and about their own affairs, they see cause sometimes to vary from them, yet the promises of the gospel-covenant, which they preach, stand firm and inviolable. Bad men are false; good men are fickle; but *God is true*, neither fickle nor false.

The apostle, having mentioned the stability of the divine promises, makes a digression to illustrate this great and sweet truth, That all the promises of God are yea and amen. For,

(1.) They are the promises of the God of truth, (v. 20.) of him that *cannot lie*, whose truth as well as mercy endureth forever.

(2.) They are made in Christ Jesus, (v. 20.) the Amen, the true and faithful Witness; he hath purchased and ratified the covenant of promises, and is the *Surety of the covenant*, Heb. 7. 22.

(3.) They are confirmed by the Holy Spirit. He does *establish* Christians in the faith of the gospel; he has *anointed* them with his sanctifying grace, which in scripture is often compared to oil; he has *sealed* them, for their security and confirmation; and he is given as an *earnest in their hearts*, v. 21, 22. An earnest secures the promise, and is part of the payment. The illumination of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting light; the quickening of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an earnest of everlasting joy. Note, The veracity of God, the mediation of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit, are all engaged that the

promises shall be sure to all the seed, and the accomplishment of them shall be to the *glory of God*, (v. 20.) for the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and never-failing truth and faithfulness.

3. The apostle gives a good reason why he did not come to Corinth, as was expected, v. 23. It was, that he might *spare* them. They ought therefore to own his kindness and tenderness. He knew there were things amiss among them, and such as deserved censure, but was desirous to shew tenderness. He assures them that this was the true reason, after this very solemn manner; *I call God for a record upon my soul*: a way of speaking not justifiable where used in trivial matters; but this was very justifiable in the apostle, for his necessary vindication, and for the credit and usefulness of his ministry, which was struck at by his opposers. He adds, to prevent mistakes, that he did not pretend to *any dominion over their faith*, v. 24. Christ only is the Lord of our faith, he is the *Author and Finisher of our faith*, Heb. 12. 2. He reveals to us what we must believe. Paul and Apollos, and the rest of the apostles, were *but ministers by whom they believed*, (1 Cor. 3. 5.) and so the *helpers of their joy*, even the joy of faith. For *by faith we stand firm*, and live safely and comfortably. Our strength and ability are *owing to faith*, and our comfort and joy must *flow* from faith.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, the apostle proceeds in the account of the reasons why he did not come to Corinth, v. 1. 4. Then he writes concerning the incestuous person who lay under censure; and gives direction for the restoring him, together with the reasons for their so doing; (v. 5. 11.) and afterward informs them of his labours and success in preaching the gospel in several places, v. 12. 17.

1. **B**UT I determined this with myself that I would not come again to you in heaviness. 2. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same who is made sorry by me? 3. And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy of you* all. 4. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

In these verses,

1. The apostle proceeds in giving an account of the reason why he did not come to Corinth, as was expected; namely, because he was unwilling to grieve them, or be grieved by them, v. 1, 2. *He had determined not to come to them in heaviness*; which yet he should have done, had he come and found scandal among them not duly animadverted upon: this would have been cause of grief both to him and them; for their sorrow or joy at meeting would have been mutual. If he had made them sorry, that would have been a sorrow to himself, for there would have been none to have made him glad. But his desire was to have a cheerful meeting with them, and not to have it imbibtered by any unhappy occasion of disagreeing.

2. He tells them it was to the same intent that he wrote his former epistle, v. 3, 4. (1.) *That he might not have sorrow from them, of whom he ought to rejoice*; and that he had written to them in *confidence* of their doing what was requisite, in order to their benefit and his comfort. The particular thing re-

ferred to, as appears by the following verses, was the case of the incestuous person about whom he had written in the first epistle, *ch. 5*. Nor was the apostle disappointed in his expectation. (2.) He assures them that he did not design to grieve them, but to testify his love to them, and that he wrote to them with much *anguish and affliction* in his own heart, and with great affection to them. He had *written with tears, that they might know his abundant love to them*. Note, [1.] Even in reproofs, admonitions, and acts of discipline, faithful ministers shew their love. [2.] Needful censures, and the exercise of church-discipline towards offenders, are a grief to tender-spirited ministers, and are administered with regret.

5. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. 6. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many. 7. So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your love* toward him. 9. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. 10. To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it*, in the person of Christ; 11. Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

In these verses the apostle treats concerning the incestuous person who had been excommunicated, which seems to be one principal cause of his writing this epistle.

Here observe,

1. He tells them that the crime of that person had grieved him *in part*; and that he was grieved also with *a part* of them, who, notwithstanding this scandal had been found among them, were *puffed up, and had not mourned*, 1 Cor. 5. 2. However, he was unwilling to lay too heavy a charge upon the whole church, especially seeing they had cleared themselves in that matter by observing the directions he had formerly given them.

2. He tells them that the punishment which had been inflicted upon this offender was sufficient, *v. 6*. The desired effect was obtained, for the man was humbled, and they had shewn the proof of their obedience to his directions.

3. He therefore *directs* them, with all speed, to restore the excommunicated person, or to receive him again to their communion, *v. 7, 8*. This is expressed several ways; he beseeches them to *forgive* him, to release him from church-censures, for they could not remit the guilt or offence against God; and also to *comfort* him; for in many cases the comfort of penitents depends upon their reconciliation not only with God, but with men also, whom they have scandalized or injured. They must also *confirm their love* to him; they should shew that their reproofs and censures proceeded from love to his person, as well as hatred to his sin; and that their design was to reform, not to ruin him. Or thus: If his fall had weakened their love to him, that they could not take that satisfaction in him as formerly; yet, now that he was recovered by repentance, they must renew and confirm their love to him.

4. He used several weighty arguments to per-

sua^de them to do thus; (1.) The case of the penitent called for this; for he was in danger of being *swallowed up with over-much sorrow*, *v. 7*. He was so sensible of his fault, and so much afflicted under his punishment, that he was in danger of falling into despair; and when sorrow is excessive, it does hurt; even sorrow for sin is too great, when it unfits for other duties, and drives men to despair. (2.) They had *shewed obedience* to his directions in passing a censure upon him, and now he would have them comply with his desire to restore him, *v. 9*. (3.) He mentions his readiness to forgive this penitent, and concur with them in this matter; "*To whom ye forgive, I forgive also*, *v. 10*. I will readily concur with you in forgiving him." And this he would do for *their sakes*, for love to them, and for their advantage; and for *Christ's sake*, or in his name, as his apostle; and in conformity to his doctrine and example, which are so full of kindness and tender mercy toward all them who truly repent. (4.) He gives another weighty reason, (*v. 11*.) *Lest Satan get an advantage against us*. Not only was there danger lest Satan should get an advantage against the penitent, by driving him to despair; but against the churches also, and the apostles or ministers of Christ, by representing them as too rigid and severe, and so frighten people from coming among them.

In this, as in other things, *wisdom is profitable to direct*, so to manage according as the case may be, that the *ministry may not be blamed* for indulging sin on the one hand, or for too great severity toward sinners on the other hand. Note, Satan is a *subtle enemy*, and uses many stratagems to deceive us; and we should not be *ignorant of his devices*: he is also a *watchful adversary*, ready to take all advantages against us; and we should be very cautious lest we give him any occasion so to do.

12. Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, 13. I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. 14. Now thanks *be* unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16. To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? 17. For we are not as many, who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ

After these directions concerning the excommunicated person, the apostle makes a long digression, to give the Corinthians an account of his travels and labours for the furtherance of the gospel, and what success he had had therein; declaring at the same time how much he was concerned for them in their affairs; how he *had no rest in his spirit*, when he found not Titus at Troas, (*v. 13*.) as he expected, from whom he hoped to have understood more perfectly how it fared with them. And we find afterward, (*ch. 7. 5-7*.) that when the apostle was come into Macedonia, he was comforted by the coming of Titus, and the information he gave him concerning them. So that we may look upon all that we read from this second chapter, *v. 12*. to *ch. 7. 5*. as a kind of parenthesis. Observe here

I. Paul's unwearied labour and diligence in his work, v. 12, 13. He travelled from place to place, to preach the gospel. He went to Troas from Philippi by sea; (Acts 20. 6.) from thence he went to Macedonia; so that he was prevented from passing by Corinth, as he designed, *ch. 1. 16.* But though he was prevented in his design, as to the place of working, yet he was unwearied in his work.

II. His success in his work; *A great door was opened to him of the Lord, v. 12.* He had a great deal of work to do, wherever he came, and had good success in his work; for God made manifest the *savour of his knowledge* by him in every place where he came. He had an opportunity to open the door of his mouth freely, and God opened the hearts of his hearers, as the heart of Lydia; (Acts 16. 14.) and the apostle speaks of this as a matter of thankfulness to God, and of rejoicing to his soul; *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ.* Note, 1. A believer's triumphs are all in Christ. In ourselves we are weak, and have neither joy nor victory; but in Christ we may rejoice and triumph. 2. True believers have constant cause of triumph in Christ, for they are more than conquerors through him who hath loved them, Rom. 8. 37. 3. God causeth them to triumph in Christ. It is God who has given us matter for triumph, and hearts to triumph. To him therefore be the praise and glory of all. 4. The good success of the gospel is a good reason for a Christian's joy and rejoicing.

III. The comfort that the apostle and his companions in labour found, even when the gospel was not successful to the salvation of some who heard it, v. 15—17. Here observe,

1. The different success of the gospel, and its different effects upon several sorts of persons to whom it is preached. The success is different; for some are saved by it, while others perish under it. Nor is this to be wondered at, considering the different effects the gospel has. For, (1.) Unto some it is a *savour of death unto death.* Those who are willingly ignorant, and wilfully obstinate, disrelish the gospel, as men dislike an ill savour, and therefore they are blinded and hardened by it: it stirs up their corruptions, and exasperates their spirits. They reject the gospel, to their ruin, even to spiritual and eternal death. (2.) Unto others the gospel is a *savour of life unto life.* To humble and gracious souls the preaching of the word is most delightful and profitable. As it is sweeter than honey to the taste, so it is more grateful than the most precious odours to the senses, and much more profitable; for as it quickened them at first when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it makes them more lively, and will end in eternal life.

2. The awful impressions this matter made upon the mind of the apostle, and should also make upon our spirits; *Who is sufficient for these things? v. 16. The Jews; who is worthy to be employed in such weighty work; a work of such vast importance, because of so great consequence? Who is able to perform such a difficult work, that requires so much skill and industry? The work is great, and our strength is small; yea, of ourselves we have no strength at all; all our sufficiency is of God.* Note, If men did seriously consider what great things depend upon the preaching of the gospel, and how difficult the work of the ministry is, they would be very cautious how they enter upon it, and very careful to perform it well.

3. The comfort which the apostle had under this serious consideration; (1.) Because faithful ministers shall be accepted of God, whatever their success be; *We are, if faithful, unto God a sweet savour of Christ,* (v. 15.) in them who are saved, and in them also who perish. God will accept of sincere intentions, and honest endeavours, though with many

they are not successful. Ministers shall be accepted, and recompensed, not according to their success, but according to their fidelity; *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord,* Isa. 49. 5. (2.) Because his conscience witnessed to his faithfulness, v. 17. Though many did corrupt the word of God, yet the apostle's conscience witnessed to his fidelity. He did not mix his own notions with the doctrines and institutions of Christ; he durst not add to, nor diminish from, the word of God; he was faithful in dispensing the gospel, as he received it from the Lord, and had no secular turn to serve; his aim was to approve himself to God, remembering that his eye was always upon him; he therefore spake and acted always as in the sight of God, and therefore in sincerity. Note, What we do in religion, is not of God, does not come from God, will not reach to God, unless it be done in sincerity, as in the sight of God.

CHAP. III.

The apostle makes an apology for his seeming to commend himself, and is careful not to assume too much to himself, but to ascribe all praise unto God, v. 1..5. He then draws a comparison between the Old Testament and the New, and shews the excellency of the latter above the former; (v. 6..11.) whence he infers what is the duty of gospel-ministers, and the advantage of those who live under the gospel, above those who lived under the law, v. 12, to the end.

1. DO we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? 2. Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God: not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. 4. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: 5. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

In these verses,

1. The apostle makes an apology for his seeming to commend himself. He thought it convenient to protest his sincerity to them, because there were some at Corinth who endeavoured to blast his reputation; yet he was not desirous of vain-glory. And he tells them,

(1.) They neither needed nor desired any verbal commendation to them, nor letters testimonial from them, as some others did, meaning the false apostles or teachers, v. 1. Their ministry among them had, without controversy, been truly great and honourable, how little soever their persons were in reality, or how contemptible soever some would have them thought to be.

(2.) The Corinthians themselves were their real commendation, and a good testimonial for them, that God was with them of a truth, that they were sent of God; *Ye are our epistle, v. 2.* This was the testimonial they most delighted in, and what was most dear to them—they were written in their hearts: and this they could appeal to upon occasion, for it was, or might be, known and read of all men. Note, There is nothing more delightful to faithful ministers, or more to their commendation, than the success of their ministry evidenced in the hearts and lives of them among whom they labour.

2. The apostle is careful not to assume too much

of himself, but to ascribe all the praise to God. Therefore,

(1.) He says they were the *epistle of Christ*, v. 3. The apostle and others were but *instruments*. Christ was the *Author* of all the good that was in them. The law of Christ was written in their hearts, and the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts. This epistle was not written with *ink*, but with the *Spirit of the living God*; nor was it written in *tables of stone*, as the law of God given to Moses, but on the *heart*; and that heart not a *stony* one, but a heart of *flesh*, upon the *fleshy* (not *fleshly*, as fleshliness denotes sensuality) *tables of the heart*, upon hearts that are softened and renewed by divine grace, according to that gracious promise, *I will take away the stony heart, and I will give you a heart of flesh*, Ezek. 36. 26. This was the good hope the apostle had concerning these Corinthians, (v. 4.) that their hearts were like the ark of the covenant, containing the tables of the law and the gospel, written with the finger, that is, by the Spirit, of the living God.

(2.) He utterly disclaims the taking any praise to themselves, and ascribes all the glory to God; "*We are not sufficient of ourselves*, v. 5. We could never have made such good impressions on your hearts, or upon our own. Such are our weakness and inability, that we cannot of ourselves think a good thought, much less raise any good thoughts or affections in other men. *All our sufficiency is of God*; to him therefore are owing all the praise and glory of that good which is done, and from him we must receive grace and strength to do more." This is true concerning ministers and all Christians; the best are no more than what the grace of God makes them. Our hands are not sufficient for us, but our sufficiency is of God; and his grace is sufficient for us, to furnish us for every good word and work.

6. Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7. But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away; 8. How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? 9. For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 10. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. 11. For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.

Here the apostle makes a comparison between the Old Testament and the New, the law of Moses and the gospel of Jesus Christ; and values himself and his fellow-labourers by this, that *they were able ministers of the New Testament*, that God had made them so, v. 6. This he does in answer to the accusations of false teachers, who magnify greatly the law of Moses.

1. He distinguishes between the *letter* and the *spirit*, even of the New Testament, v. 6. As able ministers of the New Testament, they were ministers not merely of the *letter*, to read the written word, or to preach the letter of the gospel only, but they were *ministers of the Spirit* also; the Spirit of God

did accompany their ministrations. The *letter killeth*, this the letter of the law does, for that is the ministration of death; and if we rest only in the letter of the gospel, we shall be never the better for so doing, for even that will be a *savour of death unto death*: but the *Spirit of the gospel*, going along with the *ministry* of the gospel, giveth life spiritual, and life eternal.

2. He shews the difference between the Old Testament and the New, and the excellency of the gospel above the law. For,

(1.) The Old Testament dispensation was the *ministration of death*, (v. 7.) whereas that of the New Testament is the *ministration of life*. The law discovered sin, and the wrath and curse of God, that shewed us a God *above* us, and a God *against* us; but the gospel discovers grace and *Emmanuel*, God *with* us. Upon this account the gospel is more glorious than the law; and yet *that* had a glory in it, witness the shining of Moses's face (an indication thereof) when he came down from the mount with the tables in his hand, that reflected rays of brightness upon his countenance.

(2.) The law was the *ministration of condemnation*, for that condemned and cursed every one who *continued not in all things written therein, to do them*; but the gospel is the *ministration of righteousness*: therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed: this shews us that the just shall live by his faith: this reveals the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for the obtaining the remission of sins and eternal life. The gospel therefore so much *exceeds in glory*, that in a manner it eclipses the glory of the legal dispensation, v. 10. As the shining of a burning lamp is lost, or not regarded, when the sun arises, and goeth forth in his strength; so there was no glory in the Old Testament, in comparison with that of the New.

(3.) The law is done away, but the gospel does and shall *remain*, v. 11. Not only did the glory of Moses's face go away, but the glory of Moses's law is done away also; yea, the law of Moses itself is now abolished; that dispensation was only to continue for a time, and then to vanish away; whereas the gospel shall remain to the end of the world, and is always fresh and flourishing, and remains glorious.

12. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13. And not as Moses, *who* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: 14. But their minds were blinded, for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ. 15. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. 16. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. 17. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. 18. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In these verses the apostle draws two inferences from what he had said about the Old and New Testament.

