

With such sacrifices God is well-pleased, Heb. 13. 16.

2. He would recompense it; *But my God shall supply all your wants according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, v. 19.* He does as it were draw a bill upon the exchequer in heaven, and leaves it to God to make them amends for the kindness they had shewed him. "He shall do it, not only as your God, but as my God, who takes what is done to me as done to himself. You supplied my needs, according to your poverty; and he shall supply your's, according to his riches." But still it is *by Christ Jesus*: through him we have grace to do that which is good, and through him we must expect the reward of it. Not of *debt*, but of *grace*; for the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him, because we receive the more from him.

20. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. 22. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household. 23. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The apostle concludes the epistle in these verses:

1. With praises to God; *Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen, v. 20.* Observe, (1.) God is to be considered by us as *our Father*; *Now unto God and our Father.* It is a great condescension and favour in God, to own the relation of Father to sinners, and allow us to say to him, *Our Father*; and it is a title peculiar to the gospel-dispensation. It is also a great privilege and encouragement to us, to consider him as *our Father*;

as one so nearly related, and who bears so tender an affection towards us. We should look upon God, under all our weakness and fears, not as a tyrant or an enemy, but as a *Father*, who is disposed to pity us and help us. (2.) We must ascribe glory to God as a Father: the glory of his own excellence, and of all his mercy unto us. We must thankfully own the receipt of all from him, and give the praise of all to him. And our praise must be constant and perpetual; it must be *glory for ever and ever.*

2. With salutations to his friends at Philippi; "*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus, (v. 21.)* give my hearty love to all the Christians in your parts." He desires remembrances not only to the *bishops and deacons*, and the church in general, but to every particular saint. Paul had a kind affection to all good Christians.

3. He sends salutations from those who were at Rome; "*The brethren who are with me, salute you; the ministers, and all the saints here, send their affectionate remembrances to you. Chiefly they who are of Cæsar's household*; the Christian converts who belonged to the emperor's court." Observe, (1.) There were saints in Cæsar's household. Though Paul was imprisoned at Rome, for preaching the gospel, by the emperor's command; yet there were some Christians in his own family. The gospel early obtained among some of the rich and great. Perhaps the apostle fared the better, and received some favour, by means of his friends at court. (2.) *Chiefly they, &c.* Observe, They, being bred at court, were more *complaisant* than the rest. See what an ornament to religion sanctified civility is.

4. The apostolical *benediction*, as usual; "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*" The free favour and good-will of Christ be your portion and happiness."

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS.

Completed by Dr. W. Harris.

COLOSSE was a considerable city of Phrygia, and, probably, not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis; we find these three mentioned together, *ch. 4. 13.* It is now buried in ruins, and the memory of it chiefly preserved in this epistle. The design of the epistle is to warn them of the danger of the Jewish zealots, who pressed the necessity of observing the ceremonial law; and to fortify them against the mixture of the Gentile philosophy with their Christian principles. He professes a great satisfaction in their *steadfastness* and constancy, and encourages them to *perseverance*. It was written about the same time with the epistle to the Ephesians and Philippians, *Anno Domini 62.* and in the same place, while he was now prisoner at Rome. He was not idle in his confinement, and the word of God *was not bound*.

This epistle, like that to the Romans, was written to those whom he had never seen, or had any personal acquaintance with. The church planted at Colosse was not by Paul's ministry, but by the ministry of

- Epaphras or Epaphroditus, an evangelist, one whom he delegated to preach the gospel among the Gentiles; and yet,
- I. There was a flourishing church at Colosse, and one which was eminent and famous among the churches. One would have thought none would have come to be flourishing churches but those which Paul himself had planted; but here was a flourishing church planted by Epaphras. God is sometimes pleased to make use of the ministry of those who are of less note, and lower gifts, for doing great service to his church. God uses what hands he pleases, and is not tied to those of note, that the *excellence of the power may appear to be of God, and not of men*, 2 Cor. 4. 7.
 - II. Though Paul had not the planting of this church, yet he did not therefore neglect it; nor, in writing his epistles, does he make any difference between that and other churches. The Colossians, who were converted by the ministry of Epaphras, were as dear to him, and he as much concerned for their welfare, as the Philippians, or any others who were converted by his ministry. Thus he put an honour upon an inferior minister, and teaches us not to be selfish, or think all that honour lost, which goes beside ourselves. We learn, in his example, not to think it a disparagement to us to *water* what others have *planted*; or *build* upon the foundation which others have *laid*: as he himself, as a *wise master-builder*, *laid the foundation, and another builded thereon*, 1 Cor. 3. 10.

COLOSSIANS, I.

CHAP. I.

We have here, I. The inscription, as usual, v. 1, 2. II. His thanksgiving to God for what he had heard concerning them; their faith, love, and hope, v. 3. . 8. III. His prayer for their knowledge, fruitfulness, and strength, v. 9. . 11. IV. An admirable summary of the Christian doctrine concerning the operation of the Spirit, the person of the Redeemer, the work of redemption, and the preaching of it in the gospel, v. 12. . 28.

1. **PAUL**, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, 2. To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The inscription of this epistle is much the same with the rest; only it is observable,

1. That he calls himself an *apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*. An apostle is a prime-minister in the kingdom of Christ, *immediately* called by Christ, and *extraordinarily* qualified; his work was peculiarly to *plant* the Christian church, and *confirm* the Christian doctrine. He attributes this not to his own merit, strength, or sufficiency; but to the free grace and good-will of God. He thought himself engaged to do his utmost, as an apostle, because he was made so by the will of God.

2. He joins Timothy in commission with himself, which is another instance of his humility; and though he elsewhere calls him *his son*, (2 Tim. 2. 1.) yet here he calls him *his brother*; which is an example to the elder and more eminent ministers, to look upon the younger and more obscure as their brethren, and to treat them, accordingly, with kindness and respect.

3. He calls the Christians at Colosse *saints*, and *faithful brethren in Christ*. As all good ministers, so all good Christians, are brethren one to another, who stand in a near relation, and owe a mutual love. Toward God they must be *saints*, consecrated to his honour, and sanctified by his grace; bearing his image, and aiming at his glory. And in both these, as *saints* to God, and as *brethren* to one another, they must be *faithful*. Faithfulness runs through every character and relation of the Christian life, and is the crown and glory of them all.

4. The apostolical benediction is the same as usual; *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. He wishes them *grace and peace*, the free favour of God, and all the

blessed fruits of it; all kind of spiritual blessings, and that *from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*; jointly from both, and distinctly from each; as in the former epistle.

3. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints; 5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; 6. Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth: 7. As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8. Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Here he proceeds to the body of the epistle, and begins with thanksgiving to God for what he had heard concerning them, though he had no personal acquaintance with them, and knew their state and character only by the reports of others. He gave thanks to God for them, that they had embraced the gospel of Christ, and given proofs of their fidelity to him. Observe, In his prayers for them he gave thanks for them. Thanksgiving ought to be a part of every prayer; and whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Observe,

1. Whom he gives thanks to; *To God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. In our thanksgiving we must have an eye to God as God, (he is the Object of thanksgiving as well as prayer,) and as the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, in and through whom all good comes to us. He is the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as *our Father*; and it is matter of encouragement in all our addresses to God, that we can look to him as *Christ's Father and our Father, as his God and our God*, John 20. 17. Observe,

II. What he gives thanks to God for; for the graces of God in them, which were evidences of the grace of God toward them; *Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love you have to all*

the saints; For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, v. 4. 5. Faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces in the Christian life, and proper matter of our prayer and thanksgiving. 1. He gives thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus: that they were brought to believe in him, and take upon them the profession of his religion, and venture their souls upon his undertaking. 2. For their love. Beside the general love which is due to all men, there is a particular love owing to the saints, or those who are of the Christian brotherhood, 1 Pet. 2. 17. We must love all the saints, bear an extensive kindness and good-will to good men, notwithstanding lesser points of difference, and many real weaknesses. Some understand it of their charity to the saints in necessity, which is one branch and evidence of Christian love. 3. For their hope; the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, v. 5. The happiness of heaven is called their hope, because it is the thing hoped for; looking for the blessed hope, Tit. 2. 13. What is laid out upon believers in this world, is much; but what is laid up for them in heaven, is much more. And we have reason to give thanks to God for the hope of heaven, which good Christians have; or their well-grounded expectation of the future glory. Their faith in Christ, and love to the saints, had an eye to the hope laid up for them in heaven. The more we fix our hopes on the recompense of reward in the other world, the more free and liberal shall we be of our earthly treasure upon all occasions of doing good.

Having blessed God for these graces, he blesses God for the means of grace which they enjoyed; *Wherein ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.* They had heard of the word of the truth of the gospel concerning this hope laid up for them in heaven. Observe, (1.) The gospel is the word of truth, and what we may safely venture our immortal souls upon: it proceeds from the God of truth, and the Spirit of truth, and is a faithful saying. He calls it, *the grace of God in truth, v. 6.* (2.) It is a great mercy to hear this word of truth; for the great thing we learn from it, is, the happiness of heaven. *Eternal life is brought to light by the gospel, 2 Tim. 1. 10.* They heard of the hope laid up in heaven in the word of the truth of the gospel; "*Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, v. 6.* This gospel is preached, and bringeth forth fruit in other nations; it is come to you, as it is in all the world, according to the commission, *Go preach the gospel in all the nations, and to every creature.*" Observe, [1.] All who hear the word of the gospel, ought to bring forth the fruit of the gospel, be obedient to it, and have their principles and lives formed according to it. This was the doctrine first preached; *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, Matt. 3. 8.* And our Lord says, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them, John 13. 17.* Observe, [2.] Wherever the gospel comes, it will bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God. *It bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you.* We mistake, if we think to monopolize the comforts and benefits of the gospel to ourselves. Does the gospel bring forth fruit in us? So it does in others.

He takes this occasion to mention the minister by whom they believed; (v. 7, 8.) *As ye also learned of Ephaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.* He mentions him with great respect, to engage their love to him. First, He calls him his fellow-servant; to signify not only that they served the same Master, but that they were engaged in the same work. They were fellow-labourers in the work of the Lord, though one was an apostle, and the other an ordinary minister. Secondly, He calls him his dear fellow-servant: all the servants of Christ ought to love one

another, and it is an endearing consideration, that they are engaged in the same service. Thirdly, He represents him as one who was a faithful minister of Christ to them, who discharged his trust, and fulfilled his ministry among them. Observe, Christ is our proper Master, and we are his ministers. He does not say, who is your minister; but who is the minister of Christ for you. It is by his authority and appointment, though for the people's service. Fourthly, He represents him as one who gave them a good word; *Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit, v. 8.* He recommends him to their affection, from the good report he made of their sincere love to Christ and all his members, which was wrought in them by the Spirit, and is agreeable to the Spirit of the gospel. Faithful ministers are glad to be able to speak well of their people.

9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;

The apostle proceeds in these verses to pray for them. He heard that they were good, and he prayed that they might be better. He was constant in this prayer; *We do not cease to pray for you.* It may be, he could hear of them but seldom, but he constantly prayed for them—And desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge, &c. Observe what it is that he begs of God for them.