1. Concerning the duty of the ministers of the gospel to use great *plainness* or clearness of speech. They ought not, like Moses, to put a veil upon their

faces, or obscure and darken those things that they should make plain. The gospel is a more clear dispensation than the law; the things of God are revealed in the New Testament, not in types and shadows; and ministers are much to blame, if they do not set spiritual things, and gospel-truth and grace, in the clearest light that is possible. Though the Israelites could not, yet *we* may, look *steadfastly to the end* of what was commanded, but is now *abolished*. We may see the meaning of those types and shadows by the accomplishment, seeing *the veil is done away in Christ*; and He is come, who was the End of the law for righteousness to all them who believe, and whom Moses and all the prophets pointed to, and wrote of.

2. Concerning the privilege and advantage of those who enjoy the gospel, above those who lived under the law. For,

(1.) Those who lived under the legal dispensation, had *their minds blinded*, (v. 14.) and there was a *veil upon their hearts*, v. 15. Thus it was formerly, and so it was especially as to those who remained in judaism, after the coming of the Messiah, and the publication of his gospel. Nevertheless, the apostle tells us, there is a time coming, when *this veil also shall be taken away*, and when it [the body of that people] *shall turn to the Lord*, v. 16. Or, when any particular person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away; the blindness of the mind, and the hardness of the heart, are cured.

(2.) The condition of those who enjoy and believe the gospel is much more happy. For, [1.] They have liberty; *Where the Spirit of the Lord is*, and where he worketh, as he does under the gospel-dispensation, *there is liberty*; (v. 17.) freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the servitude of corruption; liberty of access to God, and freedom of speech in prayer. The heart is set at liberty, and enlarged, to run the ways of God's commandments. [2.] They have *light*; for with *open face we behold the glory of the Lord*, v. 18. The Israelites saw the glory of God in a *cloud*, which was dark and dreadful; but Christians see the glory of the Lord as in a *glass*, more clearly and comfortably. It was the peculiar privilege of Moses, for God to converse with him face to face, in a friendly manner; but now all true Christians see him more clearly with open face. He sheweth them his glory. [3.] This light and liberty *are transforming*; we are changed into the *same image*, *from glory to glory*, (v. 18.) from one degree of glorious grace unto another, till grace here be consummated in glory for ever. How much therefore should Christians prize and improve these privileges! We should not rest contented without an experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the gospel, by the operation of the Spirit, bringing us into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have an account, I. Of the constancy of the apostle and his fellow-labourers in their work. Their constancy is declared; (v. 1.) their sincerity is vouched; (v. 2.) an objection is obviated; (v. 3, 4.) and their integrity proved, v. 5, 7. II. Of their courage and patience under their sufferings. Where see what their sufferings were, together with their allays; (v. 8, 12.) and what it was that kept them from sinking and fainting under them, v. 13, to the end.

1. **T**HEREFORE, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; 2. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifesta-

tion of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The apostle had, in the foregoing chapter, been *magnifying his office*, upon the consideration of the excellency or glory of that gospel about which he did officiate; and now in this chapter his design is to vindicate their ministry from the accusation of false teachers, who charged them as deceitful workers, or endeavoured to prejudice the minds of the people against them on account of their sufferings. He tells them, therefore, how they believed, and how they shewed their value for their office as ministers of the gospel. They were not puffed up with pride, but spurred on to great diligence; *Seeing we have this ministry*, are so much distinguished and dignified, we do not take state upon ourselves, nor indulge idleness, but are excited to the better performance of our duty." Two things in general we have an account of,

Their constancy and sincerity in their work and labour. Concerning which, observe,

I. Their constancy and perseverance in their work are declared; "*We faint not*, (v. 1.) under the difficulty of our work, nor do we desist from our labour." And this their steadfastness was owing to the *mercy of God*. From the same mercy and grace that they received the *apostleship*, (Rom. 1. 5.) they received strength to persevere in the work of that office. Note, As it is great mercy and grace to be called to be saints, and especially to be *counted faithful*, and *be put into the ministry*; (1 Tim. 1. 12.) so it is owing to the mercy and grace of God, if we continue faithful, and persevere in our work with diligence. The best men in the world would faint in their work and under their burthens, if they did not receive mercy from God. *By the grace of God I am what I am*, said this great apostle in his former epistle to these Corinthians, ch. 15. 10. And that *mercy* which has helped us *out*, and helped us *on*, hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the *end*.

II. Their sincerity in their work is avouched, (v. 2.) in several expressions; *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty*. The things of dishonesty are *hidden things*, that will not bear the light; and those who practise them, are, or should be, ashamed of them, especially when they are known. Such things the apostle did not allow of, but did *renounce* and avoid with indignation; *Not walking in craftiness*, or in disguise, acting with art and cunning, but in great simplicity, and with open freedom. They had no base and wicked designs, covered with fair and specious pretences of something that was good. Nor did they in their preaching *handle the word of God deceitfully*: but, as he said before, they used *great plainness of speech*, and did not make their ministry serve a turn, or truckle to base designs. They had not cheated the people with falsehood in

stead of truth. Some think the apostle alludes to the deceit which treacherous gamblers use, or that of hucksters in the market, who mix bad wares with good. The apostles acted not like such persons, but they manifested the truth to every man's conscience, declaring nothing but what in their own conscience they believed to be true, and might serve for the conviction of their consciences who heard them, who were to judge for themselves, and to give an account for themselves. And all this they did as in the sight of God, desiring thus to commend themselves to God, and to the consciences of men, by their undisguised sincerity. Note, A steadfast adherence to the truths of the gospel will commend ministers and people; and sincerity or uprightness will preserve a man's reputation, and the good opinion of wise and good men concerning him.

III. An objection is obviated, which might be thus formed; "If it be thus, how then does it come to pass, that the gospel is hid, and proves ineffectual, as to some who hear it?" To which the apostle answers, by shewing that this was not the fault of the gospel, nor of the preachers thereof. But the true reasons of this were, 1. *They are lost souls*, to whom the gospel is hid, or is ineffectual, v. 3. Christ came to save *that which was lost*; (Matt. 18. 11.) and the gospel of Christ is sent to save such; and if that do not find and save them, they are lost for ever; they must never expect any thing else to save them, for there is no other method or means of salvation. The hiding of the gospel therefore from souls, is both an evidence and cause of their ruin. 2. *The god of this world hath blinded their minds*, v. 4. They are under the influence and power of the Devil, who is here called the god of this world, and elsewhere the prince of this world, because of the great interest he has in this world, and the homage that is paid to him by multitudes in the world, and the great sway that, by divine permission, he bears in the world, and in the hearts of his subjects, or rather slaves. And as he is the prince of darkness, and ruler of the darkness of this world, so he darkens the understandings of men, and increases their prejudices, and supports his interest by keeping them in the dark, blinding their minds with ignorance, and error, and prejudices, that they should not behold the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. Observe, (1.) Christ's design by his gospel, is, to make a glorious discovery of God to the minds of men. Thus, as the Image of God, he demonstrates the power and wisdom of God, and the grace and mercy of God for their salvation. But, (2.) The design of the Devil, is, to keep men in ignorance; and when he cannot keep the light of the gospel out of the world, he makes it his great business to keep it out of the hearts of men.

IV. A proof of their integrity is given, v. 5. They made it their business to preach Christ, and not themselves; *We preach not ourselves*. Self was not the matter or the end of the apostles' preaching; they did not give out their own notions and private opinions, nor their passions and prejudices, for the word and will of God: nor did they seek themselves, to advance their own secular interest or glory; but they preached Christ Jesus the Lord; and thus it did become them, and behoove them to do, as being Christ's servants. Their business was, to make their Master known to the world as the Messiah, or the Christ of God, and as (Jesus) the only Saviour of men, and as the rightful Lord, and to advance his honour and glory. Note, All the lines of Christian doctrine centre in Christ; and in preaching Christ, we preach all we should preach. "As to ourselves," says the apostle, "we preach, or declare, that we are your servants for Jesus' sake." This was no compliment, but a real profession of a readiness to do good to their souls, and to promote their spiritual and eternal interest,

and that for Jesus' sake; not for their own sake or their own advantage, but for Christ's sake, that they might imitate his great example, and advance his glory. Note, Ministers should not be of proud spirits, *lording it over God's heritage*, who are servants to the souls of men; yet, at the same time, they must avoid the meanness of spirit, implied in becoming the servants of the humours or the lusts of men; if they should thus seek to please men, they would not be the servants of Christ, Gal. 1. 10. And there was good reason,

1. Why they should preach Christ. For by gospel-light we have the knowledge of the glory of God, which shines in the face of Jesus Christ, v. 6. And the light of this Sun of righteousness is more glorious than that light which God commanded to shine out of darkness. It is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun in the firmament; but it is more pleasant and profitable, when the gospel shines in the heart. Note, As light was the first-born of the first creation, so it is in the new creation: the illumination of the Spirit is his first work upon the soul. The grace of God created such a light in the soul, that they who were sometimes darkness, are made light in the Lord, Eph. 5. 8.

2. Why they should not preach themselves; because they were but earthen vessels; things of little or no worth or value. Here seems to be an allusion to the lamps which Gideon's soldiers carried in earthen pitchers, Judges 7. 16. The treasure of gospel-light and grace is put into earthen vessels. The ministers of the gospel are weak and frail creatures, and subject to like passions and infirmities as other men; they are mortal, and soon broken in pieces. And God has so ordered it, that the weaker the vessels are, the stronger his power may appear to be, that the treasure itself should be valued the more. Note, There is an excellency of power in the gospel of Christ, to enlighten the mind, to convince the conscience, to convert the soul, and to rejoice the heart: but all this power is from God the Author, and not from men, who are but instruments, so that God in all things must be glorified.

8. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair*; 9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. 12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. 13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak; 14. Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. 15. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. 16. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

13. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

In these verses the apostle gives an account of their courage and patience under all their sufferings. Where observe,

1. How their sufferings, and patience under them, are declared, *v. 8—12*. The apostles were great sufferers; therein they followed their Master: Christ had told them, *that in the world they should have tribulation*, and so they had; yet they met with wonderful support, great relief, and many allays of their sorrows. "*We are,*" says the apostle, "*troubled on every side*, afflicted many ways, and we meet with almost all sorts of troubles; *yet not distressed*, *v. 8*. We are not hedged in, or cooped up, because we can see help in God, and help from God, and have liberty of access to God." Again, "*We are perplexed*, often uncertain, and in doubt what will become of us, and not always without anxiety in our mind on this account; *yet not in despair*, (*v. 8*.) even in our greatest perplexities, knowing that God is able to support us, and to deliver us, and in him we always place our trust and hope." Again, "*We are persecuted* by men, pursued with hatred and violence from place to place, as men not worthy to live; *yet not forsaken* of God," *v. 9*. Good men may be sometimes forsaken of their friends, as well as persecuted by their enemies; but God will never leave them nor forsake them. Again, "*We are sometimes dejected, or cast down*; the enemy may in great measure prevail, and our spirits begin to fail us; there may be fears within, as well as fightings without; yet we are *not destroyed*," *v. 9*. Still they were preserved, and kept their heads above water. Note, Whatever condition the children of God may be in, in this world, they have a '*but not*' to comfort themselves with; their case sometimes is bad, yea very bad, *but not so bad* as it might be.

The apostle speaks of their sufferings as constant, and as a counterpart of the sufferings of Christ, *v. 10*. The sufferings of Christ were, after a sort, re-acted in the sufferings of Christians; thus did they *bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus* in their body, setting before the world the great example of a suffering Christ, *that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest*, that people might see the power of Christ's resurrection, and the efficacy of grace in and from the living Jesus, manifested in and toward them, who did *yet live*, though they were always *delivered to death*, (*v. 11*.) and though *death worked in them*, (*v. 12*.) they being exposed to death, and ready to be swallowed up by death continually. Thus great were the sufferings of the apostles, that, in comparison with them, other Christians were, even at that time, in prosperous circumstances. *Death worketh in us; but life in you*, *v. 12*.

II. What it was, that kept them from sinking and fainting under their sufferings, *v. 13—18*. Whatever the burthens and troubles of good men may be, they have cause enough *not to faint*.

1. Faith kept them from fainting; *We have the same spirit of faith*; (*v. 13*.) that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit; the same faith by which the saints of old did and suffered such great things. Note, The grace of faith is a sovereign cordial, and effectual antidote against fainting fits in troublous times. The spirit of faith will go far to bear up the spirit of a man under his infirmities; and as the apostle had David's example to imitate, who said, (Ps. 116. 10.) *I have believed, and therefore have I spoken*, so he leaves us his example to imitate; *We also believe, says he, and therefore speak*. Note, As we receive

help and encouragement from the good words and examples of others, so we should be careful to give a good example to others.

2. Hope of the resurrection kept them from sinking, *v. 14*. They knew that Christ was raised, and that his resurrection was an earnest and assurance of *their's*. This he had treated of largely in his former epistle to these Corinthians, *ch. 15*. And therefore their hope was firm, being well grounded, that he who raised up Christ the Head, will also raise up all his members. Note, The hope of the resurrection will encourage us in a suffering day, and set us above the fear of death: for what reason has a good Christian to fear death, that dies in hope of a joyful resurrection?

3. The consideration of the glory of God and the benefit of the church, by means of their sufferings, kept them from fainting, *v. 15*. Their sufferings were for the church's advantage, (*ch. 1. 6*.) and this did redound to God's glory. For when the church is edified, then God is glorified; and we may well afford to bear sufferings patiently and cheerfully, when we see others are the better for them—if they are instructed and edified, if they are confirmed and comforted. Note, The sufferings of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are intended for the good of the church and the glory of God.

4. The thoughts of the advantage their souls would reap by the sufferings of their bodies, kept them from fainting; *Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day*, *v. 16*. Where note, (1.) We have every one of us an *outward* and an *inward* man, a body and a soul. (2.) If the outward man *perish*, there is no remedy, it must and will be so, it was made to perish. (3.) It is our happiness, if the decays of the outward man do contribute to the *renewing* of the inward man; if afflictions *outwardly* are gain to us *inwardly*; if, when the body is sick and weak and perishing, the soul is vigorous and prosperous. The best of men have need of *further* renewing of the inward man, *even day by day*. Where the good work is begun, there is more work to be done, for the carrying it forward. And as in wicked men things grow every day worse and worse, so in godly men they grow better and better.

5. The prospect of eternal life and happiness kept them from fainting, and was a mighty support and comfort. As to which, observe,

(1.) The apostle and his fellow-sufferers saw their afflictions *working* toward heaven, and that there they would end at last; (*v. 17*.) whereupon, they weighed things aright in the balance of the sanctuary; they did as it were put the heavenly glory in one scale, and their earthly sufferings in the other; and, pondering things in their thought, they found afflictions to be *light*, and the glory of heaven to be a *far more exceeding weight*. That which sense was ready to pronounce heavy and long, grievous and tedious, faith perceived to be *light* and short, but *for a moment*. On the other hand, the worth and weight of the crown of glory, as they are exceedingly great in themselves, so they are esteemed to be by the believing soul—they far exceed all his expressions and thought; and it will be a special support, in our sufferings, when we can perceive them appointed as the way, and preparing us for the enjoyment of the future glory.

(2.) Their *faith* enabled them to make this right judgment of things; *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen*, *v. 18*. It is by *faith* that we see God, who is invisible, (Heb. 11. 27.) and by that we look to an *unseen* heaven and hell, and faith is the *evidence of things not seen*. Note, [1.] There are *unseen* things, as well as things that are seen. [2.] There is this vast difference be-

tween them, unseen things are *eternal*, seen things but *temporal*, or temporary only. [3.] By faith we not only discern these things, and the great difference between them, but by that also we take *our aim* at unseen things, and chiefly regard them, and make it our *end and scope*, not to escape *present* evils, and obtain *present* good, both of which are temporal and transitory; but to escape *future* evil, and obtain *future* good things, which, though *unseen*, are real, and certain, and eternal; and faith is *the substance of things hoped for*, as well as the evidence of things not seen, Heb. 11. 1.

CHAP. V.

The apostle proceeds in shewing the reasons why they did not faint under their afflictions, namely, their expectation, desire, and assurance of happiness after death; (v. 1..5.) and makes an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state, (v. 6..8.) and another to quicken them in their duty, v. 9..11. Then he makes an apology for seeming to commend himself, and gives a good reason for his zeal and diligence; (v. 12..16.) and mentions two things that are necessary in order to our living to Christ, regeneration and reconciliation, v. 17, to the end.

1. **F**OR we know, that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3. If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4. For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burthened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6. Therefore *we* are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8. We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it* be good or bad. 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The apostle in these verses pursues the argument of the former chapter, concerning the grounds of their courage and patience under afflictions. And,

1. He mentions their expectation, and desire, and assurance, of eternal happiness after death, v. 1—5. Observe particularly,

1. The believer's *expectation* of eternal happiness after death, v. 1. He does not always *know*, or is well assured by faith of the truth and reality of the thing itself, that there is another and a happy life after this present life is ended; but he has *good hope* through *grace* of his interest in that everlasting blessedness of the unseen world; "We know that *we* have

a building of God, we have a firm and well-grounded expectation of the future felicity." Let us take notice, (1.) *What* heaven is in the eye and hope of a believer; he looks upon it as a *house*, or habitation; a dwelling-place, a resting-place, a hiding place; our *Father's* house, where there are many mansions, and our everlasting *home*: it is a house in the *heavens*, in that high and holy place, which as far excels all the palaces of this earth, as the heavens are high above the earth: it is a *building of God*, whose Builder and Maker is God, and therefore is worthy of its Author; the happiness of the future state is what God hath prepared for them that love him: it is *eternal* in the heavens, *everlasting habitations*, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay, in which our souls now dwell, that are mouldering and decaying, *whose foundations are in the dust*. (2.) *When* it is expected this happiness shall be enjoyed—immediately after death; so soon as *our house of this earthly tabernacle is dissolved*. Note, [1.] That the body, *this earthly house*, is but a *tabernacle*, that must be *dissolved* shortly; the nails or pins will be drawn, and the cords be loosed, and then the body returns to dust as it was. [2.] When this comes to pass, then comes the house *not made with hands*. The spirit returns to God who gave it; and such as have walked with God here, shall dwell with God for ever.

2. The believer's *earnest desire* after this future blessedness, which is expressed by this word, *συνέζωμεν*—*we groan*: which denotes, (1.) A groaning of *sorrow* under a heavy load; so believers groan under the burden of life; *in this*, we groan earnestly, v. 2. We that are in *this tabernacle*, groan, *being burthened*, v. 4. The body of flesh is a heavy burthen, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers groan, because burthened with a body of sin, and the many corruptions that are still remaining and raging in them. This makes them complain, *O wretched man that I am!* Rom. 7. 24. (2.) There is a groaning of *desire* after the happiness of another life; and thus believers groan, earnestly desiring to be *clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*, (v. 2.) to obtain a blessed immortality, *that mortality might be swallowed up of life*, (v. 4.) *that being found clothed, we shall not be naked*; (v. 3.) that, if it were the will of God, we might not *sleep*, but be changed; for it is not desirable in itself to be unclothed; death, considered merely as a separation of soul and body, is not to be desired, but dreaded rather; but, considered as a passage to glory, the believer is *willing rather to die than live, to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord*, (v. 8.) to leave this body, that he may go to Christ, and to put off these rags of mortality, that he may put on the robes of glory. Note, [1.] Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as put an end to all our troubles here below. Naked we came into this world, and naked shall we go out of it. But, [2.] Gracious souls are not found naked in the other world; no, they are clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. They shall be delivered out of all their troubles, and shall have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 7. 14.

3. The believer's *assurance* of his interest in this future blessedness, on a double account; (1.) From the *experience of the grace* of God, in preparing and making him meet for this blessedness. He that hath *wrought us for the self-same thing, is God*, v. 5. Note, All who are designed for heaven hereafter, are *wrought* or prepared for heaven while they are here; the stones of that spiritual building and temple above are squared and fashioned here below. And he that hath wrought us for this, *is God*; because nothing less than a divine power can make a soul

partaker of a divine nature; no hand less than the hand of God can work us for this thing. A great deal is to be done to prepare our souls for heaven, and that *purification of the heart is from the Lord.* (2.) The earnest of the Spirit gave them this assurance; for an earnest is part of payment, and secures the full payment. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit are earnest of everlasting grace and comfort.

II. The apostle makes an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state and condition in this world, v. 6—8. Where observe,

1. What their present state and condition are, they are *absent from the Lord*, v. 6. they are pilgrims and strangers in this world; they do but sojourn here in their *earthly home*, or in this tabernacle; and though God is *with us* here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not *with him* as we hope to be: we cannot see his face while we live; *For we walk by faith, not by sight*, v. 7. We have not the vision and fruition of God, as of an object that is present with us, and as we hope for hereafter, when *we shall see as we are seen*. Note, *Faith* is for this world, and *sight* is reserved for the other world: and it is our duty, and will be our interest, to walk by faith, till we come to live by sight.

2. How comfortable and courageous we ought to be in all the troubles of life, and in the hour of death; *Therefore we are*, or ought to be, *always confident*; (v. 6.) and again, (v. 8.) *We are confident, and willing*, rather to be absent from the body. True Christians, if they duly consider the prospect faith gives them of another world, and the good reasons of their hope of blessedness after death, would be comforted under the troubles of life, and supported in the hour of death: they should take courage, when they are encountering the last enemy; and be willing rather to die than live, when it is the will of God that they should *put off this tabernacle*. Note, As those who are born from above, long to be there; so it is but *being absent* from the body, and we shall very soon be present with the Lord; but to die, and be with Christ; but *to close our eyes* to all things in this world, and we shall *open* them in a world of glory. Faith will be turned into sight.

III. He proceeds to make an inference, to excite and quicken himself and others to duty, v. 9—11. So it is, that well-grounded hopes of heaven will be far from giving the least encouragement to sloth and sinful security; but, on the contrary, they should stir us up to use the greatest care and diligence in religion; *Wherefore*, or because we hope to be present with the Lord, *we labour* and take pains, v. 9. φιλοτιμούμεθα—*We are ambitious*, and labour as industriously as the most ambitious men do to obtain what they aim at. Here observe,

1. What it was that the apostle was thus ambitious of, *acceptance with God*. We labour, that, living and dying, *whether present* in the body, or *absent* from the body, *we may be accepted of him*, the Lord; (v. 9.) that *we may please Him who hath chosen us*; that our great Lord may say to us, *Well done*. This they coveted, as the greatest favour, and the highest honour: it was the top of their ambition.

2. What further quickening motives they had to excite their diligence, from the consideration of the judgment to come, v. 10, 11. There are many things relating to this great matter, that should awe the best of men into the utmost care and diligence in religion; the *certainty* of this judgment, for we must appear; the *universality* of it, for we must all appear; the great *Judge*, before whose *judgment-seat* we must appear, the Lord Jesus Christ, who *himself* will appear in flaming fire; the *recompense* to be then received, for things done in the body; which will be very *particular* unto every one; and very *just*, according to what we have done, whether good

or bad. The apostle calls this awful judgment the *terror of the Lord*; (v. 11.) and, by the consideration thereof, was excited to *persuade men* to repent, and live a holy life, that, when Christ shall appear *terribly*, they may appear before him *comfortably*. And concerning his fidelity and diligence, he comfortably appeals unto God, and the consciences of those he wrote to; *We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences*.

12. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them who glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. 14. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15. And that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.

Here observe,

1. The apostle makes an apology for seeming to commend himself and his fellow-labourers; (v. 12.) and tells them, (1.) It was not to *commend themselves*, or for their own sakes, that he had spoken of their fidelity and diligence in the former verses; nor was he willing to suspect their good opinion of him. But, (2.) The true reason was this, to put an argument in their mouths, wherewith to answer his accusers, who made vain boastings, and *gloried in appearances* only; that he might give them an *occasion to glory on their behalf*, or to defend them against the reproaches of their adversaries. And if the people can say that the word has been manifested to their consciences, and been effectual to their conversion and edification, this is the best defence they can make for the *ministry of the word*, when they are vilified and reproached.

2. He gives good reasons for their great zeal and diligence. Some of Paul's adversaries had, it is likely, reproached him for his zeal and fervour, as if he had been a madman, or, in the language of our days, a *fanatic*; they imputed all to enthusiasm, as the Roman governor told him, *Much learning has made thee mad*, Acts 26. 24. But the apostle tells them,

(1.) It was for the glory of God, and the good of the church, that he was thus zealous and industrious; "*Whether we be beside ourselves, or whether we be sober*, whether you or others do think the one or the other, it is *to God*, and for his glory; and it is *for your cause*, or to promote your good," v. 13. If they manifested the greatest ardour and vehemency at some times, and used the greatest calmness in *strong reasonings* at other times, it was for the best ends; and in both methods they had good reason for what they did. For,

(2.) *The love of Christ constrained them*, v. 14. They were under the sweetest and strongest constraints to do what they did. Love has a constraining virtue to excite ministers and private Christians in their duty. *Our love to Christ* will have this virtue; and *Christ's love to us*, which was manifested in this great instance of his *dying for us*, will have this effect upon us, if it be duly considered and rightly judged of. For observe, how the apostle argues for the reasonableness of love's constraints; and declares,

[1.] What we were before, and must have continued to be, had not Christ died for us; *We were*

dead, v. 14. If one died for all, then were all dead; dead in *law*, under sentence of death; dead in *sins* and trespasses, spiritually dead. Note, This was the deplorable condition of all those whom Christ died for: they were lost and undone, dead and ruined, and must have remained thus miserable for ever, if Christ had not died for them.

[2.] What such should do, for whom Christ died; namely, that they should *live to him*. This is what Christ designed, that *they who live*, who are made alive unto God by means of his death, *should live to him that died for them, and rose again*, for their sakes also, and that they should not live *to themselves*, v. 15. Note, We should not make *ourselves*, but *Christ*, the end of our living and actions; and it was one end of Christ's death, to cure us of this *self-love*, and to excite us always to act under the commanding influence of *his love*. A Christian's life should be consecrated to Christ; and *then* do we live as we ought to live, when we live to Christ, who died for us.

16. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more. 17. Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18. And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech *you* by us, we pray *you* in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God. 21. For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

In these verses the apostle mentions two things that are necessary in order to our living to Christ, both of which are the consequences of Christ's dying for us—regeneration, and reconciliation.

I. Regeneration, which consists in two things; namely,

1. Weanedness from the world; "*Henceforth we know no man after the flesh*, v. 16. We do not *own* or affect any person or thing in this world for carnal ends and outward advantage: we are enabled, by divine grace, not to mind or regard this world, or the things of the world, but to live above it. The love of Christ is in our hearts, and the world is under our feet. Note, Good Christians must enjoy the comforts of this life, and their relations in this world, with a holy indifference; *Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet*, says the apostle, *we know him no more*. It is questioned whether Paul had seen Christ in the flesh. However, the rest of the apostles had, and so might some among those he was now writing to. However, he would not have them value themselves upon that account; for even the bodily presence of Christ is not to be desired or lotted upon by his disciples. We must live upon his spiritual presence, and the comfort it affords. Note, Those who make images of Christ, and use them in their worship, do not take the way that God has appointed for strengthening their faith and quicken-

ing their affections; for it is the will of God that we should not know Christ any more after the flesh.

2. A thorough change of the heart; *For if any man be in Christ*, if any man be a Christian indeed, and will approve himself such, *he is*, or he must be, *a new creature*, v. 17. Some read it, *Let him be* a new creature. This ought to be the care of all who profess the Christian faith, that they be new creatures; not only that they have a new *name*, and wear a new *livery*, but that they have a new *heart* and new *nature*. And so great is the change the grace of God makes in the soul, that, as it follows, *old things are passed away*, old *thoughts*, old *principles*, and old *practices*, are passed away; and *all these things must become new*. Note, Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul; all things are new. The renewed man acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company.

II. Reconciliation; which is here spoken of under a double notion.

1. As an unquestionable privilege, v. 18, 19. Reconciliation supposes a quarrel, or breach of friendship; and sin has made a breach, it has broken the friendship between God and man. The heart of the sinner is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with the sinner. Yet, behold, there may be a reconciliation; the offended Majesty of heaven is willing to be reconciled. And observe,

(1.) He has appointed the *Mediator of reconciliation*—Jesus Christ. He has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, v. 18. God is to be owned from first to last in the undertaking and performance of the Mediator. *All things* relating to our reconciliation by Jesus Christ, *are of God*, who by the mediation of Jesus Christ has *reconciled the world to himself*, and put himself into a capacity of being actually reconciled to offenders, without any wrong or injury to his justice or holiness; and does not *impute* to men their *trespasses*, but recedes from the rigour of the first covenant, which was broken, and does not insist upon the advantage he might justly take against us for the breach of that covenant, but is willing to enter into a new treaty, and into a new covenant of grace, and, according to the tenour thereof, freely to forgive us all our sins, and justify freely by his grace all those who do believe.

(2.) He has appointed the *ministry of reconciliation*, v. 18. By the inspiration of God the scriptures were written, which contain the *word* of reconciliation; shewing us that peace was made by the blood of the cross, that reconciliation is wrought, and directing us how we may be interested therein. And he has appointed the *office* of the ministry, which is a *ministry of reconciliation*: ministers are to open and proclaim to sinners the terms of mercy and reconciliation, and persuade them to comply therewith. For,

2. Reconciliation is here spoken of as our indispensable duty, v. 20. As God is willing to be reconciled to us, we ought to be *reconciled to God*. And it is the great end and design of the gospel, that word of reconciliation, to prevail upon sinners to lay aside their enmity against God. Faithful ministers are *Christ's ambassadors*, sent to treat with sinners on peace and reconciliation: they come in *God's name*, with his entreaties, and act in *Christ's stead*, doing the very thing he did when he was upon this earth, and what he wills to be done, now that he is in heaven. Wonderful condescension! Though God can be no loser by the quarrel, nor gainer by the peace, yet by his ministers he *beseeches* sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept of the terms he offers, that they would be reconciled to him, to all his attributes, to all his laws, and to all his providences; to believe in the Mediator, to accept the

atonement, and comply with his gospel, in all the parts of it, and in the whole design of it. And for our encouragement so to do, the apostle subjoins what should be well known and duly considered by us, (v. 21.) namely, (1.) The purity of the Mediator; that *he knew no sin*. (2.) The sacrifice he offered; *He was made Sin*; not a sinner, but *Sin*, a Sin-offering, a Sacrifice for sin. (3.) The end and design of all this; that *we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Note, [1.] As Christ, who knew no sin of *his own*, was made Sin for us, so we, who have no righteousness of *our own*, are made the righteousness of God in him. [2.] Our reconciliation to God is *only* through Jesus Christ, and for the sake of his merit: on him therefore we must rely, and make mention of his righteousness, and his only.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, the apostle gives an account of his general errand to all whom he preached to; with the several arguments and methods he used, v. 1. . 10. Then he addresses himself particularly to the Corinthians, giving them good cautions with great affection and strong arguments, v. 11. . 18.

1. **WE** then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. 2. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) 3. Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: 4. But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5. In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; 6. By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, 7. By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8. By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; 9. As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

In these verses we have an account of the apostle's general errand and exhortation to all whom he preached to in every place where he came, with the several arguments and methods he used. Observe,

I. The errand or exhortation itself, namely, to comply with the gospel-offers of reconciliation; that, being favoured with the gospel, they would not receive this *grace of God in vain*, v. 1. The gospel is a *word* of grace sounding in our ears; but it will be in vain for us to hear it, unless we believe it, and comply with the end and design of it. And as it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to exhort and persuade their hearers to accept of grace and mercy that are offered to them, so they are ho-

noured with this high title, of *co-workers with God*. Note, 1. They must *work*; and must work for God, and his glory; for *souls*, and their good: and they are workers *with God*, yet under him, as instruments only; however, if they are faithful, they may hope to find God working *with them*, and their labour will be effectual. 2. Observe the language and way of the spirit of the gospel: it is not with roughness and severity, but with all mildness and gentleness, to beseech and entreat, to use exhortations and arguments, in order to prevail with sinners, and overcome their natural *unwillingness* to be reconciled to God, and to be happy for ever.

II. The arguments and method which the apostle used. And here he tells them,

1. The present time is the only proper season to accept of grace that is offered, and improve that grace which is afforded; *NOW is the accepted time*, *NOW is the day of salvation*, v. 2. The gospel-day is a day of salvation, the means of grace the means of salvation, the offers of the gospel the offers of salvation, and the *present* time the *proper* time to accept of these offers; *To-day, while it is called to-day*. The *morrow* is none of our's: we know not *what* will be on the *morrow*, nor *where* we shall be; and we should remember that *present* seasons of grace are short and uncertain, and cannot be recalled when they are past. It is therefore our duty and interest to improve them while we enjoy them, and no less than our salvation depends upon our so doing.

2. What caution they used not to give offence that might hinder the success of their preaching; *Giving no offence in any thing*, v. 3. The apostle had great difficulty to behave prudently and inoffensively toward the Jews and Gentiles, for many of both sorts watched for his halting, and sought occasion to *blame him* and his *ministry*, or his conversation; therefore he was very cautious not to *give* offence to them who were so apt to *take* offence, that he might not offend the Jews by unnecessary zeal against the law, nor the Gentiles by unnecessary compliances with such as were zealous for the law. He was careful, in all his words and actions, not to give offence, or occasion of guilt or grief. Note, When others are too apt to *take* offence, we should be cautious lest we *give* offence; and ministers especially should be careful lest they do any thing that may bring *blame* on their ministry, or render that unsuccessful.

3. Their constant aim and endeavour in all things to *approve themselves faithful*, as became the *ministers of God*, v. 4. We see how much stress the apostle upon all occasions lays on fidelity in our work, because much of our success depends upon that. His eye was single, and his heart upright, in all his ministrations; and his great desire was to be the servant of God, and to approve himself so. Note, Ministers of the gospel should look upon themselves as *God's servants* or ministers, and act in every thing suitable to that character. So did the apostle,

(1.) *By much patience in afflictions*. He was a great sufferer, and met with many *afflictions*, often in *necessities*, and wanting the conveniences, if not the necessities of life: in *distresses*, being straitened on every side, hardly knowing what to do; in *stripes* often, (ch. 11. 24.) in *imprisonments*, in *tumults* raised by the Jews and Gentiles against him, in *labours*, not only in preaching the gospel, but in travelling from place to place for that end, and working with his hands to supply his necessities; in *watchings* and in *fastings*, either voluntary upon a religious account, or involuntary for the sake of religion: but he exercised *much patience* in all, v. 4. 5. Note, [1.] It is the lot of faithful ministers often to be reduced to great difficulties, and to stand in

need of much patience. [2.] Those who would approve themselves to God, must approve themselves faithful in trouble as well as in peace, not only in doing the work of God diligently, but also in bearing the will of God patiently.