1. That they might be knowing, intelligent Christians; filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Observe, (1.) The knowledge of our duty is the best knowledge. A mere empty notion of the greatest truths is insignificant. Our knowledge of the will of God must be always practical: we must know it, in order of do it. (2.) Our knowledge is then a blessing indeed, when it is in wisdom, when we know how to apply our general knowledge to our particular occasions, and to suit it to all emergencies. (3.) Christians should endeavour to be filled with knowledge; not only to know the will of God, but to know more of it, and to increase in the knowledge of God, (as it is, v. 10.) and to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, 2 Pet. 3. 18.

2. That their conversation might be good. Good knowledge, without a good life, will not profit. Our understanding is then a spiritual understanding, when we exemplify it in our way of living—*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, (v. 10.)* that is, as becomes the relation we stand in to him, and the profession we make of him. The agreeableness of our conversation to our religion is pleasing to God as well as to good men. We walk unto all well-pleasing, when we walk in all things according to the will of God—being fruitful in every good work. This is what we should aim at. Good words will not do without good works. We must abound in good works, and in every good work: not in some only, which are more easy, and suitable and safe, but in all, and in every instance of them. There must be a regular, uniform regard to all the will of God. And the more fruitful we are in good works, the more we shall increase in the knowledge of God. *He who doeth his will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, John 7. 17.*

8. That they might be strengthened; *strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power*, (v. 11.) fortified against the temptations of Satan, and furnished for all their duty. It is a great comfort to us, that he who undertakes to give *strength* to his people, is a God of power, and of glorious power. Where there is spiritual life, there is still need of spiritual strength; strength for all the actions of the spiritual life. To be strengthened, is to be furnished by the grace of God for every good work, and fortified by that grace against every evil one: it is to be enabled to do our duty, and still to hold fast our integrity. The blessed Spirit is the Author of this strength: for we are *strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inward man*, Eph. 3. 16. The word of God is the means of it, by which he conveys it; and it must be fetched in by prayer. It was an answer to earnest prayer that the apostle obtained sufficient grace. In praying for spiritual strength we are not straitened in the promises, and therefore should not be straitened in our own hopes and desires. Observe, (1.) He prays that they might be strengthened *with might*: that seems a tautology; but he means, that they might be mightily strengthened, or strengthened with might derived from another. (2.) It is with *all might*. It seems unreasonable that a creature should be strengthened with *all might*, for that is to make him *almighty*; but he means, with all that might which we have occasion for, to enable us to discharge our duty or preserve our innocence; that *grace* which is *sufficient* for us in all the trials of life, and able to *help us in time of need*. (3.) It is according to *his glorious power*. He means, according to the grace of God: but the grace of God in the hearts of believers is the *power* of God; and there is a *glory* in this power; it is an excellent and sufficient power. And the communications of strength are not according to *our* weakness, to whom the strength is communicated, but according to *his* power, from whom it is received. When God gives, he gives like himself; and when he strengthens, he strengthens like himself. (4.) The special use of this strength was for suffering work; *That ye may be strengthened unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness*. He prays not only that they might be *supported* under their troubles, but *strengthened* for them: the reason is, there is work to be done even when we are suffering. And they who are strengthened *according to his glorious power*, are strengthened, [1.] *To all patience*. When patience *hath its perfect work*, (Jam. 1. 4.) then we are strengthened to *all patience*; when we not only bear our troubles patiently, but receive them as gifts from God, and are thankful for them. *To you it is given to suffer*, Phil. 1. 29. When we bear our troubles well, though ever so many, and the circumstances of them ever so aggravating, then we bear them with *all patience*. And the same reason for bearing one trouble, will hold for bearing another, if it be a good reason. *All patience* includes all the kinds of it; not only bearing patience, but waiting patience. [2.] This is *even unto long-suffering*, patience drawn out to a great length: not only to bear trouble for a while, but to bear it as long as God pleases to continue it. [3.] It is with *joyfulness*: to *rejoice in tribulation*; to *take joyfully the spoiling of our goods*, and *rejoice* that we are counted *worthy to suffer for his name*; to have joy as well as patience in the troubles of life. This we could never do by any strength of our own, but as we are strengthened by the grace of God.

12. Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13. Who hath delivered us from the power of dark-

ness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son; 14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins; 15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: 16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist: 18. And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the pre-eminence. 19. For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; 20. And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven. 21. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. 22. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: 23. If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; 24. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; 25. Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26. *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27. To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29. Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Here is the summary of the doctrine of the gospel concerning the great work of our redemption by Christ. It comes in here not as the matter of a sermon, but as the matter of a thanksgiving: for our salvation by Christ furnishes us with abundant matter of thanksgiving in every view of it; *Giving thanks unto the Father*, v. 12. He does not discourse of the work of redemption in the natural order of it; for then he should speak of the purchase of it first, and afterward of the application of it. But here he inverts the order; because, in our sense

and feeling of it, the application goes before the purchase. We first find the benefits of redemption in our own hearts, and then are led by those streams to the Original and Fountain-head. The order and connexion of the apostle's discourse may be considered in the following manner.

I. He speaks concerning the operations of the Spirit of grace upon us. We must give thanks for them, because by these we are qualified for an interest in the mediation of the Son; *Giving thanks to the Father*, &c. v. 12, 13. It is spoken of as the work of the Father, because the Spirit of grace is the Spirit of the Father, and the Father works in us by his Spirit. They in whom the work of grace is wrought, must give thanks unto the Father. If we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Now what is it which is wrought for us in the application of redemption?

1. "He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, v. 13. He hath rescued us from the state of heathenish darkness and wickedness. He hath saved us from the dominion of sin, which is darkness; (1 John 1. 6.) from the dominion of Satan, who is the prince of darkness; (Eph. 6. 12.) and from the damnation of hell, which is utter darkness, Matt. 25. 30. They are called out of darkness," 1 Pet. 2. 9.

2. "He hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, brought us into the gospel-state, and made us members of the church of Christ, which is a state of light and purity." *Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord*, Eph. 5. 8. *Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2. 9. They were made willing subjects of Christ, who were the slaves of Satan. The conversion of a sinner is the translation of a soul into the kingdom of Christ out of the kingdom of the Devil. The power of sin is shaken off, and the power of Christ submitted to. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and death; and it is the kingdom of his dear Son, of the Son of his peculiar love, his beloved Son, (Matt. 3. 17.) and eminently the Beloved, Eph. 1. 6.

3. "He hath not only done this, but hath made us meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, v. 12. He hath prepared us for the eternal happiness of heaven, as the Israelites divided the Promised Land by lot; and hath given us the earnest and assurance of it." This he mentions first, because it is the first indication of the future blessedness, that by the grace of God we find ourselves in some measure prepared for it. God gives grace and glory, and we are here told what they both are. (1.) What that glory is. It is the inheritance of the saints in light. It is an inheritance, and belongs to them as children, which is the best security, and the sweetest tenure; *If children, then heirs*, Rom. 8. 17. And it is an inheritance of the saints—proper to sanctified souls. They who are not saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. And it is an inheritance in light; the perfection of knowledge, holiness, and joy, by communion with God, who is light, and the Father of lights, Jam. 1. 17. 1 John 1. 5. (2.) What this grace is. It is a meetness for the inheritance. "He hath made us meet to be partakers, suited and fitted us for the heavenly state by a proper temper and habit of soul; and he makes us meet by the powerful influence of his Spirit." It is the effect of the divine power to change the heart, and make it heavenly. Observe, All who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. As they who live and die unsanctified, go out of the world with their hell about them; so they who are sanctified and renewed, go out of the world with their heaven about them. They who have the inheritance of sons, have the education of sons and the disposition of sons: they have the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, *Abba, Father*,

Rom. 8. 15. *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*, Gal. 4. 6.

This meetness for heaven is the earnest of the Spirit in our heart; which is part of payment, and assures the full payment. They who are sanctified, shall be glorified, (Rom. 8. 30.) and will be for ever indebted to the grace of God, which hath sanctified them.

II. Concerning the person of the Redeemer. Glorious things are here said of him; for blessed Paul was full of Christ, and took all occasions to speak honourably of him. He speaks of him distinctly as God, and as Mediator. As God he speaks of him, v. 15—17.

1. He is the Image of the invisible God. Not as man was made in the image of God, (Gen. 1. 26.) in his natural faculties and dominion over the creatures: no, he is the express Image of his person, Heb. 1. 3. He is so the Image of God, as the Son is the image of his Father, who has a natural likeness to him; and as he who has seen him, has seen the Father; and his glory was the glory of the only begotten of the Father, John 1. 14.—14. 9.

2. He is the First-born of every creature. Not that he is himself a creature; for it is *αὐτοῦ τὸ αἶμα*—born or begotten before all the creation, or any creature, was made; which is the scripture-way of representing eternity, and by which the eternity of God is represented to us; *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; when there was no depth, before the mountains were settled, while as yet he had not made the earth*, Prov. 8. 23—26. It signifies his dominion over all things; as the first-born in a family is heir and lord of all, so he is the Heir of all things, Heb. 1. 2. The word, with only the change in the accent, *αὐτοῦ τὸ αἶμα*, signifies actively, the first begetter or producer of all things, and so it well agrees with the following clause: *Vid. Isidor. Peleus. epist. 30. lib. 3.*

3. He is so far from being himself a creature, that he is the Creator: *For by him were all things created, which are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible*, v. 16. He made all things out of nothing; the highest angel in heaven, as well as men upon earth. He made the world, the upper and lower world, with all the inhabitants of both; *all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made, which was made*, John 1. 3. He speaks here, as if there were several orders of angels; *whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*, which must signify either different degrees of excellence, or different offices and employment. *Angels, authorities, and powers*, 1 Pet. 3. 22. Christ is the eternal Wisdom of the Father, and the world was made in wisdom. He is the eternal Word, and the world was made by the word of God. He is the Arm of the Lord, and the world was made by that arm. *All things are created by him and for him*; *δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτόν*. Being created by him, they were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure, and for his praise. He is the End, as well as the Cause of all things. *To him are all things*, Rom. 11. 36. *εἰς αὐτόν τὰ πάντα*.

4. He is before all things. He had a being before the world was made; before the beginning of time, and therefore from all eternity. *Wisdom was with the Father, and possessed by him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old*, Prov. 8. 22. *And in the beginning the Word was with God, and was God*, John 1. 1. He not only had a being before he was born of the virgin, but he had a being before all time.

5. By him all things consist. They not only subsist in their beings, but consist in their order and de-

pendencies. He not only created them all at first, but it is by the *word of his power* that they are still upheld, Heb. 1. 3. The whole creation is kept together by the power of the Son of God, and made to consist in its proper frame. It is preserved from disbanding, and running into confusion.

The apostle next shews what he is as *Mediator*, v. 18, 19.

(1.) He is the *Head of the body, the church*: not only a Head of government and direction, as the king is the head of the state, and has right to prescribe laws, but a Head of vital influence, as the head in the natural body: for all grace and strength are derived from him; and the church is his body, the *fulness of him who filleth all in all*, Eph. 1. 22, 23.

(2.) He is the *Beginning, the First-born from the dead*, *πρῶτος ἀναστὰς*; the Principle, the First-born from the dead; the Principle of our resurrection, as well as the First-born himself. All our hopes and joys take their rise from him who is the Author of our salvation. Not that he was the first who ever rose from the dead, but the first and only one who rose by his own power, and was declared to be the *Son of God, and Lord of all things*. And he is the Head of the resurrection, and has given us an example and evidence of our resurrection from the dead. He rose as the *First-fruits*, 1 Cor. 15. 20.

(3.) He hath in *all things the pre-eminence*. It was the will of the Father that he should have *all power in heaven and earth*, that he might be preferred above angels, and all the powers in heaven; (he has *obtained a more excellent name than they*, Heb. 1. 4.) and that in all the affairs of the *kingdom of God* among men he should have the pre-eminence. He has the *pre-eminence* in the hearts of his people above the world and the flesh; and by giving him the pre-eminence we comply with the Father's will, *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John 5. 23.

(4.) *All fulness dwells in him*, and it *pleased the Father* it should do so; (v. 19.) not only a fulness of abundance for himself, but redundancy for us; a fulness of merit and righteousness, of strength and grace. As the head is the seat and source of the animal spirits, so is Christ of all graces to his people. *It pleased the Father* that all fulness should dwell in him; and we may have free resort to him for all that grace which we have occasion for. He not only intercedes for it, but is the Trustee in whose hands it is lodged to dispense to us. *Of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace*; grace in us answering to that grace which is in him; (John 1. 16.) and *he fills all in all*, Eph. 1. 23.

III. Concerning the work of redemption. He speaks of the nature of it, or wherein it consists; and of the means of it, by which it was procured.

1. Wherein it consists. It is made to lie in two things. (1.) In the remission of sin; *In whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins*, v. 14. It was sin which sold us, sin which enslaved us: if we are redeemed, we must be redeemed from sin; and this is by forgiveness, or remitting the obligation to punishment. So Eph. 1. 7. *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*. (2.) In reconciliation to God, God by him *reconciled all things to himself*, v. 20. He is the Mediator of reconciliation, who procures peace as well as pardon, and brings them into a state of friendship and favour at present, and will bring all holy creatures, angels as well as men, into one glorious and blessed society at last; *things in earth, or things in heaven*. So Eph. 1. 10. *He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth*. The word is *ἀνακαταστήσει*—he will bring them all under one head. The Gentiles, who were alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet now hath

he reconciled, v. 21. Here see what was their condition by nature, and in their Gentile state—estranged from God, and at enmity with God; and yet this *enmity is slain*, and, notwithstanding this distance, we are now reconciled. Christ has laid the foundation for our reconciliation; for he has paid the price of it, has purchased the proffer and promise of it, proclaims it as a Prophet, applies it as a King. Observe, The greatest enemies to God, who have stood at the greatest distance, and bidden him defiance, may be reconciled, if it is not their own fault.

2. How the redemption is procured; *It is through his blood*, (v. 14.) he has *made peace through the blood of his cross*, (v. 20.) and it is in the *body of his flesh through death*, v. 22. It was the *blood which made an atonement, for the blood is the life*; and without the *shedding of blood there is no remission*, Heb. 9. 22. There was such a value in the blood of Christ, that, on the account of Christ's shedding it, God was willing to deal with men upon new terms, and bring them under a covenant of grace; and for his sake, and in consideration of his death upon the cross, to pardon and accept to favour all who comply with them.

IV. Concerning the *preaching* of this redemption. Here observe,

1. To whom it was preached; *To every poor creature under heaven*; (v. 23.) it was ordered to be preached to *every creature*, Mark 16. 15. It may be preached to every creature; for the gospel excludes none who do not exclude themselves. More or less it has been, or will be, preached to every nation; though many have sinned away the light of it, and perhaps some have never yet enjoyed it.

2. By whom it was preached; *Whereof I Paul am made a minister*. Paul was a great apostle; but he looks upon it as the highest of his titles of honour, to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul takes all occasions to speak of his office; for he *magnified his office*, Rom. 11. 13. And again in v. 25. *Whereof I am made a minister*. Observe here, (1.) Whence Paul had his ministry; it was according to the *dispensation of God which was given to him*, (v. 25.) the economy or wise disposition of things in the house of God. He was *steward and master-builder*, and this was given to him: He did not usurp it, or take it to himself; and he could not challenge it as a debt. He received it from God as a gift, and took it as a favour. (2.) For whose sake he had his ministry; *"It is for you, for your benefit: ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake"*, 1 Cor. 4. 5. We are Christ's ministers for the good of his people: *to fulfil the word of God*, fully to preach it, of which you will have the greater advantage. The more we fulfil our ministry, or fill up the parts of it, the greater will be the benefit of the people; they will be the more filled with knowledge, and furnished for service." (3.) What kind of preacher Paul was. This is particularly represented. [1.] He was a suffering preacher; *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you*, v. 24. He suffered in the cause of Christ, and for the good of the church. He suffered for preaching the gospel to them. And while he suffered in so good a cause, he could rejoice in his sufferings; *rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer*, and esteem it an honour to him. *And fill up that which is behind of the affliction of Christ in my flesh*. Not that the afflictions of Paul, or any other, were expiations for sin, as the sufferings of Christ were. There was nothing wanting in them; nothing which needed to be filled up: they were perfectly sufficient to answer the intention of them, the satisfaction of God's justice, in order to the salvation of his people. But the sufferings of Paul and other good ministers made them conformable to Christ; and they followed him in his suffering state: so they are said to fill up what was behind of the sufferings of Christ, as the

wax fills up the vacuities of the seal, when it receives the impression of it. Or it may be meant not of Christ's sufferings, but of his suffering for Christ. He filled up that which was behind. He had a certain rate and measure of suffering for Christ assigned him; and as his sufferings were agreeable to that appointment, so he was still filling up more and more what was behind, or remained of them to his share. [2.] He was a close preacher: he preached not only in public, but from house to house, from person to person. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom*, v. 28. Every man has need to be warned and taught, and therefore let every man have his share. Observe, *First*, When we warn people of what they do amiss, we must teach them to do better: *warning and teaching* must go together. *Secondly*, Men must be warned and taught in all wisdom. We must choose the fittest seasons, and use the likeliest means, and accommodate ourselves to the different circumstances and capacities of those we have to do with, and teach them as they are able to bear. That which he aimed at, was, to *present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*, *trials*: either perfect in the knowledge of the Christian doctrine; (*Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded*, Philip. 3. 15. 2 Tim. 3. 17.) or else crowned with a glorious reward hereafter, when he will *present to himself a glorious church*, (Eph. 5. 27.) and bring them to the *spirits of just men made perfect*, Heb. 12. 23. Observe, Ministers ought to aim at the improvement and salvation of every particular person who hears them. *Thirdly*, He was a laborious preacher, and one who took pains: he was no loiterer, and did not do the work of the Lord negligently; (v. 29.) *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*. He laboured and strove; used great diligence, and contended with many difficulties, according to the measure of grace afforded to him, and the extraordinary presence of Christ which was with him. Observe, As Paul laid out himself to do much good; so he had this favour, that the power of God wrought in him the more effectually. The more we labour in the work of the Lord, the greater measure of help we may expect from him in it; (Eph. 3. 7.) *According to the gift of the grace of God given us to me, by the effectual working of his power*.

3. The gospel which was preached. We have an account of that; *even the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but is now made manifest to his saints*, v. 26, 27. Observe, (1.) The mystery of the gospel was long hidden: it was concealed from ages and generations, the several ages of the church under the Old Testament-dispensation. They were in a state of minority, and training up for a more perfect state of things, and could not look to the end of those things which were ordained, 2 Cor. 3. 13. (2.) This mystery now, in the fullness of time, is made manifest to the saints, or clearly revealed and made apparent. The veil which was over Moses's face, is done away in Christ, 2 Cor. 3. 14. The meanest saint under the gospel understands more than the greatest prophets under the law. He who is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than they. The mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, Eph. 3. 4, 5. And what is this mystery? It is the riches of God's glory among the Gentiles. The peculiar doctrine of the gospel was a mystery which was before hid, and is now made manifest and made known. But the great mystery here referred to, is, the breaking down the partition-wall between the Jew and Gentile, and preaching the gospel to the Gentile world, and making them partakers of the privileges of the gospel-state who

before lay in ignorance and idolatry; *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers together of his promise in Christ by the gospel*, Eph. 3. 6. Which mystery, thus made known, is, *Christ in you the hope of glory*, or among you. Observe, Christ is the hope of Glory. The ground of our hope is Christ in the word, or the gospel-revelation, declaring the nature and methods of obtaining it. The evidence of our hope is Christ in the heart, or the sanctification of the soul, and its preparation for the heavenly glory.

4. The duty of those who are interested in this redemption; *If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard*, v. 23. We must continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, that is, we must be so well fixed in our minds, as not to be moved from it by any temptations. We must be steadfast and unmovable, (1 Cor. 15. 58.) and hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, Heb. 10. 23. Observe, Then only can we expect the happy end of our faith, when we continue in the faith, and are so far grounded and settled in it, as not to be moved from it. We must not draw back unto perdition, but believe unto the saving of the soul, Heb. 10. 39. We must be faithful to death, through all trials, that we may receive the crown of life, and receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, 1 Pet. 1. 9.

CHAP. II.

I. The apostle expresses concern for the Colossians, v. 1. 4. II. He repeats it again, v. 5. III. He cautions them against false teachers among the Jews, (v. 6, 7.) and against the Gentile philosophy, v. 8. 12. IV. He represents the privileges of Christians, v. 13. 15. And concludes with a caution against the judaizing teachers, and those who would introduce the worship of angels, v. 16. 23.

1. **F**OR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; 2. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We may observe here the great concern which Paul had for these Colossians, and the other churches, which he had not any personal knowledge of. The apostle had never been at Colosse, and the church planted there was not of his planting; and yet he had as tender a care of it, as if it had been the only people of his charge; (v. 1.) *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh*. Observe, (1.) Paul's care of the church was such as amounted to a conflict. He was in a sort of agony, and had a constant fear respecting what would become of them. Herein he was a follower of his Master, who was in an agony for us, and was heard in that he feared. Observe, (2.) We may keep up a communion by faith, hope, and holy love, even with those churches and fellow-Christians, of whom we have no personal knowledge, and with whom we have no conversation. We can think, and pray, and be concerned for one another, at the greatest distance; and those we never saw in the flesh, we may hope to meet in heaven.

But what was it that the apostle desired for them?

v. 2. *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, &c.* It was their spiritual welfare that he was solicitous about. He does not say, that they may be healthy and merry, and rich and great and prosperous; but that their *hearts may be comforted*. Note, The prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity, and what we should be most solicitous about for ourselves and others. We have here a description of soul-prosperity.

1. When our knowledge grows to an *understanding of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*; then the soul prospers, when we come to have a more clear, distinct, methodical knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. *To understand the mystery*, either what was before concealed, but is now made known concerning the Father and Christ: or, the mystery before-mentioned, of calling the *Gentiles into the Christian church*, as the Father and Christ have revealed it in the gospel; and not barely to speak of it by rote, or as we have been taught it by our catechisms, but to be led into it, and enter into the meaning and design of it. This is what we should labour after, and then the soul prospers.

2. When our faith grows to a full assurance, and bold acknowledgment of this mystery. (1.) To a full assurance, or a well-settled judgment, upon their proper evidence, of the great truths of the gospel; without doubting, or calling them in question, but embracing them with the highest satisfaction, as *faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation*. (2.) When it comes to a free acknowledgment; and we not only believe with the heart, but are ready, when called to it, to make *confession* with our *mouth*; and are not ashamed of our Master and our holy religion, under the frowns and violence of their enemies. This is called the *riches of the full assurance of understanding*. Great knowledge and strong faith make a soul rich. This is being *rich toward God*, and *rich in faith*, and the *true riches*, Luke 12. 21. Jam. 2. 5.