(2.) *By acting from good principles.* The apostle went by a good principle in all he did, and tells them what his principles were; (*v. 6, 7.*) *Pureness*; and there is no piety without purity. A care to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, is necessary in order to our acceptance with God. *Knowledge* was another principle; and zeal without this is but madness. He also acted with *long-suffering and kindness*; being not easily provoked, but bearing with the hardness of men's hearts, and hard treatment from *their hands*, to whom he kindly endeavoured to do good. He acted under the influence of the *Holy Ghost*, from the noble principle of *unfeigned love*, according to the rule of the *word of truth*, under the supports and assistances of the *power of God*, having on the *armour of righteousness*, a consciousness of universal righteousness and holiness; which is the best defence against the temptations of prosperity *on the right hand*, and of adversity *on the left*.

(3.) By a due temper and behaviour under all the variety of conditions in this world, *v. 8—10.* We must expect to meet with many alterations of our circumstances and conditions in this world; and it will be a great evidence of our integrity, if we preserve a right temper of mind, and duly behave ourselves, under them all. The apostles met with *honour and dishonour*, good report and bad report: good men in this world must expect to meet with some dishonour and reproaches, to balance their honour and esteem; and we stand in need of the grace of God, to arm us against the temptations of honour on the one hand, so as to bear good report without pride; and of dishonour on the other hand, so as to bear reproaches without impatience or re- crimination. It should seem that persons differently represented the apostles in their reports; that *some* represented them as the *best*, and *others* as the *worst*, of men: by some they were counted *deceivers*, and run down as such; by others as *true*, preaching the gospel of truth, and men who were true to the trust reposed in them. They were slighted by the men of the world as *unknown*, men of no figure or account, not worth taking notice of; yet in all the churches of Christ they were *well known*, and of great account: they were looked upon as *dying*, being killed all the day long, and their interest was thought to be a dying interest; “and yet *behold*,” says the apostle, “*we live*, and live comfortably, and bear up cheerfully under all our hardships, and go on conquering and to conquer.” They were chastened, and often fell under the lash of the law, yet not killed; and though it was thought that they were *sorrowful*, a company of mopeish and melancholy men, always sighing and mourning; yet they were *always rejoicing* in God, and had the greatest reason to rejoice always. They were despised as *poor*, upon the account of their poverty in this world; and yet they *made many rich*, by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. They were thought to *have nothing*, and silver and gold they had none, houses and lands they had none; yet they *possessed all things*; they had nothing in this world, but they had a treasure in heaven. Their effects lay in another country, in another world. They had nothing in themselves, but possessed all things in Christ. Such a paradox is a Christian's life, and through such a variety of conditions and reports lies our way to heaven; and we should be careful in all these things to approve ourselves to God.

11. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open

unto you, our heart is enlarged. 12. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. 13. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my children*,) be ye also enlarged. 14. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? 15. And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16. And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The apostle proceeds to address himself more particularly to the Corinthians, and cautions them against mingling themselves with unbelievers. Where observe,

I. How the caution is introduced with a profession, in a very pathetic manner, of the most tender affection to them, *even like that of a father to his children*, *v. 11—13.* Though the apostle was happy in a great fluency of expressions, yet he seemed to want words how to signify the warm affections he had for these Corinthians. “O ye Corinthians, to whom I am now writing, I would fain convince you how well I love you: we are desirous to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of all whom we preach unto, yet *our mouth is open unto you, and our heart is enlarged unto you*, in a special manner.” And because his heart was thus enlarged with love to them, therefore he opened his mouth so freely to them in kind admonitions and exhortations; “*Ye are not*,” says he, “*straitened in us*; we would gladly do you all the service we can, and promote your comfort, as helpers of your faith and your joy; and if it be otherwise, the fault is in yourselves; it is *because ye are straitened in yourselves*, and fail in suitable returns to us, through some misapprehensions concerning us; and all we desire, as a *recompense*, is only that ye would be proportionably affected to us, as children should love their father.” Note, It is desirable that there should be a mutual good affection between ministers and their people, and this would greatly tend to their mutual comfort and advantage.

II. The caution or exhortation itself, not to mingle themselves with unbelievers, not to be *unequally yoked* with them, *v. 14.* Either,

1. In stated relations. It is wrong for good people to join in affinity with the wicked and profane: these will draw different ways, and that will be galling and grievous. Those relations who are our choice, must be chosen by rule; and it is good for those who are themselves the children of God, to join with those who are so likewise; for there is more danger that the bad will damage the good, than hope that the good will benefit the bad.

2. In common conversation. We should not yoke ourselves in friendship and acquaintance with wicked men and unbelievers. Though we cannot wholly

avoid seeing and hearing, and being with, such, yet we should never choose them for our bosom-friends.

3. Much less should we join in religious communion with them; we must not join with them in their idolatrous services, nor concur with them in their false worship, nor any abominations; we must not confound together the table of the Lord and the table of devils; the house of God and the house of Rimmon. The apostle gives several good reasons against this corrupt mixture.

(1.) It is a very great absurdity, v. 14, 15. It is an *unequal yoking* of things together, that will not agree together; as bad as for the Jews to have ploughed with an ox and an ass, or to have sown divers sorts of grain intermixed. What an absurdity is it to think of joining *righteousness* and *unrighteousness*, or mingling *light* and *darkness*, fire and water, together! Believers are, and should be, righteous; but unbelievers are unrighteous. Believers are made light in the Lord, but unbelievers are in darkness; and what comfortable communion can these have together? Christ and Belial are contrary one to the other; they have opposite interests and designs, so that it is impossible there should be any *concord* or agreement between them. It is absurd, therefore, to think of enlisting under both; and if the believer has part with an infidel, he does what in him lies to bring Christ and Belial together.

(2.) It is a dishonour to the Christian's profession; (v. 16.) for Christians are by profession, and should be in reality, the *temples of the living God*; dedicated to, and employed for, the service of God, who has promised to reside in them, *to dwell and walk in them*, to stand in a special relation to them, and take a special care of them, that he will be *their* God, and they shall be *his* people. Now there can be no agreement between the *temple of God* and *idols*. Idols are rivals with God for his honour, and God is a *jealous God*, and will not give his glory to another.

(3.) There is a great deal of danger in communicating with unbelievers and idolaters; danger of being defiled, and of being rejected: therefore the exhortation is, (v. 17.) *to come out from among them*, and keep at a due distance; *to be separate*, as one would avoid the society of those who have the leprosy or the plague, for fear of taking infection, and *not to touch the unclean thing*, lest we are defiled. Who can touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? We must take care not to defile ourselves by converse with those who defile themselves with sin; so is the will of God, as we ever hope to be *received*, and not rejected, by him.

(4.) It is base ingratitude to God for all the favours he has bestowed upon believers, and promised to them, v. 18. God has promised to be a *Father* to them, and that they shall be *his sons* and *his daughters*; and is there a greater honour or happiness than this? How ungrateful a thing then must it be, if such who have this dignity and felicity, should degrade and debase themselves by mingling with unbelievers! *Do we thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?*

CHAP. VII.

This chapter begins with an exhortation to progressive holiness, and a due regard to the ministers of the gospel, v. 1. 4. Then the apostle returns from a long digression, to speak further of the affair concerning the incestuous person, and tells them what comfort he received in his distress about that matter, upon his meeting with Titus, (v. 5. 7.) and how he rejoiced in their repentance, with the evidences thereof, v. 8. 11. And lastly, he concludes with endeavouring to comfort the Corinthians, upon whom his admonitions had had so good an effect, v. 12. 16.

1. **H**AVING therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our-

selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2. Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. 3. I speak not *this* to condemn *you*; for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*. 4. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

These verses contain a double exhortation.

1. To make a progress in holiness, or *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, v. 1. This exhortation is given with most tender affection to them who were *dearly beloved*, and enforced by strong arguments, even the consideration of those exceeding great and precious promises which were mentioned in the former chapter, and which the Corinthians had an interest in, and a title to. The promises of God are strong inducements to sanctification, in both the branches thereof, namely,

(1.) *The dying unto sin*, or mortifying our lusts and corruptions, we must *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*. Sin is filthiness, and there are defilements of body and mind; there are sins of the flesh, that are committed with the body; and sins of the spirit, spiritual wickednesses; and we must cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of both, for God is to be glorified both with body and soul.

(2.) *The living unto righteousness and holiness*. If we hope God is our Father, we must endeavour to be *partakers of his holiness*, to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We must be still perfecting holiness, and not be contented with sincerity, (which is our gospel-perfection,) without aiming at sinless perfection, though we shall always come short of it while we are in this world; and this we must do in the *fear of God*, which is the root and principle of all religion, and there is no holiness without it. Note, Faith and hope in the promises of God must not destroy our fear of God, *who taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy*.

2. To shew a due regard to the ministers of the gospel; *Receive us*, v. 2. Those who labour in the word and doctrine, should be *had in reputation*, and be *highly esteemed for their work's sake*; and this would be a help to making progress in holiness. If the ministers of the gospel are thought contemptible because of their office, there is danger lest the gospel itself be contemned also. The apostle did not think it any disparagement to court the favour of the Corinthians; and though we must flatter none, yet we must be gentle towards all.

He tells them,

(1.) He had done nothing to forfeit their esteem and good-will, but was cautious not to do any thing to deserve their ill-will; (v. 2.) *"We have wronged no man: we have done you no harm, but always designed you good."* *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*, said he to the elders of Ephesus, Acts 20. 33. *"We have corrupted no man, by false doctrines or flattering speeches. We have defrauded no man: we have not sought ourselves, or to promote our own secular interests by crafty and greedy measures, to the damage of any persons."* This is an appeal like that of Samuel, 1 Sam. 12. Note, *Then* may ministers the more confidently expect esteem and favour from the people, when they can safely appeal to them, that they are guilty of nothing that deserves disesteem or displeasure.

(2.) He did not herein reflect upon them for want

of affection to him, *v. 3, 4.* So tenderly and cautiously did the apostle deal with the Corinthians, among whom there were some who would be glad of any occasion to reproach him, and prejudice the minds of others against him. To prevent any insinuations against him on account of what he had said, as if he intended to charge them with wronging him, or unjust accusations of him for having wronged them, he assures them again of his great affection to them, inasmuch that he could spend his last breath at Corinth, and *live and die with them*, if his business with other churches, and his work as an apostle, (which was not to be confined to one place only,) would permit him to do so. And he adds, it was his great affection to them, that made him use such *boldness* or freedom of speech toward them, and caused him to *glory*, or make his boasts of them, in all places, and upon all occasions, being *filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in all their tribulations*.

5. For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. 6. Nevertheless God, that comforted those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7. And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. 8. For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season. 9. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry, after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 11. For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

There seems to be a connexion between *ch. 2. 13.* (where the apostle said he had *no rest in his spirit* when he found not Titus at Troas) and the fifth verse of this chapter: and so great was his affection to the Corinthians, and his concern about their behaviour in relation to the incestuous person, that, in his further travels, he still had no rest till he heard from them. And now he tells them,

I. *How he was distressed, v. 5.* He was troubled when he did not meet with Titus at Troas, and afterward when for some time he did not meet with him in Macedonia: this was a grief to him, because he could not hear what reception he met with at Corinth, or how their affairs went forward. And beside this, they met with other troubles, with incessant storms of persecutions; there were *fightings without*, or continual contentions with, and opposi-

tion from, Jews and Gentiles; and there were *fears within*, and great concern for such as had embraced the Christian faith, lest they should be corrupted or seduced, and give scandal to others, or be scandalized.

II. *How he was comforted, v. 6, 7.* Where observe, 1. The very coming of Titus was some comfort to him. It was matter of joy to see him, whom he long desired and expected to meet with. The very coming of Titus, and his company, who was dear to him as his *own son in the common faith*, (Tit. 1. 4.) was a great comfort to the apostle in his travels and troubles. But, 2. The good news which Titus brought concerning the Corinthians, was matter of greater consolation. He found Titus to be *comforted in them*; and this filled the apostle with comfort, especially when he acquainted him with their *earnest desire* to give good satisfaction in the things about which the apostle had written to them; and of their *mourning* for the scandal that was found among them; and the great grief they had caused to others; and their *fervent mind* or great affection toward the apostle, who had dealt so faithfully with them in reproving their faults. So true is the observation of Solomon, (Prov. 28. 23.) *He that rebuketh a man, afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue.* 3. He ascribes all his comfort to God as the Author. It was God who comforted him by the coming of Titus, even the God of all comfort; *God, who comforteth them that are cast down, v. 6.* Note, We should look above and beyond all means and instruments, unto God, as the Author of all the consolation and the good that we enjoy.

III. How greatly he was rejoiced at their repentance, and the evidences thereof. The apostle was sorry that he had grieved them, that some pious persons among them laid to heart very greatly what he said in his former epistle, or that it was needful he should make *them* sorry, whom he had rather have made glad, *v. 8.* But now he rejoiced, when he found they had *sorrowed to repentance, v. 9.* Their sorrow in itself was not the cause of his rejoicing; but the nature of it, and the effect of it, (*repentance unto salvation, v. 10.*) made him rejoice; for now it appeared that they had received damage by him in nothing; their sorrow was *but for a season*; it was turned into joy, and that joy was durable. Observe here,

1. The antecedent of true repentance is *godly sorrow*, that *worketh* repentance. It is not repentance itself, but it is a good preparation to repentance, and in some sense the *cause* that produces repentance. The offender had great sorrow, he was in danger of being *swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*; and the society was greatly sorrowful, which before was *puffed up*: and this sorrow of their's was after a *godly manner*, or according to God; (as it is in the original;) it was according to the will of God, tending to the glory of God, and wrought by the Spirit of God. It was a godly sorrow, because a sorrow for sin, as an offence against God, an instance of ingratitude, and a forfeiture of God's favour. There is a great difference between this sorrow of a godly sort, and the *sorrow of this world*. Godly sorrow produces repentance and reformation, and will end in salvation; but worldly sorrow *worketh death*. The sorrows of worldly men for worldly things, will bring down grey hairs the sooner to the grave; and such a sorrow even for sin as Judas had, will have fatal consequences, as his had, which wrought death. Note, (1.) Repentance will be attended with salvation. Therefore, (2.) True penitents will never repent that they have repented, or of any thing that was conducive thereto. (3.) Humiliation and godly sorrow are previously necessary in order to repentance, and both of them are from God, the Giver of all grace.

2. The happy fruits and consequences of true repentance are mentioned; (v. 11.) and those *fruits that are meet for repentance*, are the best evidences of it; where the heart is changed, the life and actions will be changed too. The Corinthians made it evident that their sorrow was a *godly sorrow*, and such as *wrought repentance*, because it wrought in them great *carefulness* about their souls, and to avoid sin, and please God; it wrought also a *clearing of themselves*, not by insisting upon their own justification before God, especially while they persisted in their sin, but by endeavours to put away the accursed thing, and so free themselves from the just imputation of approving the evil that had been done. It wrought *indignation* at sin, at themselves, at the tempter and his instruments; it wrought *fear*, a fear of reverence, a fear of watchfulness, and a fear of distrust; not a distrust of God, but of themselves; an awful fear of God, a cautious fear of sin, and a jealous fear of themselves. It wrought *vehement desire* after a thorough reformation of what had been amiss, and of reconciliation with God whom they had offended. It wrought *zeal*, a mixture of love and anger, a zeal for duty, and against sin. It wrought, lastly, *revenge* against sin and their own folly, by endeavours to make all due satisfaction for injuries that might be done thereby. And thus in *all things* had they *approved themselves to be clear in that matter*. Not that they were innocent, but that they were penitent, and therefore clear of guilt before God, who would pardon and not punish them; and they ought no longer to be reproved, much less to be reproached, by men, for what they had truly repented of.

12. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

13. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. 14. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth. 15. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, while he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. 16. I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in *all things*.

In these verses the apostle endeavours to comfort the Corinthians, upon whom his admonitions had had so good an effect. And in order thereto,

1. He tells them, he had a good design in his former epistle, which might be thought severe, v. 12. It was not chiefly *for his cause that did the wrong*, not only for his benefit, much less merely that he should be punished; nor yet was it only *for his cause that suffered wrong*, namely, the injured father, and that he might have what satisfaction could be given him; but it was also to manifest his great and sincere concern and *care for them*, the whole church, lest that should suffer by letting such a crime, and the scandal thereof, remain among them without due remark and resentment.

2. He acquaints them with the joy of Titus as well as of himself, upon the account of their repent-

ance and good behaviour. Titus was rejoiced, and his *spirit refreshed*, with their comfort, and this comforted and rejoiced the apostle also; (v. 13.) and as Titus was comforted while he was with them, so when he remembered his reception among them, expressing their *obedience* to the apostolical directions, and their *fear and trembling* at the reproofs that were given them, the thoughts of these things inflamed and increased his affections to them, v. 15. Note, Great comfort and joy follow upon godly sorrow. As sin occasions general grief, so repentance and reformation occasion general joy. Paul was glad, and Titus was glad, and the Corinthians were comforted, and the *penitent* ought to be comforted; and well may all this joy be on *earth*, when there is joy in *heaven* over one sinner that repenteth.

3. He concludes this whole matter with expressing the entire confidence he had in them; *He was not ashamed of his boasting concerning them to Titus*: (v. 14.) for he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning them, which he signified to Titus; and he could now with great joy declare what confidence he still had in them as to *all things*, that he did not doubt of their good behaviour for the time to come. Note, It is a great comfort and joy to a faithful minister, to have to do with a people whom he can confide in, and whom he has reason to hope will comply with every thing he proposes to them, that is for the glory of God, the credit of the gospel, and their advantage.