3. It consists in the abundance of comfort in our souls; *That their hearts might be comforted*. The soul then prospers, when it is filled with *joy and peace*, (Rom. 15. 13.) and has a satisfaction within, which all the troubles without cannot disturb; and is able to *joy in the Lord*, when all other comforts fail, Hab. 3. 17, 18.

4. The more intimate communion we have with our fellow-Christians, the more the soul prospers; *Being knit together in love*. Holy love knits the hearts of Christians one to another; and faith and love both contribute to our comfort. The stronger our faith is, and the warmer our love, the more will our comfort be.

Having occasion to mention Christ; (v. 2.) according to his usual way, he makes this remark, to his honour; (v. 3.) *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. He had said, (ch. 1. 19.) *That all fulness dwells in him*: here he mentions particularly the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. There is a fulness of wisdom in him, as he has perfectly revealed the will of God to mankind. Observe, The treasures of wisdom are hid, not from us, but for us, in Christ. They who would be wise and knowing, must apply themselves to Christ. We must spend upon the stock which is laid up for us in him, and draw from the treasures which are hid in him. He is the *Wisdom of God*, and is of *God made unto us Wisdom*, &c. 1 Cor. 1. 24, 30.

His concern for them is repeated; (v. 5.) *Though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit*; *joying, and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ*. Observe, (1.) We may be present in spirit with those churches and Christians from whom we are absent in body; for the communion of saints is a spiritual thing. Paul had heard concerning the Colossians, that they were

orderly and regular; and though he had never seen them, nor was present with them, he tells them he could easily think himself among them, and look with pleasure upon their good behaviour. Observe, (2.) The order and steadfastness of Christians are matter of joy to ministers; they joy when they behold their order, their regular behaviour, and steadfast adherence to the Christian doctrine. Observe, (3.) The more steadfast our faith in Christ is, the better order there will be in our whole conversation; for we *live and walk by faith*, 2 Cor. 5. 7. Heb. 10. 38.

4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. 5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying, and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; 7. Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10. And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power. 11. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

The apostle cautions the Colossians against deceivers; (v. 4.) *And this I say, lest any man beguile you with enticing words*; and v. 8. *Lest any man spoil you*. He insists so much upon the perfection of Christ and the gospel-revelation, to preserve them from the insinuating insinuations of those who would corrupt their principles. Note, 1. The way in which Satan spoils souls, is, by *beguiling* them. He *deceives* them, and by it slays them. He is the *old serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtilty*, 2 Cor. 11. 3. He could not ruin us if he did not cheat us; and he could not cheat us but by our own fault and folly. 2. Satan's agents, who aim to spoil them, beguile them with *enticing words*. See the danger of enticing words; how many are ruined by the flattery of those who *lie in wait to deceive*; and by the false disguises and fair appearances of evil principles and wicked practices. *By good words, and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple*, Rom. 16. 18. "You ought to stand upon your guard against enticing words, and be aware and afraid of those who would entice you to any evil; for that which they aim at, is, to spoil you." *If sinners entice thee, consent thou not*, Prov. 1. 10. Observe,

1. A sovereign antidote against seducers; (v. 6, 7.) *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up, &c.* Here note, 1. All Christians have, in profession at least, received *Jesus Christ the Lord*; received him as Christ, the great Prophet of the church, anointed by God to reveal his will; as Jesus the great High Priest, and Saviour from sin and wrath, by the expiatory sacrifice of himself; and as Lord, or Sovereign and

King, whom we are to obey and be subject to. *Received him*, consented to him, taken him for our's, in every relation and capacity, and for all the purposes and uses of them. 2. The great concern of those who have received Christ, is, *to walk in him*; to make their practices conformable to their principles, and their conversations agreeable to their engagements. As we have received Christ, or consented to be his; so we must walk with him in our daily course, and keep up our communion with him. 3. The more closely we walk with Christ, the more we are *rooted and established in the faith*. A good conversation is the best establishment of a good faith. If we walk in him, we shall be rooted in him; and the more firmly we are rooted in him, the more closely we shall walk in him; *rooted and built up*. Observe, We cannot be *built up* in Christ, unless we are *first rooted* in him. We must be united to him by a lively faith, and heartily consent to his covenant; and then we shall *grow up in him in all things*; "*As ye have been taught*"; according to the rule of the Christian doctrine, in which ye have been instructed." Observe, A good education has a good influence upon our establishment. We must be *established in the faith, as we have been taught, abounding therein*. Observe, Being established in the faith, we must *abound* therein, and improve in it more and more; and this *with thanksgiving*. Again, The way to have the benefit and comfort of God's grace, is, to be much in giving thanks for it. We must join thanksgiving to all our improvements, and be sensible of the mercy of all our privileges and attainments. Observe,

II. The fair warning given us of our danger: (v. 8.) *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*. There is a philosophy which is a noble exercise of our reasonable faculties, and highly serviceable to religion; such a study of the works of God as leads us to the knowledge of God, and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is *vain and deceitful*; which is prejudicial to religion, and sets up the wisdom of man in competition with the wisdom of God; and while it pleases men's fancies, ruins their faith; as nice and curious speculations about things above us, or of no use and concern to us; or a care of words and terms of art, which have only an empty, and often a cheating, appearance of knowledge. *After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world*: this plainly reflects upon the Jewish pedagogy or economy, as well as the Pagan learning. The Jews governed themselves by the traditions of their elders, and the *rudiments* or elements of the world, the rites and observances which were only preparatory and introductory to the gospel-state: the Gentiles mixed their maxims of philosophy with their Christian principles; and both alienated their minds from Christ. They who pin their faith on other men's sleeves, and walk in the way of the world, are turned away from following after Christ.

The deceivers were especially the Jewish teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses in conjunction with the gospel of Christ, but really in competition with it, and contradiction to it. Now here the apostle shews,

1. That we have in Christ the substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law: for example, (1.) Had they then the *Shechinah*, or special presence of God, called the *glory*, from the visible token of it? So have we now in Jesus Christ: (v. 9.) *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the *cherubims*, in a cloud which covered the *mercy-seat*: but now it dwells in the person of our Redeemer, who partakes of our nature, and is *Bone of our bone,*

and *Flesh of our flesh*; and has more clearly declared the *Father to us*. It dwells in him *bodily*; not as the body is opposed to the *spirit*, but as the body is opposed to the *shadow*. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ really, and not figuratively; for he is both God and Man. (2.) Had they *circumcision*, which was the *seal of the covenant*? In Christ we are *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, (v. 11.) by the work of *regeneration* in us, which is the spiritual or Christian circumcision: *He is a Jew, who is one inwardly*; and *circumcision is that of the heart*, Rom. 2. 29. This is owing to Christ, and belongs to the Christian dispensation. *It is made without hands*; not by the power of any creature, but by the power of the blessed Spirit of God. We are *born of the Spirit*, John 3. 5. And it is the *washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit*, Tit. 3. 5. It consists in *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh*; in renouncing sin, and reforming our lives, not in mere external rites. It is not the *putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God*, 1 Pet. 3. 21. And it is not enough to put away some one particular sin, but we must put off the whole body of them. *The old man must be crucified, and the body of sin destroyed*, Rom. 6. 6. Christ was circumcised, and, by virtue of our union to him, we partake of that *effectual grace* which puts off the *body of the sins of the flesh*. Again, The Jews thought themselves *complete in the ceremonial law*; but we are *complete in Christ*, v. 10. That was *imperfect and defective*; if the first covenant had been *faultless, there should no place have been sought for the second*; (Heb. 8. 7.) and the law was but a *shadow of good things, and could never, by those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect*, Heb. 10. 1. But all the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by the complete *sacrifice* for sin and *revelation* of the will of God; which is the *head of all principality and power*. As the Old Testament priesthood had its perfection in Christ; so likewise had the kingdom of David, which was the eminent principality and power under the Old Testament, and which the Jews valued themselves so much upon. And he is the Lord and Head of all the powers in heaven and earth, of angels and men. *Angels and authorities are subject unto him*, 1 Pet. 3. 22.

2. We have communion with Christ in his whole undertaking; (v. 12.) *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him*. We are both *buried and rise with him*, and both are signified by our baptism; not that there is any thing in the sign or ceremony of baptism, which represents this *burying and rising*, any more than the crucifixion of Christ is represented by any visible resemblance in the Lord's supper: and he is speaking of the *circumcision made without hands*; and says, it is *through the faith of the operation of God*. But the thing signified by our baptism, is, that we are buried with Christ, as baptism is the seal of the covenant, and an obligation to our dying to sin; and that we are risen with Christ, as it is a seal and obligation to our *living to righteousness, or newness of life*. God in baptism engages to be to us a *God*, and we become engaged to be *his people*, and by his grace to *die to sin, and to live to righteousness, or put off the old man, and put on the new*.

13. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14. Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and

took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: 15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

The apostle here represents the *privileges* we Christians have above the Jews, which are very great.

1. Christ's death is our life; (v. 13.) *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him.* A state of sin is a state of spiritual death. They who are in sin, are dead in sin. As the death of the body consists in its separation from the soul, so the death of the soul consists in its separation from God and the divine favour. As the death of the body is the corruption and putrefaction of it, so sin is the corruption or depravation of the soul. As a man who is dead is unable to help himself by any power of his own, so an habitual sinner is morally impotent: though he has a natural power, or the power of a reasonable creature, he has not a spiritual power, till he has the divine life, or a renewed nature. It is principally to be understood of the Gentile world, who lay in wickedness. They were dead in the uncircumcision of their flesh, being aliens to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world, Eph. 2. 11, 12. By reason of their uncircumcision they were dead in their sins. It may be understood of the spiritual uncircumcision or corruption of nature; and so it shews that we are dead in law, and dead in state. Dead in law, as a condemned malefactor is called a dead man because he is under a sentence of death; so sinners by the guilt of sin are under the sentence of the law, and condemned already, John 3. 18. And dead in state, by reason of the uncircumcision of our flesh. An unsanctified heart is called an uncircumcised heart: this is our state. Now through Christ, we, who were dead in sins, are quickened; effectual provision is made for the taking away the guilt of sin, and breaking the power and dominion of it. *Quickened together with him*; by virtue of our union to him, and in conformity to him. Christ's death was the death of our sins; Christ's resurrection is the quickening of our souls.

2. Through him we have the remission of sin; *Having forgiven you all trespasses.* This is our quickening. The pardon of the crime is the life of the criminal: and this is owing to the resurrection of Christ, as well as his death; for as he died for our sins, so he rose again for our justification, Rom. 4. 25.