CHAP. VIII.

In this and the following chapter, Paul is exhorting and directing the Corinthians about a particular work of charity—to relieve the necessities of the poor saints at Jerusalem and in Judea, according to the good example of the churches in Macedonia, Rom. 15. 26. The Christians at Jerusalem, through war, famine, and persecution, were grown poor, many of them fallen into decay, and perhaps most of them were but poor when they first embraced Christianity; for Christ said, The poor receive the gospel. Now Paul, though he was the apostle of the Gentiles, had a tender regard, and kind concern, for those among the Jews, who were converted to the Christian faith; and though many of them had not so much affection to the Gentile converts as they ought to have, yet the apostle would have the Gentiles to be kind to them, and stirred them up to contribute liberally for their relief. Upon this subject he is very large and copious, and writes very affectingly. In this eighth chapter he acquaints the Corinthians with, and commends, the good example of the Macedonians in this work of charity, and that Titus was sent to Corinth to collect their bounty, v. 1. . 6. He then proceeds to urge this duty with several cogent arguments, (v. 7. . 15.) and commends the persons who were employed in this affair, v. 16. . 24.

1. **M**OREOVER, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2. How that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3. For to *their power*, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their power*, *they were* willing of themselves; 4. Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5. And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 6. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

Observe here,

I. The apostle takes occasion from the good example of the churches of Macedonia, that is, of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and others in the region of Macedonia, to exhort the Corinthians and the Christians in Achaia to the good work of charity. And,

1. He acquaints them with their great liberality, which he calls the *grace of God bestowed on the churches*, v. 1. Some think the words should be rendered, the *gift of God* given in or by the churches. He certainly means the charitable gifts of these churches, which are called the *grace or gifts of God* either because they were very large, or rather because their charity to the poor saints did proceed from God as the Author, and was accompanied with true love to God, which also was manifested this way. The *grace of God* must be owned as the root and fountain of all the good that is in us, or done by us at any time; and it is great grace and favour from God and *bestowed on us*, if we are made useful to others, and are forward to any good work.

2. He commends the charity of the Macedonians, and sets it forth with good advantage. He tells them,

(1.) They were but in a low condition, and themselves in distress, yet they contributed to the relief of others. *They were in great tribulation and deep poverty*, v. 2. It was a time of great affliction with them, as may be seen, Acts 16. and 17. The Christians in these parts met with ill treatment, which had reduced them to *deep poverty*; yet, as they had *abundance of joy* in the midst of tribulation, they abounded in their liberality; they gave out of a little, trusting in God to provide for them, and make it up to them.

(2.) They gave very largely, with *the riches of liberality*, (v. 2.) that is, as liberally as if they had been rich. It was a large contribution they made, all things considered; it was *according to, yea beyond, their power*, (v. 3.) as much, if not more than could well be expected from them. Note, Though men may condemn the indiscretion, yet God will accept the pious zeal of those, who in real works of piety and charity do rather beyond their power.

(3.) They were very ready and forward to this good work. *They were willing of themselves*, (v. 3.) and were so far from needing that Paul should urge and press them with many arguments, that they *frayed him with much entreaty to receive the gift*, v. 4. It seems Paul was backward to undertake this trust, for *he would give himself to the word and prayer*; or, it may be, he was apprehensive how ready his enemies would be to reproach and blacken him upon all occasions, and might take a handle against him upon account of so large a sum deposited in his hands, to suspect or accuse him of indiscretion and partiality in the distribution, if not of some injustice. Note, How cautious ministers should be, especially in money-matters, not to give occasion to them who seek occasion to speak reproachfully!

(4.) Their charity was founded in true piety, and this was the great commendation of it: they performed this good work in a right method; *first they gave themselves to the Lord, and then they gave unto us* their contributions, *by the will of God*, (v. 5.) that is, according as it was the will of God they should do, or to be disposed of as the will of God should be, and for his glory. This, it seems, exceeded the expectation of the apostle; it was more than he *hoped* for, to see such warm and pious affection shining in these Macedonians, and this good work performed with so much devotion and solemnity. They solemnly, jointly, and unanimously, made a fresh surrender of themselves, and all they had, unto the Lord Jesus Christ. They had done this before, and now they do it again upon this occasion; sanctifying their contributions to do

God honour, by first giving themselves to the Lord. Note, [1.] We should give ourselves to God; we cannot bestow ourselves better. [2.] When we give ourselves to the Lord, we then give him all we have, to be called for and disposed of according to his will. [3.] Whatever we use or lay out for God, it is only giving to him what is his own. [4.] All we give or bestow for charitable uses, will not be accepted of God, or turn to our advantage, unless we first give ourselves to the Lord.

II. The apostle tells them that Titus was desired to go and make a collection among them; (v. 6.) and Titus, he knew, would be an acceptable person to them. He had met with a kind reception among them formerly; they had shewn good affection to him, and he had a great love for them. Besides, Titus had already *begun* this work among them, therefore he was desired to *finish* it. So that he was, on all accounts, a proper person to be employed; and when so good a work had already prospered in so good a hand, it would be pity if it should not proceed and be finished. Note, It is an instance of wisdom, to use proper instruments in a work we desire to do well; and the work of charity will often succeed the best, when the most proper persons are employed to ask for it, and dispose of it.

7. Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

8. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. 9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. 10. And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. 11. Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have. 12. For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. 13. For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and you burthened: 14. But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be* a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want; that there may be equality: 15. As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

In these verses the apostle uses several cogent arguments to stir up the Corinthians to this good work of charity.

I. He urges upon them the consideration of their eminence in other gifts and graces, and would have them excel in this of charity also, v. 7. Great address and much holy art are here used by the apostle, when he would persuade the Corinthians to *this* good thing. He commends them for *other* good things that were found in them. Most people love to be accosted kindly, especially when we ask a gift of them for ourselves, or others; and it is a justice

we owe to those in whom God's grace shines, to give them their due commendation. Observe here, what it was that the Corinthians abounded in. *Faith* is mentioned first, for that is the root; and as *without faith it is impossible to please God*, (Heb. 11. 6.) so they who do abound in faith, will abound in other graces and good works also; and this will work and shew itself *by love*. To their faith was added *utterance*, which is an excellent gift, and redounds much to the glory of God, and the good of the church. Many have faith, who want utterance. But these Corinthians excelled most churches in spiritual gifts, and particularly in utterance; and yet this was not in them, as in too many, both the effect and evidence of ignorance; for with their utterance there appeared *knowledge*, abundance of knowledge. They had a treasury of things new and old, and in their utterance they brought out of this treasury. They abounded also in *all diligence*. Often, those who have great knowledge and ready utterance are not the most diligent Christians. Great talkers are not always the best doers; but these Corinthians were diligent to do, as well as know, and talk well. And further, they had abundant *love to their ministers*; and were not like too many, who, having gifts of their own, are but too apt to slight their ministers, and neglect them. Now to all these good things the apostle desires them to add *this grace* also; to abound in charity to the poor; that, where so much good was found, there should be found yet more good.

Before the apostle proceeds to another argument, he takes care to prevent any misapprehensions of his design to impose on them, or to bind heavy burthens upon them by his authority; and tells them, (v. 8.) he did not speak *by commandment*, or in a way of authority; I give *my advice*, v. 10. He took occasion from the *forwardness of others*, to propose what would be *expedient for them*, and would prove the *sincerity of their love*, or be the genuine effect and evidence thereof. Note, A great difference should be made between plain and positive duty, and the improvement of a present opportunity of doing or getting good. Many a thing which is good for us to do, yet cannot be said to be, by express and indispensable commandment, our duty at this or that time.

II. Another argument is taken from the consideration of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The best arguments for Christian duties are those that are taken from the love of Christ, *that constraineth us*. The example of the churches of Macedonia was such as the Corinthians should imitate; but the example of our *Lord Jesus Christ* should have much greater influence. And *ye know*, saith the apostle, *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*; (v. 9.) *that, though he was rich, as being God, equal in power and glory with the Father, rich in all the glory and blessedness of the upper world, yet for your sakes he became poor*; not only did become Man for us, but he became *poor* also. He was born in poor circumstances, lived a poor life, and died in poverty; and this was for our sakes, that *we* thereby might be *made rich*; rich in the love and favour of God; rich in the blessings and promises of the new covenant; rich in the hopes of eternal life, being heirs of the kingdom. This is a good reason why we should be charitable to the poor out of what we have, because we ourselves live upon the charity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Another argument is taken from their good purposes, and their forwardness to begin this good work. As to this he tells them,

1. It was expedient for them to perform what they purposed, and finish *what* they had begun, v. 10, 11. What else did their good purposes and good beginnings signify? Good purposes, indeed, are good

things; they are like buds and blossoms, pleasant to behold, and give hopes of good fruit; but they are lost, and signify nothing, without performances. So good beginnings are amiable; but we shall lose the benefit, unless there be perseverance, and we bring forth *fruit to perfection*. Seeing therefore the Corinthians had shewed a *readiness to will*, he would have them be careful also in the *performance*, according to their ability. For,

2. This would be acceptable to God. *This will of your mind is accepted*, (v. 12.) when accompanied with sincere endeavours. When men purpose that which is good, and endeavour, according to their ability, to perform also, God will accept of what they have, or can do, and not reject them for what they have not, and is not in their power to do: and this is true as to other things, beside the work of charity. But let us note here, that this scripture will by no means justify those who think good meanings are enough, or that good purposes, and the profession of a willing mind, are sufficient to save them. It is accepted, indeed, where there is a performance as far as we are able, and when Providence hinders the performance, as in David's case, concerning building a house for the Lord, 2 Sam. 7.

IV. Another argument is taken from the discrimination which Divine Providence makes, in the distribution of the things of this world, and the mutability of human affairs, v. 13—15. The force of the arguing seems to be this; Providence gives to some more of the good things of this world, and to some less, and that with this design; that those who have a greater *abundance*, *might supply them who are in want*, that there might be room for charity. And further, considering the mutability of human affairs, and how soon there may be an alteration, so that those who now have an abundance may stand in need of being supplied themselves in their wants; this should induce them to be charitable while they are able. It is the will of God, by our mutual supplying one another, that there should be *some sort of equality*; not an *absolute* equality indeed, or such a *levelling* as would destroy property, for in such a case there could be no exercise of charity. But, as in works of charity there should be an equitable proportion observed, that the burthen should not lie too heavy on some, while others are wholly eased; so all should think themselves concerned to supply those who are in want. This is illustrated by the instance of gathering and distributing *mannna* in the wilderness, concerning which (as we may read, Exod. 16.) it was the duty of every family, and all in the family, to gather what they could; which, when it was gathered, was put into some common receptacle for each family, whence the master of the family distributed to every one as he had occasion; to some, more than they were able, through age and infirmity, to gather up; to others, less than they gathered, because they did not need so much; and thus *he that had gathered much*, (more than he had occasion for,) had nothing over, when a communication was made to him *that had gathered little*, who by this method had no lack. Note, Such is the condition of men in this world, that we mutually depend on one another, and should help one another; those who have ever so much of this world, have no more than food and raiment; and those who have but a little of this world, seldom want those; nor, indeed, should those who have abundance suffer others to want, but be ready to afford supply.

16. But thanks *be* to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18. And

we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; 19. And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration* of your ready mind: 20. Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: 21. Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 22. And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you. 23. Whether *any do inquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren *be inquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. 24. Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

In these verses the apostle commends the brethren who were sent to them to collect their charity; and, as it were, gives them letters credential, that, if they *were inquired after*, (v. 23.) if any should be inquisitive or suspicious concerning them, it might be known who they were, and how safely they might be trusted.

1. He commends Titus, (1.) For his *earnest care* and *great concern* of heart for them, and desire in all things to promote their welfare. This is mentioned with thankfulness to God; (v. 16.) and it is cause of thankfulness, if God hath *put into the hearts* of any to do us or others any good. (2.) For his readiness to this present service. He *accepted* of the office, and was *forward* to go upon this good errand, v. 17. Asking of charity for the relief of others, is by many looked upon as a thankless office; yet it is a good office, and what we should not be shy of when we are called to it.

2. He commends *another brother*, who was sent with Titus. It is generally thought that this was Luke. He is commended, (1.) As a man whose *praise was in the gospel through all the churches*, v. 18. His ministerial services of several kinds were well known, and he had approved himself *raise-worthy* in what he had done. (2.) As one chosen of the churches, (v. 19.) and joined with the apostle in his ministration. This was done, it is most likely, at the motion and request of Paul himself; for this reason, *that no man might blame him in that abundance which was administered by him*, v. 20. So cautious was the apostle to avoid all occasions that evil-minded men might lay hold on to blacken him. He would not give occasion to any to accuse him of injustice or partiality in this affair; and thought it to be his duty, as it is the duty of all Christians, *to provide for things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*; to act so prudently as to prevent, as far as we can, all unjust suspicions concerning us, and all occasions of scandalous imputations. Note, We live in a censorious world, and should cut off occasion from them who seek occasion to speak reproachfully. It is the crime of others, if they reproach or censure us without occasion; and it is our imprudence at least, if we give them any occasion, when there may not be a just cause for them so to do.

3. He commends also *another brother* who was joined with the two former in this affair. This brother is thought to be Apollos. Whoever he was, he had *approved himself diligent in many things*; and therefore was fit to be employed in this affair. Moreover, he had a great desire to this work, because of the *confidence* or good opinion he had of the Corinthians; (v. 22.) and it is a great comfort to see *those* employed in good works, who have formerly approved themselves diligent.

4. He concludes this point with a general good character of them all, (v. 23.) as *fellow-labourers* with him for their welfare; as the *messengers of the churches*; as the *glory of Christ*, who were to him for a name and a praise, who brought glory to Christ as instruments, and had obtained honour from Christ to be counted faithful, and employed in his service.

Wherefore, upon the whole, he exhorts them to shew their liberality, answerable to the great expectation others had concerning them at this time; that these messengers of the churches, and the churches themselves, might see a full *proof of their love* to God, and to their afflicted brethren; and that it was with good reason the apostle had even *boasted on their behalf*, v. 24. Note, The good opinion others entertain of us, should be an argument with us to do well.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, the apostle seems to excuse his earnestness in pressing the Corinthians to the duty of charity; (v. 1. .5.) and proceeds to give directions 'about the acceptable way and manner of performing it, that is, bountifully, deliberately, and freely; and gives good encouragement for so doing, v. 6, to the end.

1. **F**OR as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you. 2. For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4. Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. 5. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a *matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness.

In these verses the apostle speaks very respectfully to the Corinthians, and with great skill; and, while he seems to excuse his urging them so earnestly to charity, still presses them thereto, and shews how much his heart was set upon this matter.

1. He tells them it was needless to press them with further arguments to afford relief to their poor brethren, (v. 1.) being satisfied he had said enough already to prevail with *them*, of whom he had so good an opinion. For, (1.) *He knew their forwardness* to every good work, and how they had begun this good work *a year ago*. Inasmuch, that, (2.) He had boasted of *their zeal* to the Macedonians, and this *had provoked many* of them to do as they had done. Wherefore he was persuaded, that, as they had begun well, they would go on well; and so, com-

mending them for what they had done, he lays an obligation on them to proceed and persevere.

2. He seems to apologize for sending Titus and the other brethren to them. He is unwilling they should be offended at him for this, as if he was too earnest, and pressed too hard upon them; and tells the true reasons why he sent them, namely,

(1.) That, having this timely notice, they might be fully *ready*, (v. 3.) and not surprised with hasty demands, when he should come to them. When we would have others to do that which is good, we must act toward them prudently and tenderly, and give them time.

(2.) That he might not be ashamed of his boasting concerning them, if they should be found unready, v. 3, 4. He intimates that some from Macedonia might *haphly come with him*: and if the collection should not then be made, this would make *him*, not to say *them*, ashamed, considering the boasting of the apostle concerning them. Thus careful was he to preserve their reputation and his own. Note, Christians should consult the reputation of their profession, and endeavour to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*.

6. But this *I say*, He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9. (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad: he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:) 11. Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. 12. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13. While by the experiment of this administration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; 14. And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Here we have,

I. Proper directions to be observed about the right and acceptable manner of bestowing charity; and it is of great concernment, that we do *what is required*, so as is commanded. Now, as to the manner in which the apostle would have the Corinthians give, observe,

1. It should be *bountifully*; this was intimated, v. 5. that a liberal contribution was expected, a *matte of bounty*, not what savoured of *covetousness*; and he offers to their consideration, that men who expect a good return at harvest, are not wont to pinch and spare in sowing their seed, for the return usually is proportionable to what they sow, v. 6.

2. It should be *deliberately*; Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, v. 7. Works of charity, like other good works, should be done with thought and design; whereas, some do good only by accident; they comply, it may be hastily, with the importunity of others, without any good design, and give more than they intended, and then repent of it afterward; or possibly, had they duly considered all things, they would have given more. Due deliberation, as to this matter of our own circumstances, and those of them we are about to relieve, will be very helpful to direct us how liberal we should be in our contributions for charitable uses.

3. It should be *freely*, whatever we give, be it more or less: *not grudgingly, or of necessity*, but cheerfully, v. 7. Persons sometimes will give merely to satisfy the importunity of those who ask their charity, and what they give is in a manner squeezed or forced from them, and this unwillingness spoils all they do. We ought to give more freely than the modesty of some necessitous persons will allow them to ask: we should not only deal *of* bread, but *draw out our souls* to the hungry, Isa. 60. 10. We should give liberally, with an *open hand*, and cheerfully, with an *open countenance*; being glad we have ability, and an opportunity, to be charitable.

II. Good encouragement to perform this work of charity in the manner thus directed to. Here the apostle tells the Corinthians,

1. They themselves would be *no losers* by what they gave in charity. This may serve to obviate a secret objection in the minds of many against this good work, who are ready to think they may want what they give away: but such should consider that what is given to the poor in a right manner, is far from being lost; as the precious seed, which is cast into the ground, is not lost, though it is buried there for a time; for it will spring up, and bear fruit; the sower shall receive it again with increase, v. 6. Such good returns may they expect, who give freely and liberally in charity. For,

(1.) God loveth a cheerful giver; (v. 7.) and what may not *they* hope to receive, who are the objects of the divine love? Can a man be a loser by doing that with which God is pleased? May not such a one be sure that he shall some way or other be a gainer? Nay, are not the love and favour of God better than all other things, *better than life itself*?

(2.) God is able to make our charity redound to our advantage, v. 8. We have no reason to distrust the *goodness* of God, and surely we have no reason to question his *power*; he is able to *make all grace abound* towards us, and to abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and temporal good things. He can make us to have a *sufficiency* in all things; to be content with what we have; to make up what we give; to make us able to give yet more: as it is written, (Ps. 112. 9.) concerning the charitable man, *He hath dispersed abroad. He hath given to the poor. His righteousness, that is, his almsgiving, endureth for ever.* The honour of it is lasting, the reward of it eternal, and he is still able to live comfortably himself, and to give liberally to others.

(3.) The apostle puts up a prayer to God in their behalf, that they might be gainers, and not losers, v. 10, 11. Where observe, [1.] *To whom* the prayer is made, to God, *who ministereth seed to the sower*, who by his providence giveth such an increase of the fruits of the earth, that we have not only bread sufficient to eat for one year, but enough to sow again for a future supply: or thus, It is God who giveth us not only a competency for ourselves, but that also wherewith we may supply the wants of others, and so should be as seed to be sown. [2.] *For what* he prayeth; there are several things which he desires for them, namely, that they may have *bread for their food*; always a good competency for themselves,

food convenient; that God would *multiply their seed*, so that they might still be able to do more good; and that there might be an *increase of the fruits of righteousness*, that they might reap plentifully, and have the best and most ample returns of their charity; so as to be *enriched in every thing to all bountifulness*, (v. 11.) that upon the whole they may find it true that they shall be no losers, but great gainers. Note, Works of charity are so far from impoverishing us, that they are the proper means truly to enrich us, or make us truly rich.

2. The poor distressed saints would be *gainers*, and they would be no losers: for this service would *supply their wants*, v. 12. If we have reason to think them to be *saints*, whom we believe to be of the *household of faith*, whose wants are great; how ready should we be to do them good! Our goodness cannot extend unto God, but we should freely extend it to these *excellent ones of the earth*, and thus shew that we delight in them.

3. This would redound to the praise and glory of God. Many thanksgivings would be given to God on this account, by the apostle, and by them who were employed in this ministration, v. 11. These would bless God, who made them happy instruments in so good a work, and made them successful in it. Beside these, *others* also would be thankful; the poor, who were supplied in their wants, would not fail to be very thankful to God, and bless God for them; and all who wished well to the gospel would *glorify God for this experiment*, or proof of *subjection to the gospel of Christ*, and true love to all men, v. 13.

Note, (1.) True Christianity is a subjection to the gospel, a yielding ourselves to the commanding influence of its truths and laws.

(2.) We must evidence the sincerity of our subjection to the gospel, by works of charity.

(3.) This will be for the credit of our profession, and to the praise and glory of God.

(4.) Those whose wants were supplied, would make the best returns they were able, by sending up many prayers to God for those who had relieved them, v. 14. And thus should we recompense the kindnesses we receive, when we are not in a capacity of recompensing them any other way; and as this is the only recompense the poor can make, so it is often greatly for the advantage of the rich.

Lastly, The apostle concludes this whole matter with this doxology, *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift*, v. 15. Some think, by this unspeakable gift he means the gift of grace bestowed on the churches, in making them able and willing to supply the necessities of the saints, which would be attended with unspeakable benefit both to the givers and receivers. It should seem rather, that he means *Jesus Christ*, who is indeed the *unspeakable Gift of God* unto this world; a gift we have all reason to be very thankful for.

CHAP. X.

There was no place in which the apostle Paul met with more opposition from false apostles than at Corinth; he had many enemies there. Let not any of the ministers of Christ think strange, if they meet with perils, not only from enemies, but from false brethren; for blessed Paul himself did so. Though he was so blameless and inoffensive in all his carriage, so condescending and useful to all, yet there were those who bore him ill-will, who envied him, and did all they could to undermine him, and lessen his interest and reputation. Therefore he vindicates himself from their imputations, and arms the Corinthians against their insinuations. In this chapter, the apostle, in a mild and humble manner, asserts the power of his preaching, and to punish offenders, v. 1. 6. He then proceeds to reason the case with the Corinthians, asserting his relation to Christ, and his authority as an apostle of Christ; (v. 7. 11.) and refuses to justify himself, or to act by such rules, as the false teachers did, but according to the better rules he had fixed for himself, v. 12, to the end.

1. NOW I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: 2. But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds:) 5. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ: 6. And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Here we may observe,

1. The mild and humble manner in which the blessed apostle addresses the Corinthians, and how desirous he is that no occasion might be given him to use severity.

1. He addresses himself in a very mild and humble manner; *I Paul myself beseech you*, v. 1. We find, in the introduction to this epistle, he joined Timothy with himself; but now he speaks only for himself, against whom the false apostles had particularly levelled their reproaches; yet in the midst of the greatest provocations he shewed humility and mildness, from the consideration of the *meekness and gentleness of Christ*, and desires this great example might have the same influence on the Corinthians. Note, When we find ourselves tempted or inclined to be rough and severe towards any body, we should think of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that appeared in him in the days of his flesh, in the design of his undertaking, and in all the acts of his grace toward poor souls. How humbly also does this great apostle speak of himself, as *one in presence base among them*! So his enemies spake of him with contempt, and this he seems to acknowledge; while others thought meanly, and spake scornfully of him, he had low thoughts of himself, and spake humbly of himself. Note, We should be sensible of our own infirmities, and think humbly of ourselves, even when men reproach us for them.

2. He is desirous that no occasion might be given to use severity, v. 2. *He beseeches them* to give no occasion for him to be bold, or to exercise his authority against them in general, as he had resolved to do against some who unjustly charged him as *walking according to the flesh*, that is, regulating his conduct, even in his ministerial actions, according to carnal policy, or with worldly views. This was what the apostle had renounced, and this is contrary to the spirit and design of the gospel, and was far from being the aim and design of the apostle. Hereupon,

II. He asserts the power of his preaching, and to punish offenders.

1. The power of his preaching, v. 3—5. Where observe, (1.) The work of the ministry is a warfare, not *after the flesh* indeed, for it is a spiritual warfare with spiritual enemies, and for spiritual purposes. And though ministers *walk in the flesh*, or live in the body, and in the common affairs of life act (as other men, yet in their work and warfare they must not go by the maxims of the flesh, nor should they design to please the flesh: that must be crucified with its affections and lusts; it must be mortified and kept

under. (2.) The doctrines of the gospel and discipline of the church are the *weapons* of this warfare; and these are not *carnal*: outward force, therefore, is not the method of the gospel, but strong persuasions, by the power of truth, and the meekness of wisdom. A good argument this is against persecution for conscience-sake: conscience is accountable to God only; and people must be *persuaded* to God and their duty, not *driven* by force of arms. And so the weapons of our warfare *are mighty*, or very powerful; the evidence of truth is convincing and cogent; this indeed is *through God*, or owing to him, because they are his institutions, and accompanied with his blessing, which makes all opposition to fall before his victorious gospel. Where we may observe, [1.] What opposition is made against the gospel, by the powers of sin and Satan in the hearts of men: ignorance, prejudices, beloved lusts, are Satan's *strong-holds* in the souls of some; vain imaginations, carnal reasonings, and high thoughts, or proud conceits, in others, *exalt themselves against the knowledge of God*: by these ways the Devil endeavours to keep men from faith and obedience to the gospel, and secures his possession of the hearts of men, as his own house or property. But then observe, [2.] The conquest which the word of God gains. These strong-holds are *pulled down* by the gospel as the means, through the grace and power of God accompanying it as the principal efficient cause. Note, The conversion of the soul is the conquest of Satan in that soul.

2. The apostle's power to *punish offenders* (and that in an extraordinary manner) is asserted in v. 6. The apostle was a prime-minister in the kingdom of Christ, and chief officer in his army, and *had in readiness*, he had power and authority at hand, to *revenge all disobedience*, to punish offenders in a most exemplary and extraordinary manner. The apostle speaks not of *personal* revenge, but of punishing disobedience to the gospel, and disorderly walking among church-members, by inflicting church-censures. Note, Though the apostle shewed meekness and gentleness, yet he would not betray his authority; and therefore intimates, that when he would commend them whose obedience was *fulfilled* or manifested, others would fall under severe censures.

7. Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are we* Christ's. 8. For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: 9. That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. 10. For *his* letters, say they, *are weighty and powerful*; but *his* bodily presence is weak, and *his* speech contemptible. 11. Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.

In these verses the apostle proceeds to reason the case with the Corinthians, in opposition to those who despised him, judged him, and spake hardly of him. "Do ye," says he, "*look on things after the outward appearance?*" v. 7. Is this a fit measure or rule to make an estimate of things or persons by, and to judge between me and my adversaries?" In outward appearance, Paul was mean and despicable with some; he did not make a figure, as perhaps some of his competitors might do: but this was a

false rule to make a judgment by. It should seem, that some boasted mighty things of themselves, and made a fair shew; but there are often false appearances: a man may seem to be learned, who has not learned Christ, and appear virtuous, who has not a principle of grace in his heart. However, the apostle asserts two things of himself:

1. His *relation* to Christ; *If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's*, v. 7. It should seem by this, that Paul's adversaries boasted of their relation to Christ, as his ministers and servants. Now the apostle reasons thus with the Corinthians; "Suppose it to be so, allowing what they say to be true, (and let us observe, that in fair arguing, we should allow all that may be reasonably granted; and should not think it impossible but those who differ from us very much, may yet belong to Christ, as well as we,) allowing them," might the apostle say, "what they boast of, yet they ought also to allow this to us, that *we also are Christ's*." Note, (1.) We must not, by the most charitable allowances we make to others who differ from us, cut ourselves off from Christ, or deny our relation to him. For, (2.) There is room in Christ for many; and those who differ much from one another, may yet be *one* in him. It would help to heal the differences that are among Christians, if they would remember, that how confident soever we may be that we belong to Christ, yet, at the same time, we must allow that they who differ from us, may belong to Christ too, and therefore should be treated accordingly. We must not think that we are *the people*, and that none belong to Christ but *we*. This we may plead for ourselves, against those who judge us and despise us, that, how weak soever we are, yet, as they are Christ's, so are we: we profess the *same faith*, we walk by the *same rule*, we build upon the *same foundation*, and hope for the *same inheritance*.

2. His *authority* from Christ as an apostle. This he had mentioned before; (v. 6.) and now he tells them that he might speak of it again, and that with some sort of *boasting*, seeing it was a truth, that the *Lord had given it to him*, and it *was more* than his adversaries could justly pretend to. It was certainly what he should *not be ashamed of*, v. 8. Concerning which observe,

(1.) The nature of his authority; it was for *edification*, and not for *destruction*. This indeed is the end of all authority, civil and ecclesiastical, and was the end of that extraordinary authority which the apostles had, and of all church-discipline.

(2.) The caution with which he speaks of his authority, professing his design was not to *terrify* them with big words, nor by angry *letters*, v. 9. Thus he seems to obviate an objection that might have been formed against him, v. 10. But the apostle declares he did not intend to frighten them who were obedient, nor did he write any thing in his letters, that he was not able to make good by deeds, against the disobedient; and he would have his adversaries *know this*, (v. 11.) that he would, by the exercise of his apostolical power committed to him, make it appear to have a real efficacy.

12. For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. 13. But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. 14. For we stretch not

ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ: 15. Not boasting of things without *our measure*, *that is*, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, 16. To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. 17. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 18. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

In these verses, observe,

1. The apostle refuses to justify himself, or to act by such rules as the false apostles did, v. 12. He plainly intimates that they took a wrong method to commend themselves, in *measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves*, which was *not wise*. They were pleased, and did pride themselves, in their own attainments, and never considered those who far exceeded them in gifts and graces, in power and authority; and this made them haughty and insolent. Note, If we would compare ourselves with others who excel us, this would be a good method to keep us humble; we should be pleased and thankful for what we have of gifts or graces, but never pride ourselves therein, as if there were none to be compared with us, or that do excel us. The apostle would not be of the number of such vain men: let us resolve that we will not make ourselves of that number.

2. He fixes a better rule for his conduct; namely, *not to boast of things without his measure*, which was the measure *God had distributed* to him, v. 13. His meaning is, either that he would not boast of more gifts or graces, or power and authority, than God had really bestowed on him; or rather, that he would not act beyond his commission as to persons or things, nor go beyond the line prescribed to him; which he plainly intimates the false apostles did, while they *boasted of other men's labours*. The apostle's resolution was, to keep within his own province, and that compass of ground which God had marked out for him. His commission as an apostle was to preach the gospel *every where*, especially among the Gentiles, and he was not confined to one place; yet he observed the directions of Providence, and the Holy Spirit, as to the particular places whither he went, or where he did abide.

3. He acted according to this rule; *We stretch not ourselves beyond our measure*, v. 14. And particularly he acted according to this rule in preaching at Corinth, and in the exercise of his apostolical authority there; for he came thither by divine direction, and there he converted many to Christianity; and therefore, in *boasting* of them as his charge, he acted not contrary to his rule, he boasted not of *other men's labours*, v. 15.

4. He declares his success in observing this rule. His hope was, that their *faith was increased*, and that others *beyond them*, even in the remoter parts of Achaia, would embrace the gospel also; and in all this he exceeded not his commission, nor acted in *another man's line*.

5. He seems to check himself in this matter, as if he had spoken too much in his own praise. The unjust accusations and reflections of his enemies had made it needful he should justify himself; and the wrong methods they took, gave him good occasion

to mention the better rule he had observed: yet he is afraid of boasting, or taking any praise to himself, and therefore he mentions two things which ought to be regarded:

(1.) *He that glorieth, should glory in the Lord*, v. 17. If we are able to fix good rules for our conduct, or act by them, or have any good success in so doing, the praise and glory of all are owing unto God. Ministers in particular must be careful not to glory in their performance, but must give God the glory of their work, and the success thereof.

(2.) *Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*, v. 18. Of all flattery, self-flattery is the worst; and self-applause is seldom any better than self-flattery and self-deceit: at the best, self-commendation is no praise; it is oftentimes as foolish and vain as it is proud: therefore, instead of praising or commending ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves to God, and his approbation will be our best commendation.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter the apostle goes on with his discourse, in opposition to the false apostles, who were very industrious to lessen his interest and reputation among the Corinthians, and had prevailed too much by their insinuations. I. He apologises for going about to commend himself, and gives the reason for what he did, v. 1. . . 4. II. He mentions, in his own necessary vindication, his equality with the other apostles, and with the false apostles in this particular, of preaching the gospel to the Corinthians freely, without wages, v. 5. . . 15. III. He makes another preface to what he was about further to say in his own justification, v. 16. . . 21. And, IV. He gives a large account of his qualifications, labours, and sufferings, in which he exceeded the false apostles, v. 22, to the end.

1. **W**OULD to God ye could bear with me a little in *my folly*: and indeed bear with me. 2. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ. 3. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another Spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

Here we may observe,

1. The apology the apostle makes for going about to commend himself. He is loath to enter upon this subject of self-commendation; *Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly*, v. 1. He calls this *folly*, because too often it is really no better; in his case it was necessary; yet, seeing others might apprehend it to be folly in him, he desires them to bear with it. Note, As much against the grain as it is with a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much is it against the grain with a humble man to speak in his own praise. It is no pleasure to a good man to speak well of himself, yet in some cases it is lawful, when it is for the advantage of others, or for our own necessary vindication; as thus it was here. For,

2. We have the reasons for what the apostle did; namely,

(1.) To preserve the Corinthians from being corrupted by the insinuations of the false apostles, v. 2, 3. He tells them, *he was jealous over them with godly jealousy*; he was afraid lest their faith should

be weakened by hearkening to such suggestions as tended to lessen their regard to his ministry, by which they were brought to the Christian faith. He had *espoused them* to one husband, converted them to Christianity; (and the conversion of a soul is its marriage to the Lord Jesus;) and he was desirous to *present them as a chaste virgin*, pure and spotless, and faithful, not having *their minds corrupted* with false doctrines, by false teachers; so as *live was beguiled by the subtlety of the serpent*. This godly jealousy in the apostle was a mixture of love and fear; and faithful ministers cannot but be afraid and concerned for their people, lest they should lose that which they have received, and turn from what they have embraced, especially when *deceivers are gone abroad*, or have *crept in among them*.