3. Whatsoever is in force against us, is taken out of the way. He has obtained for us a legal discharge from the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us; (v. 14.) which may be understood, (1.) Of that obligation to punishment, in which consists the guilt of sin. The curse of the law is the hand-writing against us, like the hand-writing on Belshazzar's wall. *Cursed is every one who continues not in every thing.* This was a hand-writing which was against us, and contrary to us; for it threatened our eternal ruin. This was removed when he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Gal. 3. 13. He cancelled the obligation for all who repent and believe. "Upon me be the curse, my father." He vacated and disannulled the judgment which was against us. When he was nailed to the cross, the curse was as it were nailed to the cross. And our indwelling corruption is crucified with Christ, and by the virtue of his cross. When we remember the dying of the Lord Jesus, and see him nailed to the cross, we should see the hand-writing against us taken out of the way. Or rather, (2.) It must be understood of the ceremonial law; the hand-writing of ordinances, the ceremonial institutions or the law of commandments

contained in ordinances, (Eph. 2. 15.) which was a yoke to the Jews, and a partition-wall to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; disannulled the obligation of it, that all might see and be satisfied it was no more binding. When the substance was come, the shadows flee away. It is abolished; (2 Cor. 3. 13.) and that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away, Heb. 8. 13. The expressions are in allusion to the ancient methods of cancelling a bond, either by crossing the writing, or striking it through with a nail.

4. He has obtained a glorious victory for us over the powers of darkness; *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it,* v. 15. As the curse of the law was against us, so the power of Satan was against us. He treated with God as the Judge, and redeemed us out of the hands of his justice by a price; but out of the hands of Satan the executioner he redeemed us by power and with a high hand. *He led captivity captive.* The Devil and all the powers of hell were conquered and disarmed by the dying Redeemer. The first promise pointed at this; the bruising the heel of Christ in his sufferings, was the breaking the serpent's head, Gen. 3. 15. The expressions are lofty and magnificent: let us turn aside, and see this great sight. The Redeemer conquered by dying. See his crown of thorns turned into a crown of laurels. He spoiled them, broke the Devil's power, and conquered and disabled him, and made a shew of them openly; exposed them to public shame, and made a shew of them to angels and men. Never had the Devil's kingdom such a mortal blow given to it, as was given by the Lord Jesus. He tied them to his chariot-wheels, and rode forth conquering and to conquer; alluding to the custom of a general's triumph, who returned victorious, triumphing over them in it, either in his cross and by his death; or, as some read it, in himself, by his own power; for he trod in the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him.

16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days: 17. Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. 18. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. 19. And not holding the Head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. 20. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances; 21. (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22. Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

The apostle concludes the chapter with exhortations to proper duty which he infers from the foregoing discourse

I. Here is a caution to take heed of judaizing teachers, or those who would impose upon Christians the yoke of the ceremonial law; *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, &c.* v. 16. Much of the ceremonies of the law of Moses consisted in the distinction of *meats and days*. It appears by Rom. 14. there were such who were for keeping up those distinctions: but here the apostle shews, that since Christ is come, and has cancelled the ceremonial law, we ought not to keep it up. "Let no man impose those things upon you, for God has not imposed them: if God has made you free, be not you again entangled in that yoke of bondage." And this the rather, because these things were *shadows of things to come*; (v. 17.) intimating, that they had no intrinsic worth in them, and that they are now done away. But the *body is of Christ*: the body, of which they were shadows, is come; and to continue the ceremonial observances, which were only types and shadows of Christ and the gospel, carries an intimation that Christ is not yet come, and the gospel-state not yet commenced. Observe the advantages we have under the gospel, above what they had under the law: they had the shadows, we the substance.

II. He cautions them to take heed of those who would introduce the worship of angels as mediators between God and them, as the Gentile philosophers did; *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels,* v. 18. It looked like a piece of modesty to make use of the mediation of angels, as conscious to ourselves of our unworthiness to speak immediately to God: but though it has a *shew of humility*, it is a voluntary, not a commanded humility; and therefore it is not acceptable, yea, it is not warrantable: it is taking that honour which is due to Christ only, and giving it to a creature. Besides, the notions upon which this practice was grounded, were merely the inventions of men, and not by divine revelation; the proud conceits of human reason, which makes men presume to dive into things, and determine them, without sufficient knowledge and warrant; *intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*: pretending to describe the orders of angels, and their respective ministries, which God has hidden from us; and therefore, though there was a shew of humility in the practice, there was a real pride in the principle. They advanced those notions to gratify their own carnal fancy, and were fond of being thought wiser than other people. Pride is at the bottom of a great many errors and corruptions, and even of many evil practices, which have a great shew and appearance of humility. They who do so, do *not hold the Head*, v. 19. They did, in effect, disclaim Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. It is the highest disparagement to Christ, who is the Head of the church, for any of the members of it to make use of any intercessors with God but him. When men let go their hold of Christ, they catch at that which is next them, and will stand them in no stead. *From which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.* Observe, 1. Jesus Christ is not only a Head of government over the church, but a Head of vital influence to it. They are knit to him by joints and bands, as the several members of the body are united to the head, and receive life and nourishment from him. Observe, 2. The body of Christ is a growing body; *it increaseth with the increase of God*. The new man is increasing, and the nature of grace is to grow, where there is not an accidental hinderance. *With the increase of God*; with an increase of grace which is from God as its Author; or, in a usual Hebraism, with a large and abundant increase. *That ye may be filled with*

all the fulness of God, Eph. 3. 19. See a parallel expression, *Which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, maketh increase of the body*, Eph. 4. 15, 16.

He takes occasion from hence to warn them again; "*Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?*" v. 20. If as Christians ye are dead to the observances of the ceremonial law, why are ye subject to them? Such observances, *Touch not, taste not, handle not,*" v. 21, 22. Under the law there was a ceremonial pollution contracted by touching a dead body, or any thing offered to an idol; or by tasting any forbidden meats, &c. *which all are to perish with the using*; having no intrinsic worth in themselves to support them; and they who used them saw them perishing and passing away: or, which tend to corrupt the Christian faith, having no other authority than the traditions and injunctions of men. *Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humility*. They thought themselves wiser than their neighbours, in observing the law of Moses together with the gospel of Christ, that they might be sure in one at least, to be in the right; but alas, it was but a shew of wisdom, a mere invention and pretence. So they seem to *neglect the body*, by abstaining from such and such meats, and mortifying their bodily pleasures and appetites; but there is nothing of true devotion in these things, for the gospel teaches us to worship God *in spirit and truth*, and not by ritual observances; and through the mediation of Christ alone, and not of any angels. Observe, (1.) Christians are freed by Christ from the ritual observances of Moses's law, and delivered from that *yoke of bondage* which God himself had laid upon them. (2.) Subjection to ordinances, or human appointments in the worship of God, is highly blameable, and contrary to the freedom and liberty of the gospel. The apostle requires Christians *to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage*, Gal. 5. 1. And the imposition of them is invading the authority of Christ, the Head of the church, and *introducing another law of commandments contained in ordinances*, when Christ has *abolished the old one*, Eph. 2. 15. Observe, (3.) Such things have only a *shew of wisdom*, but are really folly. True wisdom is, to keep close to the appointment of the gospel; and an entire subjection to Christ, the only Head of the church.

CHAP. III.

I. The apostle exhorts us to set our hearts upon heaven, and take them off from this world, v. 1. 4. II. He exhorts to the mortification of sin, in the various instances of it, v. 5. 11. III. He earnestly presses to mutual love and compassion, v. 12. 17. And concludes with exhortations to relative duties; of wives and husbands, parents and children, masters and servants, v. 18. 25.

1. **I**F ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4. When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The apostle, having described our privileges by Christ in the former part of the epistle, and our discharge from the yoke of the ceremonial law, comes here to press upon us our duty inferred from thence. Though we are made free from the obligation of

the ceremonial law, it does not therefore follow that we may live as we list. We must walk the more closely with God in all the instances of evangelical obedience. He begins with exhorting them to set their hearts on heaven, and take them off from this world; *If ye then be risen with Christ*. It is our privilege, that we are *risen with Christ*, have benefit by the resurrection of Christ; and by virtue of our union and communion with him are justified and sanctified, and shall be glorified. From hence he infers, that we must *seek those things which are above*. We must mind the concerns of another world more than the concerns of this. We must make heaven our scope and aim, seek the favour of God above, keep up our communion with the upper world by faith, and hope, and holy love, and make it our constant care and business to secure our title to the heavenly bliss. And the reason is, because *Christ sits at the right hand of God*. He who is our best Friend and our Head, is advanced to the highest dignity and honour in heaven, and is gone before, to secure to us the heavenly happiness; and therefore we should seek and secure what he has purchased at so vast an expense, and is taking so much care about. We must live such a life as Christ lived here on earth, and lives now in heaven, according to our capacities.

He explains the duty; (v. 2.) *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*. Observe, To seek heavenly things, is, to set our affection upon them, to love them, and let out our desires toward them. Upon the wings of affection the heart soars upward, and is carried forth toward spiritual and divine objects. We must acquaint ourselves with them, esteem them above all other things, and lay out ourselves in preparation for the enjoyment of them. David gave this proof of his *loving the house of God*, that he diligently sought after it, and prepared for it, Ps. 27. 4. This is to be *spiritually minded*, (Rom. 8. 6.) and to *seek and desire a better country, that is, a heavenly*, Heb. 11. 14, 16. *Things on earth* are here set in opposition to *things above*. We must not dote upon them, or expect too much from them, that we may set our affections on heaven; for heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, and a supreme regard to both is inconsistent; and the prevalence of our affection to one will proportionably weaken and abate our affection to the other. He assigns three reasons for this, v. 3, 4.

1. That we are dead; that is, to present things, and as our portion. We are so in profession and obligation; for we are *buried with Christ, and planted into the likeness of his death*. Every Christian is *crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto him*, Gal. 6. 14. And if we are dead to the earth, and have renounced it as our happiness, it is absurd for us to *set our affection upon it, and seek it*. We should be like a dead thing to it, unmoved and unaffected towards it.

2. Our true life lies in the other world; *Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*, v. 3. The new man has its livelihood from thence. It is born and nourished from above; and the perfection of its life is reserved for that state. It is *hid with Christ*; not hid from us only, in point of secrecy, but hid for us, denoting security. The life of a Christian is *hid with Christ*. *Because I live, ye shall live also*, John 14. 19. Christ is at present a hidden Christ, or one *whom we have not seen*; but this is our comfort, that our *life is hid with him*, and laid up safe with him. As we have reason to *love him whom we have not seen*, (1 Pet. 1. 8.) so we may take the comfort of a happiness out of sight, and *reserved in heaven for us*.

3. Because at the second coming of Christ we hope for the perfection of our happiness. If we live a life of Christian purity and devotion now, *when Christ,*

who is our Life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory, v. 4. Observe, (1.) Christ is a believer's life. *I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me*, Gal. 2. 20. He is the Principle and End of the Christian's life. He lives in us by his Spirit, and we live to him in all we do. *To me to live is Christ*, Phil. 1. 21. Observe, (2.) Christ will appear again. He is now *hid*; and the *heavens must contain him*; but he will appear in all the pomp of the upper world, with his *holy angels, and his own glory, and his Father's glory*, Mark 8. 38. Luke 9. 26. Observe, (3.) We shall then appear with him in glory. It will be his glory to have his redeemed with him; he will come to be glorified in his saints; (2 Thess. 1. 10.) and it will be their glory to come with him, and be with him for ever. At the second coming of Christ there will be a general meeting of all the saints; and they whose life is now *hid with Christ*, shall then appear with Christ in that glory which he himself enjoys, John 17. 24. Do we look for such a happiness as that, and should we not *set our affection upon that world, and live above this*? What is there here to make us fond of it? What is there not there to draw our hearts to it? Our Head is there, our home is there, our treasure is there, and we hope to be there for ever.