(2.) To vindicate himself against the false apostles; forasmuch as they could not pretend they had another Jesus, or another Spirit, or another gospel to preach to them, v. 4. If this had been the case, there would have been some colour of reason to *bear with them*, or to *hearken to them*. But seeing there is but *one Jesus, one Spirit, and one gospel*, that is, or at least that ought to be, preached to them, and received by them; what reason could there be why the Corinthians should be prejudiced against him who first converted them to the faith, by the artifices of any adversary? It was a just occasion of jealousy, that such persons designed to preach *another Jesus, another Spirit, and another gospel*.

5. For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. 6. But though *I be rude in speech*, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. 7. Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? 8. I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. 9. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burthensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. 10. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11. Wherefore? Because I love you not? God knoweth. 12. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them who desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. 13. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

After the foregoing preface to what he was about to say, the apostle in these verses mentions,

1. His equality with the *other apostles*—that he *was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apos-*

les, v. 5. This he expresses very modestly; *I suppose so*; he might have spoken very positively. The *apostleship*, as an office, was equal in all the apostles; but the *apostles*, like other Christians, differed one from another. These *stars differed one from another in glory*, and Paul was indeed of the first magnitude; yet he speaks modestly of himself, and humbly owns his personal infirmity, that he was *rude in speech*, had not such a graceful delivery as some others might have. Some think that he was a man of a very low stature, and that his voice was proportionably small; others think that he might have had some impediment in his speech, perhaps a stammering tongue. However, he was not *rude in knowledge*; he was not unacquainted with the best rules of oratory and art of persuasion, much less was he ignorant of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as had been *thoroughly manifested among them*.

2. His equality with the *false apostles* in this particular—the preaching the gospel unto them freely, without wages. This the apostle largely insists on, and shews that as they could not but own him to be a minister of Christ, so they ought to acknowledge he had been a good friend to them. For,

(1.) He had preached the gospel to them freely, v. 7—10. He had proved at large, in his former epistle to them, the lawfulness of ministers receiving maintenance from the people, and the duty of the people to give them an honourable maintenance; and here he says he himself had *taken wages of other churches*, (v. 8.) so that he had a right to have asked and received from them: yet he waived his right, and chose rather to *abase himself*, by working with his hands in the trade of tent-making to maintain himself, than be *burthensome to them*, that they might be *exalted*, or encouraged to receive the gospel, which they had so cheap; yea, he chose rather to be supplied from Macedonia than to be chargeable unto them.

(2.) He informs them of the reason of this his conduct among them. And *negatively*, it was not because he *did not love them*, (v. 11.) or was unwilling to receive tokens of their love; for love and friendship are manifested by mutual giving and receiving. But *positively*, it was to avoid offence, that he *might cut off occasion from them that desired occasion*. He would not give occasion for any to accuse him of worldly designs in preaching the gospel, or that he intended to make a trade of it, to enrich himself; and that others who opposed him at Corinth, might not in this respect gain an advantage against him: that wherein they *gloried*, as to this matter, they *might be found even as he*, v. 12. It is not improbable to suppose that the chief of the false teachers at Corinth, or some among them, were rich, and taught (or deceived) the people freely, and might accuse the apostle or his fellow-labourers as mercenary men, who received hire or wages, and therefore the apostle kept to his resolution not to be chargeable to any of the Corinthians.

3. The false apostles are charged as *deceitful workers*; (v. 13.) and that upon this account, because they would *transform themselves* into the likeness of the apostles of Christ, and though they were the *ministers of Satan*, would seem to be the *ministers of righteousness*. They would be as industrious and as generous in promoting error as the apostles were in preaching truth; they would endeavour as much to undermine the kingdom of Christ as the apostle did to establish it. There were counterfeit *prophets* under the Old Testament, who wore the garb, and learned the language, of the prophets of the Lord. So there were counterfeit *apostles* under the New Testament, who seemed in many respects like the true apostles of Christ. And *no marvel*; (says the apostle;) hypocrisy is a thing not to be

much wondered at in this world, especially when we consider the great influence Satan has upon the minds of many, who *rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience*. As he can turn himself into any shape, and put on almost any form, and look sometimes like an angel of light, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness, so he will teach his ministers and instruments to do the same. But it follows, *Their end is according to their works*; (v. 15.) the end will discover them to be *deceitful workers*, and their work will end in ruin and destruction.

16. I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. 17. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. 18. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. 19. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. 20. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. 21. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

Here we have a further excuse, that the apostle makes for what he was about to say in his own vindication.

1. He would not have them think he was guilty of folly, in saying what he said to vindicate himself; *Let no man think me a fool*, v. 16. Ordinarily indeed, it is unbecoming a wise man to be much and often speaking in his own praise; boasting of ourselves is usually not only a sign of a proud mind, but a mark of folly also; however, says the apostle, yet *as a fool receive me*; if ye do count it folly in me to *boast a little*, yet give due regard to what I shall say.

2. He mentions a caution, to prevent the abuse of what he should say, telling them that what he spake, *he did not speak after the Lord*, v. 17. He would not have them think that boasting of ourselves, or glorying in what we have, is a thing commanded by the Lord in general unto Christians, nor yet that this is always necessary in our own vindication; though it may be lawfully used, but not *contrary* to the Lord, when, strictly speaking, it is not *after the Lord*. It is the duty and practice of Christians, in obedience to the command and example of the Lord, rather to humble and abase themselves; yet prudence must direct in what circumstances it is *needful* to do that which we may do *lawfully*, even speak of what God has wrought *for us*, and *in us*, and *by us* too.

3. He gives a good reason why they should suffer him to *boast a little*; namely, because they suffered others to do so, who had less reason. *Seeing many glory after the flesh*, of carnal privileges, or outward advantages and attainments, *I will glory also*, v. 18. But he would not glory in *those things*, though he had as much or more reason than others to do so. But he gloried in his *infirmities*, as he tells them afterward. The Corinthians thought themselves wise, and might think it an instance of wisdom, to bear with the weakness of others, and therefore suffered others to do what might seem folly; therefore the apostle would have them bear with him. Or these words, *Ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise*, (v. 19.) may be *ironical*, and then the meaning is this, "Notwithstanding all your wisdom, ye willingly suffer yourselves to be brought

into bondage under the Jewish yoke, or suffer others to tyrannize over you; nay, to *devour you*, or make a prey of you, and *take of you* hire for their own advantage, and to *exalt themselves* above you, and lord it over you; nay, even to *smite you on the face*, or impose upon you to your very faces, (v. 20.) upbraiding you while they *reproach me*, as if ye had been *very weak* in shewing regard to me," v. 21. Seeing this was the case, that the Corinthians, or some among them, could so easily bear all this from the false apostles, it was reasonable for the apostle to desire, and expect, they should bear with what might seem to them an indiscretion in him, seeing the circumstances of the case were such as made it needful, that *whereinsoever any were bold*, he should be *bold also*, v. 21.

22. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 23. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool.) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? 30. If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 31. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. 32. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: 33. And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Here the apostle gives a large account of his own qualifications, labours, and sufferings; (not out of pride or vain-glory, but to the honour of God, who had enabled him to do and suffer so much for the cause of Christ;) and wherein he excelled the false apostles, that would lessen his character and usefulness among the Corinthians. Observe,

1. He mentions the privileges of his birth, (v. 22.) which were equal to any they could pretend to; he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews; of a family among the Jews, that never intermarried with the Gentiles. He was also an Israelite, and could boast of his being descended from the *beloved* Jacob as well as they; and was also of the seed of Abraham, and not of the proselytes. It should seem from hence, that the false apostles were of the Jewish race, who gave disturbance to the Gentile converts.

II. He makes mention also of his *apostleship*; that he was more than an ordinary minister of Christ, v. 23. God had counted him faithful, and had put him into the ministry; he had been a useful minister of Christ unto them; they had found full proofs of his ministry; *Are they ministers of Christ? I am more so.*

III. He chiefly insists upon this, that he had been an extraordinary sufferer for Christ; and this was what he gloried in, or rather he gloried in the grace of God that had enabled him to be more abundant in labours, and to endure very great sufferings, such as *stripes above measure, frequent imprisonments, and often the dangers of death*, v. 23. Note, When the apostle would prove himself an extraordinary minister, he proves that he had been an extraordinary sufferer. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and for that reason was hated of the Jews; they did all they could against him; and among the Gentiles also he met with hard usage. Bonds and imprisonments were familiar to him; never was the most notorious malefactor more frequently in the hands of public justice, than Paul was for righteousness-sake. The jail and the whipping-post, and all other hard usages of those who are accounted the worst of men, were what he was accustomed to. As to the Jews, whenever he fell into their hands, they never spared him. *Five times he fell under their lash, and received forty stripes save one*, v. 24. Forty stripes was the utmost their law allowed; (Deut. 25. 3.) but it was usual with them, that they might not exceed, to abate one at least of that number. And to have the abatement of one only, was all the favour that ever Paul received from them. The Gentiles were not tied up to that moderation, and among them *he was thrice beaten with rods*, of which we may suppose once was at Philippi, Acts 16. 22. *Once he was stoned* in a popular tumult, and was taken up for dead, Acts 14. 19. He says, that *thrice he suffered shipwreck*; and we may believe him, though the sacred history gives a relation but of one. *A night and a day he had been in the deep*, (v. 25.) in some deep dungeon or other, shut up as a prisoner.

Thus he was all his days a constant confessor; perhaps scarcely a year of his life, after his conversion, passed without suffering some hardship or other for his religion; yet this was not all, for wherever he went, he went in perils; he was exposed to perils of all sorts. If he journeyed by land, or voyaged by sea, he was in perils of robbers, or enemies of some sort: the Jews, his own countrymen, sought to kill him, or do him a mischief; the heathen, to whom he was sent, were not more kind to him, for among them he was in peril. If he was in the city, or in the wilderness, still he was in peril. He was in peril not only among avowed enemies, but among them also who called themselves brethren, but were false brethren, v. 26.

Beside all this, he had great weariness and painfulness in his ministerial labours, and these are things that will come into account shortly, and people will be reckoned with for all the care and pains of their ministers concerning them. Paul was a stranger to wealth and plenty, power and pleasure, preferment and ease; he was in watchings often, and exposed to hunger and thirst; in fastings often, it may be out of necessity; and endured cold and nakedness, v. 27. Thus was he, who was one of the greatest blessings of the age, used as if he had been the burthen of the earth, and the plague of his generation. And yet this is not all; for, as an apostle, the care of all the churches lay on him, v. 28. He mentions this last, as if this lay the heaviest upon him, and as if he could better bear all the persecutions of his enemies than the scandals that were to be found in the churches he had the oversight of. *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* v. 29. There was not a weak Christian, whom he did

not sympathize with; nor any one scandalized, but he was affected therewith. See what little reason we have to be in love with the pomp and plenty of this world, when this blessed apostle, one of the best of men that ever lived, excepting Jesus Christ, felt so much hardship in it. Nor was he ashamed of all this, but, on the contrary, it was what he accounted his honour; and therefore, much against the grain as it was with him to glory, yet, says he, *if I must needs glory*, if my adversaries will oblige me to it in my own necessary vindication, *I will glory in these my infirmities*, v. 30. Note, Sufferings for righteousness-sake will, the most of any thing, redound to our honour.

In the two last verses, he mentions one particular part of his sufferings out of its place, as if he had forgotten it before, or because the deliverance God wrought for him was most remarkable; namely, the danger he was in at Damascus, soon after he was converted, and not settled in Christianity, at least in the ministry and apostleship. This is recorded, Acts 9. 24, 25. This was his first great danger and difficulty, and the rest of his life was of a piece with that. And it is observable, that, lest it should be thought he spake more than was true, the apostle confirms this narrative with a solemn oath, or appeal to the omniscience of God, v. 31. It is a great comfort to a good man, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is an omniscient God, knows the truth of all he says, and knows all he does, and all he suffers for his sake.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, the apostle proceeds in maintaining the honour of his apostleship. He magnified his office, when there were those who vilified it. What he says in his own praise, was only in his own justification, and the necessary defence of the honour of his ministry, the preservation of which was necessary to the success thereof. First, He makes mention of the favour God had shewn him, the honour done him, the methods God took to keep him humble, and the use he made of this dispensation, v. 1. 10. Then he addresses himself to the Corinthians, blaming them for what was faulty among them, and giving a large account of his behaviour, and kind intentions toward them, v. 11, to the end.

1. **I**T is not expedient for me doubtless to glory: I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth,) such a one caught up to the third heaven. 3. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5. Of Such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. 6. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. 7. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Here we may observe,

I. The narrative the apostle gives of the favours God had shewn him, and the honour he had done him; for doubtless *he* is the man in Christ, of whom he speaks. Concerning this we may take notice,

1. Of the honour itself which was done to the apostle, he was *caught up into the third heaven*, v. 2. When this was, we cannot say, whether it was during those three days that he lay without sight at his conversion, or at some other time afterward; much less can we pretend to say *how* this was, whether by a separation of his soul from his body, or by an extraordinary transport in the depth of contemplation. It would be presumption for us to determine, if not also to inquire into, this matter; seeing the apostle himself says, *Whether in the body or out of the body, he could not tell*. It was certainly a very extraordinary honour done him: in some sense he was caught up into the *third heaven*, the heaven of the blessed, above the *aërial* heaven, in which the fowls fly; above the *starry* heaven, which is adorned with those glorious orbs: it was into the *third* heaven, where God most eminently manifests his glory. We are not capable of knowing all, nor is it fit we should know very much, of the particulars of that glorious place and state: it is our duty and interest to give diligence to make sure to ourselves a mansion there; and if that be cleared up to us, then we should long to be removed thither, to abide there for ever.

This third heaven is called *paradise*, (v. 4.) in allusion to the earthly paradise, out of which Adam was driven for his transgression; it is called the paradise of God, (Rev. 2. 7.) signifying to us, that by Christ we are restored to all the joys and honours we lost by sin, yea to much better. The apostle does not mention what he *saw* in the third heaven or paradise, but tells us, that *he heard unspeakable words*, such as it is not possible for a man to utter; such are the sublimity of the matter, and our unacquaintedness with the language of the upper world: nor was it *lawful* to utter those words, because, while we are here in this world, we have a more sure word of prophecy than such visions and revelations, 2 Pet. 1. 19. We read of the *tongue of angels* as well as of men, and Paul knew as much of that as ever any man upon earth did, and yet preferred charity, that is, the sincere love of God and our neighbour. This account which the apostle gives us of his vision, should check our curious desires after forbidden knowledge, and teach us to improve the revelation God has given us in his word. Paul himself, who had been in the third heaven, did not publish to the world what he had heard there, but adhered to the doctrine of Christ: on that foundation the church is built, and on that we must build our faith and hope.

2. The modest and humble manner in which the apostle mentions this matter, is observable. One would be apt to think that one who had had such visions and revelations as these, should have boasted

greatly of them; but, says he, *It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory*, v. 1. He therefore did not mention this immediately, not till *above fourteen years* after, v. 2. And then it is not without some reluctance, as a thing which in a manner he was forced to, by the necessity of the case. Again, he speaks of himself in the third person, and does not say, *I am the man* who was thus honoured above other men. Again, his humility appears by the check he seems to put upon himself, (v. 6.) which plainly shews that he delighted not to dwell upon this theme. Thus was he, who was not behind the chiefest of the apostles in dignity, very eminent for his humility. Note, It is an excellent thing to have a lowly spirit in the midst of high advancements; and those who abase themselves, shall be exalted.

II. The apostle gives an account of the methods God took to keep him humble, and to prevent his *being lifted up above measure*; and this he speaks of, to balance the account that was given before of the visions and revelations he had had. Note, When God's people communicate their experiences, let them always remember to take notice of what God has done to keep them humble, as well as what he has done in favour to them, and for their advancement. Here observe,

1. The apostle was pained with a *thorn in the flesh*, and *buffeted with a messenger of Satan*, v. 7. We are much in the dark what this was, whether some great trouble, or some great temptation. Some think it was an acute bodily pain or sickness; others think it was the indignities done him by the false apostles, and the opposition he met with from them, particularly on the account of his speech, which was contemptible. However this was, God often brings *this* good out of evil, that the reproaches of our enemies help to hide pride from us; and this is certain, that what the apostle calls a *thorn in his flesh*, was for a time very grievous to him: but the thorns Christ wore, for us, and with which he was crowned, sanctify and make easy all the thorns in the flesh we may at any time be afflicted with; for *he suffered, being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted*. Temptations to sin are most grievous thorns; they are *messengers of Satan*, to buffet us. Indeed it is a great grievance to a good man, to be so much as tempted to sin.

2. The design of this was to keep the apostle humble, *lest he should be exalted above measure*, v. 7. Paul himself knew he *had not yet attained, neither was already perfect*; and yet he was in danger of being lifted up with pride. If God love us, he will hide pride from us, and keep us from being exalted above measure; and spiritual burthens are ordered, to cure spiritual pride. This thorn in the flesh is said to be a *messenger of Satan*, which he did not send with a good design, but, on the contrary, with ill intentions, to discourage the apostle, (who had been so highly favoured of God,) and hinder him in his work. But God designed this for good, and he over-ruled it for good, and made this messenger of Satan to be so far from being a hindrance, that it was a help to the apostle.