5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; 7. In which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them. 8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

The apostle exhorts the Colossians to the mortification of sin, the great hindrance to seeking the things which are above. Since it is our duty to set our affections upon heavenly things, it is our duty to mortify our *members which are upon the earth*, and which naturally incline us to the things of the world: "Mortify them, subdue the vicious habits of mind which prevailed in your Gentile state. Kill them, suppress them, as you do weeds or vermin which spread and destroy all about them, or as you kill an enemy which fights against you and wounds you." *Your members which are upon the earth*; either the *members of the body*, which are the earthly part of us, and were *curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth*; (Ps. 139. 15.) or the corrupt affections of the mind, which lead us to earthly things; the members of the *body of death*, Rom. 7. 24. He specifies,

I. The lusts of the flesh, for which they were before so very remarkable; *fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil-concupiscence*; the various workings of the carnal appetite and fleshly impurities, which they indulged in their former course of life, and which were so contrary to the Christian state and the heavenly hope.

II. The love of the world; and *covetousness,*

which is idolatry; an inordinate love of present good and outward enjoyments, which proceeds from too high a value in the mind, puts upon too eager a pursuit, hinders the proper use and enjoyment of them, and creates anxious fear and immoderate sorrow for the loss of them. Observe, Covetousness is spiritual idolatry: it is giving that love and regard to worldly wealth, which is due to God only; and carries a greater degree of malignity in it, and is more highly provoking to God, than is commonly thought. And it is very observable, that among all the other instances of sin which good men are recorded in the scripture to have fallen into; (and there is scarcely any but some or other, in one or other part of their life, have fallen into;) there is no instance in all the scripture of any good man charged with covetousness.

He proceeds to shew how necessary it is to mortify sins, v. 6, 7.

1. Because if we do not kill them, they will kill us; (v. 6.) *For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.* See what we all are by nature more or less: we are *children of disobedience*; not only disobedient children, but under the power of sin, and naturally prone to disobey. *The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies,* Ps. 58. 3. And being *children of disobedience*, we are *children of wrath*, Eph. 2. 3. The *wrath of God* comes upon all the *children of disobedience*. They who do not obey the precepts of the law, incur the penalties of it. The sins he mentions were their sins in their heathen and idolatrous state, and they were then especially the *children of disobedience*; and yet these sins brought judgments upon them, and exposed them to the wrath of God.

2. We should mortify these sins, because they have lived in us; (v. 7.) *In the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.* Observe, The consideration that we have formerly lived in sin, is a good argument why we should now forsake it. We have walked in by-paths, therefore let us walk in them no more. *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more,* Job 34. 32. *The time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness,* 1 Pet. 4. 3. *When ye lived among them who did such things,* (so some understand it,) then ye walked in those evil practices. It is a hard thing to live among them who do the *works of darkness*, and not have *fellowship* with them, as it is to walk in the mire, and contract no soil. Let us keep out of the way of evil-doers.

And as we are to mortify inordinate appetites, so we are to mortify inordinate passions; (v. 8.) *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice:* for these are contrary to the design of the gospel, as well as grosser impurities; and though they are more spiritual wickedness, have not less malignity in them. For the gospel religion introduces a change of the higher as well as the lower powers of the soul, and supports the dominion of right reason and conscience over appetite and passion. Anger and wrath are bad; but malice is worse, because it is more rooted and deliberate; it is anger heightened and settled.

And as the corrupt principles in the heart must be cut off, so the product of them in the tongue: as *blasphemy*, which seems here to mean, not so much *speaking ill of God, as speaking ill of men*; giving ill language to them, or raising ill reports of them, and injuring their good name by any evil arts and *filthy communication*: all lewd and wanton discourse, which comes from a polluted mind in the speaker, and propagates the same defilements in the hearers. *Lying; Lie not one to another,* (v. 9.) for it is contrary both to the law of truth and the law of love; and is both unjust and unkind, and nat-

urally tends to destroy all faith and friendship among mankind. Lying makes us like the Devil, (who is the *father of lies*;) and is a prime part of the Devil's image upon our souls. And therefore we are cautioned against this sin by that general reason; *seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man.* The consideration that we have by profession put away sin, and espoused the cause and interest of Christ; that we have renounced all sin, and stand engaged to Christ; should fortify us against this sin of lying. They who have *put off the old man*, have put it off *with its deeds*; and they who have *put on the new man*, must *put on all its deeds*: not only *espouse* good principles, but *act* them in a good conversation. The new man is said to be *renewed in knowledge*; because an ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. Without knowledge the heart cannot be good, Prov. 19. 2. The grace of God works upon the will and affections by renewing the understanding. Light is the first thing in the new creation, as it was in the first: *after the image of him who created him.* It was the honour of man in innocence, that he was made after the *image of God*; but that image was defaced and lost by sin, and is renewed by sanctifying grace: so that a renewed soul is something like what Adam was in the day he was created.

In the privilege and duty of sanctification *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free,* v. 11. There is now no difference arising from different country, or different condition and circumstance of life: it is as much the duty of the one as of the other, to be holy; and as much the privilege of the one as of the other, to receive from God the grace to be so. Christ came to take down all *partition-walls*, that all might stand on the same level before God, both in duty and privilege. And for this reason, because *Christ is all in all.* Christ is a Christian's all, his only Lord and Saviour, and all his Hope and Happiness. And to those who are sanctified, one as well as another, and whatever they are in other respects, he is *All in all*, the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *Beginning* and the *End*: he is *All* in all things to them.

12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, ✓ holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; 13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye.* 14. And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful. 16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

The apostle proceeds to exhort to mutual love and compassion; *Put on therefore bowels of mercy,* v. 12. We must not only *put off anger and wrath*, (as v. 8.) but we must *put on bowels of kindness*; not only *cease to do evil, but learn to do well*; not only not do hurt to any, but do what good we can to all. The argument here used to enforce the exhortation, is very affecting; *Put on, as the elect of God, holy*

and beloved. Observe, 1. They who are holy, are the elect of God; and they who are the elect of God, and holy, are *beloved*; beloved of God, and ought to be so of all men. 2. They who are the elect of God, *holy and beloved*, ought to conduct themselves in every thing as becomes them, and so as not to lose the credit of their holiness, or the comfort of their being chosen and beloved. It becomes those who are holy toward God, to be lowly and loving towards all men. Observe, What we must put on in particular. (1.) *Compassion* toward the miserable; *bowels of mercy*, the tenderest mercies. They who owe so much to mercy, ought to be merciful to all who are proper objects of mercy. *Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful*, Luke 6. 36. (2.) *Kindness* toward our friends, and those who love us. A courteous disposition becomes the elect of God; for the design of the gospel is not only to soften the minds of men, but to sweeten them, and to promote friendship among men as well as reconciliation with God. (3.) *Humbleness of mind*, in submission to those above us, and condescension to those below us. There must not only be a humble carriage, but a humble mind. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. 11. 29. (4.) *Meekness* toward those who have provoked us, or been any way injurious to us. We must not be transported into any indecency by our resentment of indignities and neglects; but must prudently bridle our own anger, and patiently bear the anger of others. (5.) *Long-suffering* toward those who continue to provoke us. *Charity suffereth long*, as well as *is kind*, 1 Cor. 13. 4. Many can bear a short provocation, who are weary of bearing when it grows long. But we must suffer long both the injuries of men and the rebukes of Divine Providence. If God is *long-suffering* to us, under all our provocations of him, we should exercise *long-suffering* to others in like cases. (6.) *Mutual forbearance*, in consideration of the infirmities and deficiencies which we all labour under; *forbearing one another*. We have all of us something which needs to be borne with; and that is a good reason why we should bear with others in what is disagreeable to us. We need the same good turn from others, which we are obliged to shew them. (7.) A readiness to *forgive injuries*; *forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any*. While we are in this world, where there is so much corruption in our hearts, and so much occasion of difference and contention, quarrels will sometimes happen, even among the elect of God, who are *holy and beloved*; as Paul and Barnabas had a *sharp contention*, which parted them *asunder one from the other*, (Acts 15. 39.) and Paul and Peter, Gal. 2. 14. But it is our duty to forgive one another in such cases; not to bear any grudge, but put up with the affront, and pass it by. And the reason is; *Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*. The consideration that we are forgiven by Christ so many offences, is a good reason why we should forgive others. It is an argument of the divinity of Christ, that he had *power on earth to forgive sins*; and it is a branch of his example which we are obliged to follow, if we ourselves would be forgiven. *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us*, Matt. 6. 12.

Now, in order to all this, we are exhorted here to several things.

I. To clothe ourselves with love; (v. 14.) *Above all things put on charity*: over all things, *ἐν παντί σε τῆτις*. Let this be the upper garment, the robe, the livery, the mark of our dignity and distinction. Or, Let this be principal and chief, as the whole sum and abstract of the second table. *Add to faith virtue, and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. 1. 5—7. He lays the foundation in faith, and the top-stone in charity, which is the bond of perfectness,

the cement and centre of all happy society. Christian unity consists in unanimity and mutual love.

II. To submit ourselves to the government of the *peace of God*; (v. 15.) *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts*, that is, *God's* being at peace with you, and the comfortable sense of his acceptance and favour: or, a disposition to peace among yourselves, a peaceable spirit, that keeps the peace, and makes peace. This is called the *peace of God*; because it is of his working in all who are his. *The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace*, Rom. 14. 17. "Let this peace rule in your heart; prevail and govern there; or, umpire and decide all matters of difference among you." *To which ye are called in one body*. We are called to this peace, to peace with God as our privilege, and peace with our brethren as our duty. Being united in *one body*, we are called to be at peace one with another, as the members of the natural body; for *we are the body of Christ, and members in particular*, 1 Cor. 12. 27. To preserve in us this peaceable disposition, we must be thankful. The work of thanksgiving to God is such a sweet and pleasant work, that it will help to make us sweet and pleasant towards all men. "Instead of envying one another upon the account of any particular favours and excellence, be thankful for his mercies, which are common to all of you."

III. To let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, v. 16. The gospel is the word of Christ, which is come to us; but that is not enough, it must dwell in us, or *keep house*—*ἐνικαίτω*; not as a servant in a family, who is under another's control, but as a master, who has a right to prescribe and direct to all under his roof. We must take our instructions and directions from it; and our portion of meat and strength, of grace and comfort, in due season, as from the *master of the household*. It must dwell in us; be always ready and at hand to us in every thing, and have its due influence and use. We must be familiarly acquainted with it, and *know it for our good*, Job 5. 27. It must dwell in us *richly*: not only keep house in our hearts, but keep a good house. Many have the word of Christ dwelling in them, but it dwells in them but *poorly*; it has no mighty force and influence upon them. Then the soul prospers, when the word of God dwells in us *richly*; when we have abundance of it in us, and are full of the scriptures and of the grace of Christ. And this in *all wisdom*. The proper office of Wisdom is, to apply what we know to ourselves, for our own direction. The word of Christ must dwell in us, not in all *notion* and *speculation*, to make us doctors, but in all *wisdom*, to make us good Christians, and enable us to conduct ourselves in every thing as becomes Wisdom's children.