3. The apostle prayed earnestly to God for the removal of this sore grievance. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; and when we are afflicted with thorns in the flesh, we should *give ourselves to prayer*. Therefore we are sometimes tempted, that we may learn to pray. The apostle *besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him*, v. 8. Note, Though afflictions are sent for our spiritual benefit, yet we may pray to God for the removal of them: we ought indeed to desire also, that they may reach the end for which they are designed. The apostle prayed earnestly, and repeated his requests; he besought the Lord *thrice*, often. So that if an answer be not given to

the *first* prayer, nor to the *second*, we must hold on, and hold out, till we receive an answer. Christ himself prayed to his Father *thrice*. As troubles are sent, to teach us to pray, so they are continued, to teach us to *continue instant in prayer*.

4. We have an account of the answer given to the apostle's prayer; that, although the trouble was not removed, yet an equivalent should be granted; *My grace is sufficient for thee*. Note, (1.) Though God accepteth the prayer of faith, yet he does not always answer it in the letter; as he sometimes grants in wrath, so he sometimes denies in love. (2.) When God does not remove our troubles and temptations, yet, if he gives us *grace sufficient* for us, we have no reason to complain, or to say that he deals ill by us. It is a great comfort to us, whatever thorns in the flesh we are pained with, that God's grace is sufficient for us. Grace signifies two things: [1.] The *good-will* of God towards us, and that is enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort us; to support our souls, and cheer up our spirits, in all afflictions and distresses. [2.] The *good work* of God in us, the grace we receive from the fulness that is in Christ our Head; and from him there shall be communicated that which is suitable and seasonable, and *sufficient* for his members. Christ Jesus understands our case, and knows our need, and will proportion the remedy to our malady, and not only strengthen us, but glorify himself. *His strength is made perfect in our weakness*. Thus his grace is manifested and magnified; he ordains his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

III. Here is the use which the apostle makes of this dispensation; *He gloried in his infirmities*, (v. 9.) and *took pleasure* in them, v. 10. He does not mean his *sinful* infirmities, (those we have reason to be ashamed of and grieved at,) but he means his afflictions, his *reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake*, v. 10. And the reason of his glory and joy on account of these things, was this—They were fair opportunities for Christ to manifest the power and sufficiency of his grace *resting upon him*, by which he had so much experience of the strength of divine grace, that he could say, *When I am weak, then am I strong*. This is a Christian paradox: when we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we see ourselves weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, and are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace.

11. I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. 13. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burthensome to you? Forgive me this wrong. 14. Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burthensome to you; for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. 16. But be it so, I did not

burthen you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. 17. Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? 18. I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit? *Walked we not in the same steps?* 19. Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? We speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. 20. For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: 21. *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many who have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

In these verses the apostle addresses himself to the Corinthians, two ways.

I. He blames them for what was faulty in them; that they had not stood up in his defence as they ought to have done, and so made it the more needful for him to insist so much on his own vindication. They in a manner *compelled him* to commend himself, who *ought to have been commended of them*, v. 11. And had they, or some among them, not failed on their part, it would have been less needful for him to have said so much on his own behalf. He tells them further, that they in particular had good reason to speak well of him, as being in *nothing behind the very chiefest apostles*, because he had given them full proof and evidence of his apostleship; for *the signs of an apostle were wrought among them in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*. Note, 1. It is a debt we owe to good men, to stand up in the defence of their reputation; and we are under special obligations to those we have received benefit by, especially spiritual benefit, to own them as instruments in God's hand of good to us, and to vindicate them when they are calumniated by others. 2. How much soever we are, or ought to be, esteemed by others, we ought always to think humbly of ourselves. See an example of this in this great apostle, who thought himself *to be nothing*, though in truth he was not behind the chiefest apostles. So far was he from seeking praise from men, though he tells them their duty to vindicate his reputation: so far was he from applauding himself, when he was forced to insist upon his own necessary self-defence.

II. He gives a large account of his behaviour and kind intentions toward them; in which we may observe the characters of a faithful minister of the gospel.

1. He was not willing to be burthensome to them, nor did he seek *their's*, but *them*. He says, (v. 13.) he *had not been* burthensome to them for the time past, and tells them, (v. 14.) he *would not be* burthensome to them for the time to come, when he should come to them: he spared their purses, and did not covet their money; *I seek not your's, but you*. He sought not to enrich himself, but to save their souls: he did not desire to make a property of them to himself, but to gain them over to Christ, whose servant he was. Note, Those who aim at

clothing themselves with the fleece of the flock, and take no care of the sheep, are hirelings, and not good shepherds.

2. He would gladly *spend and be spent* for them; (v. 15.) he was willing to take pains and to suffer loss for their good. He would *spend* his time, his parts, his strength, his interest, his *all*, to do them service; nay so spend as to *be spent*, and be like a candle, which consumes itself, to give light to others.

3. He did not abate in his love to them, notwithstanding their unkindness and ingratitude to him; and therefore was contented and glad to take pains with them; though *the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved*, v. 15. This is applicable to other relations: if others be wanting in their duty to us, it does not follow therefore that we may neglect our duty to them.

4. He was careful not only that *he himself* should not be burthensome, but that *none he employed* should. This seems to be the meaning of what we read, v. 16—18. If it should be objected by any, that though he did not himself burthen them, yet that he, *being crafty, caught them with guile*, that is, he sent those among them who pillaged from them, and afterward he shared with them in the profit; "This was not so," says the apostle; "I did not make a gain of you myself, nor by any of them I sent; nor did Titus, nor any others. *We walked by the same spirit, and in the same steps.*" They all agreed in this matter, to do them all the good they could, without being burthensome to them; to promote the gospel among them, and make it as easy to them as possible. Or, this may be read with an *interrogation*, as utterly disclaiming any guile in himself and others toward them.

5. He was a man who did all things for *edifying*, v. 19. This was his great aim and design, to do good, to lay the foundation well, and then with care and diligence to build the superstructure.

6. He would not *shrink from* his duty, for fear of displeasing them, though he was so careful to make himself easy to them. Therefore he was resolved to be faithful in reproving sin, though he was therein *found to be such as they would not*, v. 20. The apostle here mentioned several sins that are too commonly found among professors of religion, and are very reprobable; *debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults*; and though those who are guilty of these sins, can hardly bear to be reprov'd for them, yet faithful ministers must not fear offending the guilty by sharp reproofs, as they are needful, in public and in private.

7. He was grieved at the apprehensions that he should find scandalous sins among them, not duly repented of. This, he tells them, would be the cause of great humiliation and lamentation. Note, (1.) The falls and miscarriages of professors cannot but be a humbling consideration to a good minister; and God sometimes takes this way to humble those who might be under temptation to be lifted up; *I fear lest my God will humble me among you*. (2.) We have reason to bewail those who sin, and do not repent; *to bewail many that have sinned, and have not repented*, v. 21. If these have not, as yet, grace to mourn and lament their own case, their case is the more lamentable; and those who love God, and love them, should mourn for them.

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, the apostle threatens to be severe against obstinate sinners, and assigns the reason thereof; (v. 1..6.) then he makes a suitable prayer to God on the behalf of the Corinthians, with the reasons inducing him thereto; (v. 7..10.) and concludes his epistle with a valediction and a benediction, v. 11..14.

1. **T**HIS is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. 2. I told you before, and foretold you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent, now I write to them who heretofore have sinned, and to all others, that, if I come again, I will not spare: 3. Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. 4. For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. 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? 6. But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates?

In these verses, observe,

1. The apostle threatens to be severe against obstinate sinners when he should come to Corinth, having now sent to them a first and second epistle, with proper admonitions and exhortations, in order to reform what was amiss among them. Concerning which we may notice,

(1.) The caution with which he proceeded in his censures: he was not hasty in using severity, but gave a first and second admonition. So some understand his words, (v. 1.) *This is the third time I am coming to you*; referring to his first and second epistles, by which he admonished them, as if he were present with them, though in person he was absent, v. 2. According to this interpretation, these two epistles are the witnesses he means in the first verse, referring rather to the direction of our Saviour, (Matt. 18. 16.) concerning the manner how Christians should deal with offenders before they proceed to extremity, than to the law of Moses, (Deut. 17. 6.—19. 5.) for the behaviour of judges in criminal matters. We should go, or send, to our brother, once and again, to tell him of his fault. Thus the apostle had *told* these Corinthians *before*, in his former epistle, and now he tells them, or *writes to them who heretofore had sinned, and to all others*, giving warning unto all before he came in person the *third time*, to exercise severity against scandalous offenders.

Others think that the apostle had designed and prepared for his journey to Corinth twice already, but was providentially hindered, and now informs them of his intentions a *third time* to come to them. However this be, it is observable, that he kept an account how often he endeavoured, and what pains he took with these Corinthians for their good: and we may be sure that an account is kept in heaven, and we must be reckoned with another day, for the helps we have had for our souls, and how we have improved them.

(2.) The threatening itself, *That if (or when) he came again, (in person) he would not spare* obstinate sinners, and such as were impenitent, in their scandalous enormities. He had told them before, he feared *God would humble him among them*, because he should find some who *had sinned and had not repented*; and now he declares he would *not spare* such, but would inflict church-censures upon them, which are thought to have been accompanied in those early times with visible and extraordinary tokens of divine displeasure. Note, Though it is

God's gracious method to bear long with sinners, yet he will not bear always; at length he will come, and will not spare them who remain obstinate and impenitent, notwithstanding all his methods to reclaim and reform them.

2. The apostle assigns a reason why he would be thus severe, namely, for a *proof of Christ speaking in him*, which they *sought after*, v. 3. The evidence of his apostleship was necessary for the credit, confirmation, and success, of the gospel he preached; and therefore such as denied that, were justly and severely to be censured. It was the design of the false teachers, to make the Corinthians call this matter into question, of which yet they had *not weak*, but strong or *mighty* proofs, (v. 3.) notwithstanding the mean figure he made in the world, and the contempt which by some was cast upon him; even as Christ himself *was crucified through weakness*, or appeared in his crucifixion as a weak and contemptible person, *but liveth by the power of God*, or in his resurrection and life manifests his divine power, v. 4.

4. So the apostles, how mean and contemptible soever they appeared to the world, did yet, as instruments, manifest the power of God, and particularly the power of his grace, in converting the world to Christianity. And therefore, as a proof unto those who among the *Corinthians sought a proof of Christ's speaking in the apostle*, he puts them upon the proving their Christianity; (v. 5.) *Examine yourselves*, &c. Hereby he intimates, that if they could prove their own Christianity, this would be a proof of his apostleship; for if they were in the *faith*, if Jesus Christ was in *them*, this was a proof that Christ *shone in him*, because it was by his ministry they did believe. He had been not only an instructor, but a father to them. He had begotten them again by the gospel of Christ. Now, it could not be imagined that a divine power should go along with his ministrations, if he had not his commission from on high. If therefore they could prove themselves *not to be reprobates*, not to be rejected of Christ, *he trusted they should know that he was not a reprobate*, (v. 6.) not disowned by Christ.

What the apostle here says of the duty of the Corinthians to *examine themselves*, &c. with the particular view already mentioned, is applicable to the great duty of all who call themselves Christians, to examine themselves concerning their spiritual state. We should examine whether we *be in the faith*, because it is a matter in which we may be easily deceived, and wherein a deceit is highly dangerous: we are therefore concerned to *prove our own selves*, to put the question to our own souls, whether Christ be in us, or not; and *Christ is in us, except we be reprobates*: so that either we are true Christians, or we are great cheats; and what a reproachful thing is it for a man not to know himself, nor to know his own mind!

7. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. 8. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9. For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even your perfection*. 10. Therefore I write these things being absent, lest, being present, I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Here we have,

1. The apostle's prayer to God on the behalf of

the Corinthians, that they might *do no evil*, v. 7. This is the most desirable thing we can ask of God, both for ourselves and for our friends, to be kept from sin, that we and they may do no evil; and it is most needful, that we often pray to God for his grace to keep us, because without that we cannot keep ourselves. We are more concerned to pray that we may not *do evil*, than that we may not *suffer evil*.

2. The reasons why the apostle put up this prayer to God on behalf of the Corinthians; which reasons have a special reference to their case, and the subject-matter about which he was writing to them. Observe, he tells them,

(1.) It was not so much for his own personal reputation, as for the honour of religion; "*Not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest*, or decent, and for the credit of religion, though we should be reproached and vilified, and accounted as *reprobates*," v. 7. Note, [1.] The great desire of faithful ministers of the gospel, is, that the gospel they preach may be honoured, however their persons may be vilified. [2.] The best way to adorn our holy religion, is, *to do that which is honest*, and of good report; to walk so as becomes the gospel of Christ.

(2.) Another reason was this; that they might be free from all blame and censure when he should come to them. This is intimated in v. 8. *We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*. If therefore they did not evil, nor act contrary to their profession of the gospel, the apostle had no power or authority to punish them. He had said before, (ch. 10. 8.) and says here, (v. 10.) *The power which the Lord has given me, was to edification, not to destruction*. So that although the apostle had great powers committed to him for the credit and advancement of the gospel, yet he could not do anything to the disparagement of the truth, or the discouragement of them who obeyed it. He *could not*, he *would not*, he *dared not*, he had no commission to act against the truth; and it is remarkable, how the apostle did rejoice in this blessed impotency. "*We are glad*" says he, (v. 9.) "*when we are weak, and ye are strong*"; that is, that we have no power to censure those who are strong in faith, and fruitful in good works." Some understand this passage thus; "Though we are weak through persecutions and contempt, we bear it patiently, and also joyfully, while we see that ye are strong, that ye are prosperous in holiness, and persevering in well-doing." For,

(3.) He desired their *perfection*, (v. 9.) that is, that they might be sincere, and aim at perfection; (sincerity is our gospel-perfection;) or else he wished there might be a thorough reformation among them. He not only desired that they might be kept from sin, but also that they might grow in grace, and increase in holiness, and that all that was amiss among them might be rectified and reformed. This was the great end of his writing this epistle, and that freedom he used with them by *writing these things*, those friendly admonitions and warnings, *being absent, that so, being present, he should not use sharpness*, (v. 10.) not proceed to the utmost extremity in the exercise of the power which the Lord had given him as an apostle, *to revenge all disobedience*, ch. 10. 6.

11. Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. 12. Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13. All the saints salute you. 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the

communion of the Holy Ghost, *be with you all.* Amen.

Thus the apostle concludes this epistle, with,

1. A valediction. He gives them a parting *farewell*, and takes his leave of them for the present, with hearty good wishes for their spiritual welfare. In order to which,

(1.) He gives them several good exhortations. [1.] To be *perfect*, or to be knit together in love, which would tend greatly to their benefit and advantage, as a church, or Christian society. [2.] To be *of good comfort* under all the sufferings and persecutions they might endure for the cause of Christ, or any calamities and disappointments they might meet with in the world. [3.] To be *of one mind*, which would greatly tend to their comfort; for the more easy we are with our brethren, the more ease we shall have in our own souls. The apostle would have them, as far as was possible, to be of the same opinion and judgment; however, if this could not be attained to, yet, [4.] He exhorts them *to live in peace*; that difference in opinion should not cause an alienation of affections; that they should be at peace among themselves. He would have all the schisms healed, that were among them; that there should be no more contention and wrath found among them; to prevent which, they should avoid *debates, envyings, backbitings, whisperings*, and such like enemies to peace.

(2.) He encourages them with the promise of God's presence among them; *The God of love and peace shall be with you*, v. 11. Note, [1.] God is the God of love and peace. He is the Author of peace, and lover of concord: he hath loved us, and is willing to be at peace with us; he commands us to love him, and to be reconciled to him, and also that we love one another, and be at peace among ourselves. [2.] God will be with them who live in love and

peace. He will love them who love peace; he will dwell with them here, and they shall dwell with him for ever. Such shall have God's *gracious* presence here, and be admitted to his *glorious* presence hereafter.

(3.) He gives directions to them to salute each other, and sends kind salutations to them from those who were with him, v. 12, 13. He would have them testify their affection to one another by the sacred rite of a *kiss of charity*, which was then used, but has long been disused, to prevent all occasions of wantonness and impurity, in the more declining and degenerate state of the church.

2. The apostolical benediction; (v. 14.) *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.* Thus the apostle concludes his epistle, and thus it is usual and proper to dismiss worshipping assemblies. This plainly proves the doctrine of the gospel, and is an acknowledgment, that *Father, Son, and Spirit*, are *three* distinct Persons, yet but *one* God; and herein *the same*, that they are the Fountain of all blessings to men. It likewise speaks our duty, which is, to have an eye by faith to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to live in a continual regard to the *three* Persons in the *Trinity*, into whose name we were *baptized*, and in whose name we are *blessed*.

This is a very solemn benediction, and we should give all diligence to inherit this blessing. The *grace* of Christ, the *love* of God, and the *communion* (or communication) of the Holy Ghost: the *grace* of Christ as Redeemer, the *love* of God who sent the Redeemer, and all the communications of this *grace* and *love*, which come to us by the Holy Ghost; it is the communications of the Holy Ghost that qualify us for an interest in the *grace* of Christ, and the *love* of God: and we can desire no more to make us happy than the *grace* of Christ, the *love* of God, and the *communion* of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE GALATIANS.

Completed by Mr. Bayes.

THIS epistle of Paul is directed not to the church or churches of a single city, as some others are, but of a country or province, for so Galatia was. It is very probable that these Galatians were first converted to the Christian faith by his ministry; but if he was not the instrument of planting, yet at least he had been employed in watering these churches, as is evident from this epistle itself, and also from Acts 18. 23. where we find him going over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.