IV. To *teach and admonish one another*. This would contribute very much to our furtherance in all grace; for we sharpen ourselves by quickening others, and improve our knowledge by communicating it for their edification. We must *admonish one another in psalms and hymns*. Observe, Singing of psalms is a gospel-ordinance; *ψαλμοὶ καὶ ὕμνοι καὶ ᾠαὶ*: the Psalms of David, and spiritual hymns and odes, collected out of the scripture, and suited to special occasions, instead of their lewd and profane songs in their idolatrous worship. Religious poetry seems countenanced by these expressions, and is capable of great edification. But when we sing psalms, we make no melody, unless we sing *with grace in our hearts*, unless we are suitably affected with what we sing, and go along in it with true devotion and understanding. Singing of psalms is a teaching ordinance as well as a praising ordinance; and we are not only to quicken and encourage ourselves, but to *teach and admonish one another*, mutually excite our affections, and convey instructions

V. All must be done in the name of Christ; (v.

17.) *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus:* according to his command, and in compliance with his authority; by strength derived from him; with an eye to his glory; and depending upon his merit for the accepting of what is good, and pardon of what is amiss; *Giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* Observe, 1. We must give thanks in all things; *whatsoever we do,* we must still give thanks, Eph. 5. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things.* 2. The Lord Jesus must be the Mediator of our praises as well as of our prayers; *We give thanks to God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,* Eph. 5. 20. They who do all things in Christ's name, will never want matter of thanksgiving to God, even the Father.

18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them. 20. Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to *anger*, lest they be discouraged. 22. Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25. But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

The apostle concludes the chapter with exhortations to relative duties, as before in the epistle to the Ephesians. The epistles which are most taken up in displaying the glory of the divine grace, and magnifying the Lord Jesus, are the most particular and distinct in pressing the duties of the several relations. We must never separate the privileges and duties of the gospel-religion.

1. He begins with the duties of wives and husbands; (v. 18.) *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* Submission is the duty of wives, *ὑποτάσθαι*. It is the same word which is used to express our duty to magistrates, (Rom. 13. 1. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,*) and is expressed by subjection and reverence, Eph. 5. 24, 33. The reason is, that *Adam was first formed, then Eve: and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression,* 1 Tim. 2. 13, 14. He was first in the creation, and last in the transgression. And the head of the woman is the man; and the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man; neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man, 1 Cor. 11. 3, 8, 9. It is agreeable to the order of nature and the reason of things, as well as the appointment and will of God. But then it is submission, not to a rigorous lord or absolute tyrant, who may do his will and is without restraints; but to a husband, and to her own husband, who stands in the nearest relation, and is under strict engagements to proper duty too. And *this is fit in the Lord:* it is becoming the relation, and what they are bound in duty to do, as an instance of obedience to the authority and law of Christ.

On the other hand, *husbands must love their wives, and not be bitter against them,* v. 19. They must love them with tender and faithful affection, as *Christ loved the church, and as their own bodies; and even*

as himself; (1 Ph. 5. 25, 28, 33.) with a love peculiar to the nearest relation and the greatest comfort and blessing of life. And they must not be bitter against them; or use them unkindly, with harsh language or severe treatment; but be kind and obliging to them in all things: for the woman was made for the man, neither is the man without the woman, and the man also is by the woman, 1 Cor. 11. 9, 11, 12.

II. The duties of children and parents; *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord,* v. 20. They must be willing to do all their lawful commands, and be at their direction and disposal; as those who have a natural right, and are fitter to direct them than themselves. The apostle (Eph. 6. 2.) requires them to honour as well as obey their parents; they must esteem them, and think honourably of them; as the obedience of their lives must proceed from the esteem and opinion of their minds. And this is *well-pleasing to God*, or acceptable to him; for it is the *first commandment with promise*, (Eph. 6. 2.) with an explicit promise annexed to it, *That it shall be well with them, and they shall live long on the earth.* Dutiful children are the most likely to prosper in the world, and enjoy long life.

And parents must be tender, as well as children obedient; (v. 21.) *"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."* Let not your authority over them be exercised with rigour and severity, but with kindness and gentleness; lest you raise their passions, and discourage them in their duty, and by holding the reins too strait make them fly out with the greater fierceness." The ill temper and example of imprudent parents often prove a great hindrance to their children, and a stumbling-block in their way; see Eph. 6. 4. And it is by the tenderness of parents, and dutifulness of children, that God ordinarily furnishes his church with a seed to serve him, and propagates religion from age to age.

III. Servants and masters; *Servants, obey your masters in all things according to the flesh,* v. 22. Servants must do the duty of the relation in which they stand, and obey their masters' commands in all things which are consistent with their duty to God their heavenly Master. *Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers:* not only when their master's eye is upon them, but when they are from under their master's eye. They must be both just and diligent. *In singleness of heart, fearing God:* without selfish designs, or hypocrisy and disguise, as those who fear God, and stand in awe of him. Observe, The fear of God, ruling in the heart, will make people good in every relation. Servants who fear God, will be just and faithful when they are from under their master's eye, because they know they are under the eye of God; (Gen 20. 11.) *Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place.* Neh. 5. 15. *But so did not I, because of the fear of God.* "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily," (v. 23.) with diligence, not idly and slothfully;" or, "Do it cheerfully, not discontented at the providence of God which put you in that relation." *As to the Lord, and not as to men.* It sanctifies a servant's work when it is done *as unto God;* with an eye to his glory, and in obedience to his command, and not merely *as unto men,* or with regard to them only. Observe, We are really doing our duty to God, when we are faithful in our duty to men. And for servants' encouragement, let them know, that a good and faithful servant is never the further from heaven for his being a servant; *"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ,"* v. 24. Serving your masters according to the command of Christ, you serve Christ, and he will be your Paymaster: you will have a glorious reward at last. Though you are now servants, you

shall receive the inheritance of sons. But, on the other hand, *He who doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done,*" v. 25. There is a righteous God, who, if servants wrong their masters, will reckon with them for it, though they may conceal it from their notice. And he will be sure to punish the unjust as well as reward the faithful servant: and so if masters wrong their servants. *And there is no respect of persons with him.* The righteous Judge of the earth will be impartial, and carry it with an equal hand toward master and servant; not swayed by any regard to men's outward circumstances and condition of life. The one and the other will stand upon a level at his tribunal.

It is probable that the apostle has a particular respect, in all these instances of duty, to the case mentioned, 1 Cor. 7. of relations of a different religion, as a Christian and heathen, a Jewish convert and uncircumcised Gentile; where there was room to doubt whether they were obliged to the proper duties of their several relations to such persons. And if it hold in such cases, it is much stronger upon Christians one towards another, and where both are of the same religion. And how happy would the gospel-religion make the world, if it every where prevailed; and how much would it influence every state of things, and every relation of life!

CHAP. IV.

I. He continues his account of the duty of masters, from the close of the former chapter, v. 1. II. He exhorts to the duty of prayer, (v. 2..4.) and to a prudent and decent conduct toward those with whom we converse, v. 5, 6. III. He closes the epistle with the mention of several of his friends, of whom he gives an honourable testimony, v. 7..18.

1. **MASTERS**, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

The apostle proceeds with the duty of masters to their servants, which might have been joined to the foregoing chapter, and is a part of that discourse. Here observe,

1. Justice is required of them; "*Give unto your servants that which is just and equal;*" (v. 1.) not only strict justice, but equity and kindness. Be faithful to your promises to them, and perform your agreements; not defrauding them of their dues, or *keeping back by fraud the hire of the labourers*, Jam. 5. 4. Require no more of them than they are able to perform; and do not lay unreasonable burthens upon them, and beyond their strength. Provide for them what is fit, supply proper food and physic, and allow them such liberties as may enable them the better for cheerful service, and make it the easier to them: and this, though they are employed in the meanest and lowest offices, and are of another country and a different religion from yourselves.

2. A good reason for this regard; "*Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*" Ye who are masters of others, have a Master yourselves, and are servants of another Lord. Ye are not lords of yourselves, and are accountable to one above you. Do ye deal with your servants as you expect God should deal with you; and as those who believe you must give an account. Ye are both servants of the same Lord in the different relations in which you stand, and are equally accountable to him at last. *Knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him,*" Eph. 6. 9.

2. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; 3. Withal praying

also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4. That I make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

If this be considered as connected with the foregoing verse, then we may observe, that it is part of the duty which masters owe their servants, to pray with them, and to pray daily with them, or *continue in prayer*. They must not only do justly and kindly by them, but act a Christian and religious part, and be concerned for their souls as well as their bodies; "as parts of your charge, and under your influence. Be concerned for the blessing of God upon them, as well as the success of your affairs in their hands." And this is the duty of every one; to *continue in prayer*. "Keep up your constant times of prayer, without being diverted from it by other business; keep your hearts close to the duty, without wandering or deadness; and even to the end of it: *watching in the same.*" Christians should lay hold on all opportunities for prayer, and choose the fittest seasons, which are least liable to disturbance from other things, and keep their minds lively in the duty, and in suitable frames. *With thanksgiving*, or solemn acknowledgment of the mercies received. Thanksgiving must have a part in every prayer.

Withal praying also for us, v. 3. The people must pray particularly for their ministers, and bear them upon their hearts at all times at the throne of grace. "Do not forget us, whenever you pray for yourselves," Eph. 6. 19. 1 Thess. 5. 25. Heb. 13. 18. *That God would open to us a door of utterance*; either afford opportunity to preach the gospel; (so he says, *a great door and effectual is opened to me*, 1 Cor. 16. 9.) or else give me ability and courage, and enable me with freedom and faithfulness; so Eph. 6. 19. *And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds*; that is, either the deepest doctrines of the gospel with plainness, of which Christ is the principal Subject; (he calls it, *the mystery of the gospel*, Eph. 6. 19.) or else he means the preaching of the gospel to the Gentile world, which he calls *the mystery hid from ages*, (ch. 1. 26.) and *the mystery of Christ*, Eph. 3. 4. For this he was now in bonds. He was a prisoner at Rome, by the violent opposition of the malicious Jews. He would have them pray for him, that he might not be discouraged in his work, or driven from it by his sufferings; "*That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak*, v. 4. That I may make this mystery known to those who have not heard of it; and make it plain to their understanding, in such a manner as I ought to do." He had been particular in telling them what he prayed for them, ch. 1. Here he tells them particularly what he would have them pray for him. Paul knew as well as any man how to speak: and yet he begs their prayers for him, that he might be taught to speak. The best and most eminent Christians need the prayers of meaner Christians, and are not above asking them. The chief speakers need prayer, that God would give them a *door of utterance*, and that they may speak as they *ought to speak*.

5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

The apostle exhorts them further to a prudent and decent conduct towards all those with whom

they conversed : toward the heathen world, or those out of the Christian church, among whom they lived ; (v. 5.) “ *Walk in wisdom toward them who are without.* Be careful, in all your converse with them, to get no hurt by them, or contract any of their customs ; for *evil communications corrupt good manners* ; and to do no hurt to them, or increase their prejudices against religion, and give them an occasion of dislike. Yea, do them all the good you can, and by all the fittest means ; and in the proper seasons recommend religion to them. *Redeeming the time* ; either improving every opportunity of doing them good, and making the best use of your time in proper duty ;” (diligence in redeeming time very much recommends religion to the good opinion of others ;) or else, “ *walking cautiously and with circumspection, to give them no advantage against you, or expose yourselves to their malice and ill-will.*” Eph. 5. 15, 16. *Walk circumspectly, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*, dangerous, or times of trouble and suffering.

And towards others, or those who are within as well as those who are without ; “ *Let your speech be always with grace*, v. 6. Let all your discourse be as becomes Christians, and with a deference to your profession ; savoury, discreet, seasonable.” Though it be not always of grace, it must be always *with grace* ; and though the matter of our discourse be that which is common, yet there must be an air of piety upon it, and it must be in a Christian manner, *seasoned with salt*. Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, makes it savoury, and keeps it from corrupting. *That ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.* One answer is proper for one man, and another for another man, Prov. 26. 4, 5. We have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to give proper answers to every man ; particularly in answering the questions and objections of adversaries against our religion ; giving the reasons of our faith, and shewing the unreasonableness of their exceptions and cavils, to the best advantage for our cause, and least prejudice to ourselves. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man, who asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*, 1 Pet. 3. 15.

7. All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord* : 8. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts ; 9. With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one of you*. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done here*. 10. Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner, saluteth you ; and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments ; if he come unto you, receive him ;) 11. And Jesus, who is called Justus ; who are of the circumcision. These only are *my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God*, which have been a comfort unto me. 12. Epaphras, who is *one of you*, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis*.

14. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you. 15. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. 16. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans ; and that ye likewise read the *epistle from Laodicea*. 17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. 18. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

In the close of this epistle the apostle does several of his friends the honour to leave their names upon record, with some testimony of his respect, which will be spoken of wherever the gospel comes, and last to the end of the world.

1. Concerning Tychicus, v. 7. By him this epistle was sent ; and he does not give them an account in writing of his present state, because Tychicus would do it by word of mouth more fully and particularly. He knew they would be glad to hear how it fared with him. The churches cannot but be concerned for good ministers, and desirous to know their state. He gives him this character, *A beloved brother and faithful minister*. Paul, though a great apostle, owns a faithful minister for a brother and a beloved brother. Faithfulness in any one is truly lovely, and renders him worthy our affection and esteem. *And a fellow-servant in the Lord*. Ministers are servants of Christ, and fellow-servants to one another. They have one Lord, though they have different stations and capacities of service. Observe, It adds much to the beauty and strength of the gospel-ministry, when ministers are thus loving and condescending one to another, and by all just means support and advance one another’s reputation. Paul sent him not only to tell them of his affairs, but to bring him an account of their’s ; *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts*, v. 8. He was as willing to hear from them as they could be to hear from him ; and thought himself as much obliged to sympathize with them as he thought them obliged to sympathize with him. It is a great comfort, under the troubles and difficulties of life, to have the mutual concern of fellow-Christians.

2. Concerning Onesimus ; (v. 9.) *With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*. He was sent back from Rome along with Tychicus. This was he whom Paul had *begotten in his bonds*, (Philemon 10.) who had been servant to Philemon, and who was a member, if not a minister, of their church. He was converted at Rome, whither he had fled from his master’s service ; and is now sent back, it is probable, with the epistle to Philemon, to introduce him again into his master’s family. Observe, Though he was a poor servant, and had been a bad man, yet, being now a convert, Paul calls him *a faithful and beloved brother*. The meanest circumstances of life, and greatest wickedness of former life, makes no difference in the spiritual relation among sincere Christians : they partake of the same privileges, and are entitled to the same regards. *The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all, and upon all, them that believe ; for there is no difference* ; (Rom. 3. 22.) and *there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*, Gal. 3. 28. Perhaps this was sometime after he was converted, and sent back to Philemon ; and by this time he had entered into the ministry, because Paul calls him *a brother*.

3. *Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner.* They who join in services and sufferings, should be thereby engaged to one another in holy love, and endeared to one another. Paul had a particular affection for his fellow-servants and his fellow-prisoners.

4. *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas.* This is supposed to be the same who wrote the gospel which bears his name. *If he come unto you, receive him.* Paul had a quarrel with Barnabas upon the account of this Mark, who was his nephew, and thought not good to take him with them, because he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work, Acts 15. 38. He would not take Mark with him, but took Silas, because Mark had deserted them; and yet Paul is not only reconciled to him himself, but recommends him to the respect of the churches, and gives a great example of a truly Christian and forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not be always remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness,* Gal. 6. 1.

5. Here is one who is called *Jesus*, which is the Greek name for the Hebrew *Joshua*. *If Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day,* Heb. 4. 8. *Who is called Justus.* It is probable that he changed it for the name of Justus, in honour to the name of the Redeemer. Or else Jesus was his Jewish name, for he was of the circumcision; and Justus his Roman or Latin name. *These are my fellow-labourers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.* Observe what comfort the apostle had in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, who were working out their own salvation, and endeavouring to promote the salvation of others. Good ministers take great comfort in those who are their fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Their friendship and converse together are a great refreshment under the sufferings and difficulties in their way.

6. *Epaphras, (v. 12.)* the same with *Epaphroditus*. He is one of you, one of your church; he salutes you, or sends his service to you, and his best affections and wishes. *Always labouring fervently for you in prayers.* Epaphras had learned of Paul to be much in prayer for his friends. Observe,

(1.) In what manner he prayed for them. He laboured in prayer; laboured fervently; and always laboured fervently for them. They who would succeed in prayer, must take pains in prayer; and we must be earnest in prayer, not only for ourselves, but for others also. It is the effectual fervent prayer which is the prevailing prayer, and availeth much; (Jam. 5. 16.) and *Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain, v. 17.*

(2.) What is the matter of this prayer; *That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.* Observe, To stand perfect and complete in the will of God, is what we should earnestly desire both for ourselves and others. We must stand complete in all the will of God; in the will of his precepts, by a universal obedience; and in the will of his providence, by a cheerful submission to it: and we stand perfect and complete in both by constancy and perseverance unto the end.

The apostle was witness for Epaphras, that he had a great zeal for them; *"I bear him record; I can testify for him that he has a great concern for you, and that all he does for you proceeds from a warm desire for your good."* And his zeal extended to all about them; to them who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. He had a great concern for the Christian interest in the neighbouring places, as well as among them.

7. *Luke* is another here mentioned, whom he calls the beloved physician. This is he who wrote the Gospel and Acts, and was Paul's companion. Observe, He was both a physician and an evangelist. Christ himself both taught and healed, and was the great Physician as well as Prophet of the church. He was the beloved Physician; one who recommended himself more than ordinary to the affections of his friends. Skill in physic is a useful accomplishment in a minister, and may be improved to more extensive usefulness and greater esteem among Christians.

8. *Demas.* Whether this was written before the second epistle to Timothy, or after, is not certain. There we read, (2 Tim. 4. 10.) *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.* Some have thought that this epistle was written after; and then it is an evidence, that though Demas forsook Paul, yet he did not forsake Christ; or he forsook him but for a time, and recovered himself again, and Paul forgave him, and owned him as a brother. But others think more probable, that this epistle was written before the other; this in anno 62. that in 66. and then it is an evidence how considerable a man Demas was, who yet afterward revolted. Many who have made a great figure in profession, and gained a great name among Christians, have yet shamefully apostatized; *They went forth from us, because they were not of us,* 1 John 2. 19.

9. The brethren in Laodicea are here mentioned, as living in the neighbourhood of Colosse; and Paul sends salutations to them, and orders that this epistle should be read in the church of the Laodiceans; (v. 16.) that a copy of it should be sent thither, to be read publicly in their congregation. And some think Paul sent another epistle at this time to Laodicea, and ordered them to send for that from Laodicea, and read it in their church; *And that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.* If so, that epistle is now lost, and did not belong to the canon; for all the epistles which the apostles ever wrote, were not preserved, any more than all the words and actions of our blessed Lord; *There are many other things which Jesus did, which if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books which should be written;* John 21. 25. But some think it was the epistle to the Ephesians, which is still extant.

10. *Nymphas* is mentioned, (v. 15.) as one who lived at Colosse, and had a church in his house; either a religious family, where the several parts of worship were daily performed; or some part of the congregation met there, when they had no public places of worship allowed, and they were forced to assemble in private houses for fear of their enemies. *The disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews;* (John 20. 19.) and the apostle preached in his own lodging and hired house, Acts 28. 23, 30. In the former sense it shewed his exemplary piety; in the latter his zeal and public spirit.

11. Concerning *Archippus*, who was one of their ministers at Colosse. They are bid to admonish him, to mind his work as a minister, to take heed to it and to fulfil it; to be diligent and careful of all the parts of it, and to persevere in it unto the end. They must attend to the main design of their ministry, without troubling themselves or the people with things foreign to it, or of less moment. Observe, (1.) The ministry we have received, is a great honour; for it is received in the Lord, and is by his appointment and command. (2.) They who have received it, must fulfil it, or do the full duty of it. They betray their trust, and will have a sad account at last, who do this work of the Lord negligently. (3.) Their people may put their ministers in mind of their duty, and excite them to it; *Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry;* though, no

doubt, with decency and respect, not from pride and conceit.

12. Concerning Paul himself; (v. 18.) *The salutation of me Paul. Remember my bonds.* He had a scribe to write all the rest of the epistle, but these words he wrote with his own hand; *Remember my bonds.* He does not say, "Remember I am a prisoner, and send me supply;" but, "Remember

I am in bonds as the apostle of the Gentiles, and let that confirm your faith in the gospel of Christ:" it adds weight to his exhortation; *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy,* Eph. 4. 1. "Grace be with you. The free favour of God, and all good, the blessed fruits and effects of it, be with you, and your portion."

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE
FIRST EPISTLE
OF
ST. PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS.

Completed by Mr. D. Mayo.

THESSALONICA was formerly the metropolis of Macedonia; it is now called *Salonichi*, and is the best peopled, and one of the best towns for commerce, in the Levant. The apostle Paul, being diverted from his design of going into the provinces of Asia, properly so called, and directed after an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel in Macedonia, (Acts 16. 9, 10.) in obedience to the call of God went from Tarsus to Samothracia, from thence to Neapolis, and from thence to Philippi, where he had good success in his ministry; but met with hard usage, being cast into prison with Silas his companion in travel and labour; from whence being wonderfully delivered, they comforted the brethren there, and departed. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where the apostle planted a church that consisted of some believing Jews, and many converted Gentiles, Acts 17. 1—4. But a tumult being raised in the city by the unbelieving Jews, and the lewd and baser sort of the inhabitants; Paul and Silas, for their safety, were sent away by night unto Berea: and afterward Paul was conducted to Athens, leaving Silas and Timotheus behind him, but sent directions that they should come to him with all speed.

When they were come, Timotheus was sent to Thessalonica, to inquire after their welfare, and to establish them in the faith, (1 Thess. 3. 2.) who returned to Paul while he tarried at Athens, and was sent again, together with Silas, to visit the churches in Macedonia. So that Paul, being left at Athens alone, (1 Thess. 3. 1.) departed from thence to Corinth, where he continued a year and a half; in which time Silas and Timotheus returned to him from Macedonia, (Acts 18. 5.) and then he wrote this epistle to the church of Christ at Thessalonica; which, though it is placed after the other epistles of this apostle, is supposed to be *first* in time of all Paul's epistles, and to be written about A. D. 51.

The main scope is to express, the thankfulness of this apostle for the good success his preaching had among them, to establish them in the faith, and persuade them to a holy conversation.

I. THESSALONIANS, I.

CHAP. I.

After the introduction, (v. 4.) the apostle begins with a thanksgiving to God for the saving benefits bestowed on them, v. 2 . . 5. And then mentions the sure evidences of

the good success of the gospel among them, which was notorious and famous in several other places, v. 6 . . 10.

1. **PAUL**, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessaloni-