

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

Completed by Dr. John Evans.

If we compare scripture with scripture, and take the opinion of some devout and pious persons ; in the Old Testament, David's psalms, and in the New Testament, Paul's epistles, are stars of the first magnitude, that differ from the other stars in glory.

The whole scripture is indeed an epistle from heaven to earth ; but in it we have upon record several particular epistles, more of St. Paul's than of any other ; for he was the chief of the apostles, and laboured more abundantly than they all. His natural parts, I doubt not, were very pregnant, his apprehension quick and piercing, his expression fluent and copious, his affections, wherever he took, very warm and zealous, and his resolutions no less bold and daring : this made him, before his conversion, a very keen and bitter persecutor ; but when the strong man armed was dispossessed, and the stronger than he came to divide the spoil, and to sanctify these qualifications, he became the most skilful, zealous preacher ; never any better fitted to win souls, nor more successful.

Fourteen of his epistles we have in the canon of scripture ; many more, it is probable, he wrote in the course of his ministry, which might be profitable enough for doctrine, for reproof, &c. but, not being given by inspiration of God, they were not received as canonical scripture, nor handed down to us. Six epistles said to be Paul's, written to Seneca, and eight of Seneca's to him, are spoken of by some of the ancients, [Sixt. Senens. Biblioth. Sanct. lib. 2.] and are extant ; but, upon the view, they appear spurious and counterfeit.

This epistle to the Romans is placed first, not because of the priority of its date, but because of the superlative excellency of the epistle, it being one of the longest and fullest of all, and, perhaps, because of the dignity of the place to which it is written. Chrysostom would have this epistle read over to him twice a week.

It is gathered from some passages in the epistle, that it was written *Anno Christi* 56 from Corinth, while Paul made a short stay there in his way to Troas, Acts 20. 5, 6. He commendeth to the Romans Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, (*ch.* 16.) which was a place belonging to Corinth. He calls Gaius his *host*, or the man with whom he lodged, (*ch.* 16. 23.) and he was a Corinthian, not the same with Gaius of Derbe, mentioned Acts 20. Paul was now going up to Jerusalem, with the money that was given to the poor saints there ; and of that he speaks, *ch.* 16. 26.

The great mysteries treated of in this epistle, must needs produce in this, as in other writings of Paul, many things dark, and hard to be understood, 2 Pet. 3. 16.

The method of this (as of several other of the epistles) is observable ; the former part of it doctrinal, in the eleven first chapters ; the latter part practical, in the five last : to inform the judgment, and to reform the life. And the best way to understand the truths explained in the former part, is to abide and abound in the practice of the duties prescribed in the latter part ; for if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, John 7. 17.

I. The doctrinal part of the epistle instructs us,

1. Concerning the way of salvation. (1.) The foundation of it laid in justification, and that not by the Gentiles' works of nature, (*ch.* 1.) nor by the Jews' works of the law, (*ch.* 2, 3.) for both Jews and Gentiles were liable to the curse : but only by faith in Jesus Christ, (*ch.* 3. 21, &c. *ch.* 4.) *per totum—through the whole.* (2.) The steps of this salvation are, [1.] Peace with God, *ch.* 5. [2.] Sanctification, *ch.* 6, 7. [3.] Glorification, *ch.* 8.

2. Concerning the persons saved, such as belong to the election of grace, (*ch.* 9.) Gentiles and Jews, *ch.* 10, 11. By this it appears, that the subjects he discourses of, were such as were then the present truths, as the apostle speaks, 2 Pet. 1. 12. Two things the Jews then stumbled at—justification by faith without the works of the law, and the admission of the Gentiles into the church ; and therefore both these he studied to clear and vindicate.

II. The practical part follows : wherein we find, 1. Several general exhortations proper for all christians, *ch.* 12. 2. Directions for our behaviour, as members of a civil society, *ch.* 13. 3. Rules for the conduct of christians to one another, as members of the christian church, *ch.* 14. and *ch.* 15. to v. 14.

III. As he draws towards a conclusion, he makes an apology for writing to them ; (*ch.* 15. 14—16.) gives them an account of himself and his own affairs ; (*v.* 17—21.) promises them a visit ; (*v.* 22—29.) begs their prayers ; (*v.* 30—33.) sends particular salutations to many friends there ; (*ch.* 16. 1—16.) warns them against those who caused divisions ; (*v.* 17—20.) adds the salutations of his friends with him ; (*v.* 21—23.) and ends with a benediction to them, and a doxology to God, *v.* 24—27.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, we may observe, I. The preface or introduction to the whole epistle, to v. 16. II. A description of the deplorable condition of the Gentile world, which begins the proof of the doctrine of justification by faith, here laid down at v. 17. The first is according to the then usual formality of a letter, but intermixed with very excellent and savoury expressions.

1. **PAUL**, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2. (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) 3. Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 4. And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: 5. By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: 6. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ. 7. To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this paragraph we have,

I. The person who writes the epistle, described v. 1. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ*; that is his title of honour, which he glories in, not as the Jewish teachers, *Rabbi, Rabbi*; but a servant, a more immediate attendant, a steward in the house.

Called to be an apostle. Some think he alludes to his old name Saul, which signifies *one called for*, or *inquired after*: Christ sought him, to make an apostle of him, Acts 9. 15. He here builds his authority upon his call; he did not run without sending, as the false apostles did: *καλῶς ἀποστόλου*—*called an apostle*; as if this were the name he would be called by, though he acknowledges himself not meet to be called so, 1 Cor. 15. 9.

Separated to the gospel of God. The Pharisees had their name from separation, because they *separated themselves to the study of the law*, and might be called *ἀπαρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ νόμῳ*: such a one Paul had been; but now he had changed his studies, was *ἀπαρτισμένος ἐν Ευαγγέλιον Θεῶ*, a gospel Pharisee, separated by the counsel of God, (Gal. 1. 15.) *separated from his mother's womb*, by an immediate direction of the Spirit, and a regular ordination according to that direction, (Acts 13. 2, 3.) by a dedication of himself to this work. He was an entire devotee to the gospel of God, the gospel which has God for its Author, the original and extraction of it divine and heavenly.

II. Having mentioned the gospel of God, he digresses, to give us an encomium of it.

1. The antiquity of it; it was *promised before*, (v. 2.) it was no novel upstart doctrine, but of ancient standing in the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, which did all unanimously point at the gospel, the morning-beams that ushered in the sun of righteousness: this not by word of mouth only, but in the *scriptures*.

2. The subject-matter of it; it is concerning Christ, v. 3, 4. The prophets and apostles all bear witness to him; he is the true Treasure hid in the field of the scriptures. Observe, when Paul mentions Christ, how he heaps up his names and titles, *his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*, as one that took a pleasure in speaking of him; and having mentioned him, he cannot go on in his discourse without some expres-

sion of love and honour, as here, where in one person he shews us his two distinct natures.

(1.) His human nature; *made of the seed of David*; (v. 3.) that is, born of the virgin Mary, who was of the house of David; (Luke 1. 27.) as was Joseph his supposed father, Luke 2. 4. David is here mentioned, because of the special promises made to him concerning the Messiah, especially his kingly office; 2 Sam. 7. 12. Ps. 132. 11. compared with Luke 1. 32, 33.

(2.) His divine nature; *declared to be the Son of God*; (v. 4.) the Son of God by eternal generation, or, as it is here explained, *according to the Spirit of holiness*. *According to the flesh*, that is, his human nature, *he was of the seed of David*; but *according to the Spirit of holiness*, that is, the divine nature, (as he is said to be *quickened by the Spirit*, 1 Pet. 3. 18. compared with 2 Cor. 13. 4.) he is the Son of God.

The great proof or demonstration of this, is, *his resurrection from the dead*; that proved it effectually and undeniably. The sign of the prophet Jonas, Christ's resurrection, was intended for the last conviction, Matt. 12. 39, 40. Those that would not be convinced by that, would be convinced by nothing.

So that we have here a summary of the gospel doctrine concerning Christ's two natures in one person.

3. The fruit of it; (v. 5.) *By whom*, that is, by Christ manifested and made known in the gospel, *we, Paul* and the rest of the ministers, *have received grace and apostleship*, that is, the favour to be made apostles, Eph. 3. 8. The apostles were made a spectacle to the world, led a life of toil and trouble and hazard, *were killed all the day long*, and yet Paul reckons the apostleship a favour: we may justly reckon it a great favour to be employed in any work or service for God, whatever difficulties or dangers we may meet with in it.

This apostleship was received *for obedience to the faith*, that is, to bring people to that obedience; as Christ, so his ministers, received, that they might give. Paul's was for this obedience *among all nations*, for he was the *apostle of the Gentiles*, ch. 11. 13. Observe the description here given of the christian profession, it is *obedience to the faith*; it does not consist in a notional knowledge, or a naked assent, much less does it consist in perverse disputings, but in obedience. This obedience to the faith answers the *law of faith*, mentioned ch. 3. 27. The act of faith is the obedience of the understanding to God revealing, and the product of that is the obedience of the will to God commanding. To anticipate the ill use which might be made of the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, which he was to explain in the following epistle, he here speaks of christianity as an obedience. Christ has a yoke.

"*Among whom are ye*, v. 6. Ye Romans in this stand upon the same level with other Gentile nations of less fame and wealth; ye are all one in Christ." The gospel-salvation is a common salvation, Jude 3. No respect of persons with God.

The called of Jesus Christ; all those, and those only, are brought to an obedience of the faith, that are effectually called of Jesus Christ.

III. The persons to whom it is written; (v. 7.) *To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints*; that is, to all the professing christians that were in Rome, whether Jews or Gentiles originally, whether high or low, bond or free, learned or unlearned; rich and poor meet together in Christ Jesus.

Here is, 1. *The privilege of christians*; they are *beloved of God*, they are members of that body which is beloved, which is God's *Elefhi-bah*, if

which his delight is. We speak of God's love by his bounty and beneficence, and so he hath a common love to all mankind, and a peculiar love for true believers; and between these there is a love he hath for all the body of visible christians.

2. The *duty* of christians; and that is to be holy, for hereunto are they called, *called to be saints*, called to salvation through sanctification. Saints, and only saints, are beloved of God with a special and peculiar love.

καλησιν ἁγίοις—*called saints*, saints in profession; it were well if all that are called saints, were saints indeed: they that are called saints, should labour to answer to the name; otherwise, though it is an honour and a privilege, yet it will be of little avail at the great day to have been called saints, if we be not really so.

IV. The apostolical benediction; (v. 7.) *Grace to you and peace*. This is one of the tokens in every epistle; and it hath not only the affection of a good wish, but the authority of a blessing: the priests under the law were to bless the people, and so are gospel ministers, in the name of the Lord.

In this usual benediction observe,

1. The favours desired, *grace and peace*; the Old Testament salutation was, *peace be to you*; but now grace is prefixed, *grace*, that is, the favour of God towards us, or the work of God in us; both are previously requisite to true peace. All gospel-blessings are included in these two, *grace and peace*.

Peace, that is, all good; peace with God, peace in your own consciences, peace with all that are about you; all these founded in grace.

2. The fountain of those favours, *from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*. All good comes, (1.) From God as a Father; he hath put himself into that relation, to engage and encourage our desires and expectations: we are taught, when we come for grace and peace, to call him our Father. (2.) *From the Lord Jesus Christ*, as Mediator, and the great Feoffee in trust, for the conveying and securing of these benefits. We have them from his fulness, peace from the fulness of his merit, grace from the fulness of his Spirit.

8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. 10. Making request (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God) to come unto you. 11. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. 14. I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

I. His thanksgiving for them; (v. 8.) *First, I thank my God*. It is good to begin every thing with blessing God, to make that the *alpha* and *omega* of every song, in every thing to give thanks.

My God. He speaks this with delight and triumph. In all our thanksgivings, it is good for us to eye God as our God; that makes every mercy sweet, when we can say of God, "He is mine in covenant."

Through Jesus Christ. All our duties and performances are pleasing to God only *through Jesus Christ*; praises as well as prayers.

For you all. We must express our love to our friends, not only by praying for them, but by praising God for them. God must have the glory of all the comfort we have in our friends; for every creature is that to us, and no more, that God makes it to be. Many of these Romans Paul had no personal acquaintance with, and yet he could heartily rejoice in their gifts and graces. When some of the Roman christians met him, (Acts 28. 15.) he *thanked God for them*, and took courage; but here his true catholic love extends itself further, and he *thanks God for them all*; not only for those among them that were his helpers in Christ, and that bestowed much labour upon him, (whom he speaks of ch. 16. 3, 6.) but for them all.

That your faith is spoken of. Paul travelled up and down from place to place, and wherever he came, he heard great commendations of the christians at Rome, which he mentions, not to make them proud, but to quicken them to answer the general character people gave of them, and the general expectation people had from them. The greater reputation a man hath for religion, the more careful he should be to preserve it, because a little folly spoils him that is in reputation, Eccl. 10. 1.

Throughout the whole world, that is, the Roman empire, into which the Roman christians, upon Claudius's edict to banish all the Jews from Rome, were scattered abroad, but were now returned, and, it seems, left a very good report behind them, wherever they had been, in all the churches; there was this good effect of their sufferings; if they had not been persecuted, they had not been famous; this was indeed a good name, a name for good things with God and good people. As the elders of old, so these Romans, *obtained a good report through faith*, Heb. 11. 2. It is a desirable thing to be famous for faith.

The faith of the Roman christians came to be thus talked of, not only because it was excelling in itself, but because it was eminent and observable in its circumstances. Rome was a city upon a hill, every one took notice of what was done there. Thus they who have many eyes upon them, have need to walk circumspectly, for what they do, good or bad, will be spoken of.

The church of Rome was then a flourishing church; but since that time how is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! Rome is not what it was. She was then espoused a *chaste virgin to Christ*, and excelled in beauty; but she has since degenerated, dealt treacherously, and embraced the bosom of a stranger; so that (as that good old book, the *Practice of Piety*, makes appear in no less than twenty-six instances) even the *epistle to the Romans*, is now an epistle against the Romans; little reason has she therefore to boast of her former credit.

II. His prayer for them, v. 9. Though a famous flourishing church, yet they had need to be prayed for; they had not yet attained. Paul mentions this as an instance of his love to them. One of the greatest kindnesses we can do our friends, and sometimes the only kindness that is in the power of our hands, is, by prayer to recommend them to the loving kindness of God. From Paul's example here we may learn,

1. Constancy in prayer; *always without ceasing*. He did himself observe the same rules he gave to others, Eph. 6. 18. 1 Thess. 5. 17. Not that Paul did nothing else but pray, but he kept up stated times for the solemn performance of that duty, and those very frequent, and observed without fail.

2. Charity in prayer; *I make mention of you*. Though he had no particular acquaintance with them, or interest in them, yet he prayed for them; not only for all saints in general, but he made express mention of them. It is not unfit sometimes to be express in our prayers for particular churches and places; not to inform God, but to affect ourselves. We are likely to have the most comfort in those friends that we pray most for. Concerning this he makes a solemn appeal to the searcher of hearts; *for God is my witness*. It was in a weighty matter, and in a thing known only to God and his own heart, that he used this asseveration. It is very comfortable to be able to call God to witness our sincerity and constancy in the discharge of a duty. God is particularly a Witness to our secret prayers, the matter of them, the manner of the performance; then our *Father sees in secret*, Matt. 6. 6.

God, whom I serve with my spirit. Those that serve God *with their spirits*, may, with a humble confidence, appeal to him; hypocrites cannot, who rest in bodily exercise.

His particular prayer, among many other petitions he put up for them, was, that he might have an opportunity of giving them a visit; (v. 10.) *Making request, if by any means, &c.* Whatever comfort we desire to find in any creature, we must have recourse to God for it by prayer; for *our times are in his hand, and all our ways at his disposal*. The expressions here used, intimate that he was very desirous of such an opportunity, *if by any means*; that he had long and often been disappointed, *now at length*; and yet that he submitted it to the Divine Providence, *a prosperous journey by the will of God*. As in our purposes, so in our desires, we must still remember to insert this, *if the Lord will*, James 4. 15. Our journeys are prosperous or otherwise, according to *the will of God*; comfortable or not, as he pleases.

III. His great desire to see them, with the reasons of it, v. 11—15. He had heard so much of them, that he had a great mind to be better acquainted with them. Fruitful christians are as much the joy, as barren professors are the grief, of faithful ministers.

Accordingly, he *often purposed to come, but was let hitherto*; (v. 13.) for man purposeth, but God disposeth. He was hindered by other business that took him off, by his care of other churches, whose affairs were pressing; and Paul was for doing that first, not which was most pleasant, (then he would have gone to Rome,) but which was most needful. A good example to ministers, who must not consult their own inclinations so much as the necessity of their people's souls.

Paul desired to visit these Romans,

1. That they might be edified; (v. 11.) *That I may impart unto you*. He received, that he might communicate. Never were full breasts so desirous to be drawn out to the sucking infant, as Paul's head and heart were to be *imparting spiritual gifts*, that is, preaching to them. A good sermon is a good gift, so much the better for being a *spiritual gift*.

To the end we may be established. Having commended their flourishing, he here expresses his desire of their establishment, that as they grew upward in the branches, they might grow downward in the root. The best saints, while they are in such a shaking world as this, have need to be more and more established; and *spiritual gifts* are of special use for our establishment.

2. That he might be comforted, v. 12. What he heard of their flourishing in grace, was so much a joy to him, that it must needs be much more so to behold it. Paul could not take comfort in the fruit of the labours of other ministers.

By the mutual faith both of you and me, that is, our mutual faithfulness and fidelity. It is very comfortable when there is a mutual confidence between minister and people, they confiding in him as a faithful minister, and he in them as a faithful people. Or, the mutual work of faith, which is love; they rejoiced in the expressions of one another's love, or communicating their faith one to another. It is very refreshing to christians to compare notes about their spiritual concerns; thus are they sharpened, *as iron sharpens iron*.

That I might have some fruit; v. 13. Their edification would be his advantage, it would be fruit abounding to a good account. Paul minded his work, as one that believed the more good he did, the greater would his reward be.

3. That he might discharge his trust as *the apostle of the Gentiles*; (v. 14. *I am a debtor*;) (1.) His receivings made him *debtor*; the great gifts and abilities which he had, made him a *debtor*; for they were talents he was intrusted with, to trade for his Master's honour. We should think of this when we covet great things; that all our receivings put us in debt; we are but stewards of our Lord's goods. (2.) His office made him a *debtor*; he was a *debtor* as he was an apostle, he was called and sent to work, and had engaged to mind it.

Paul had improved his talent, and laboured in his work, and done as much good as ever any man did, and yet, in reflection upon it, he still writes himself *debtor*; for *when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants*.

Debtor to the Greeks, and to the barbarians, that is, as the following words explain it, *to the wise and to the unwise*. The Greeks fancied themselves to have the monopoly of wisdom, and looked upon all the rest of the world as *barbarians*, comparatively so; not cultivated with learning and arts as they were. Now Paul was a *debtor to both*, looked upon himself as obliged to do all the good he could both to the one and to the other. Accordingly, we find him paying his debt, both in his preaching and in his writing, doing good *both to Greeks and barbarians*, and suiting his discourse to the capacity of each. You may observe a difference between his sermon at Lystra among the plain Lycaonians, (Acts 14. 15, &c.) and his sermon at Athens among the polite philosophers, Acts 17. 22, &c. He delivered both as *debtor to each, giving to each their portion*. Though a plain preacher, yet as *debtor to the wise*, he speaks wisdom among them that are perfect, 1 Cor. 2. 6.

For these reasons he was ready, if he had an opportunity, to preach the gospel at Rome, v. 15. Though a public place, though a perilous place, where christianity met with a great deal of opposition, yet Paul was ready to run the risk at Rome, if called to it; *I am ready*—*επιθυμω*. It notes a great readiness of mind, and that he was very forward to it. What he did was not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. It is an excellent thing to be ready to meet every opportunity of doing or getting good.

16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. 18. For the

wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ;

Paul here enters upon a large discourse of justification ; in the latter part of this chapter laying down his thesis ; and in order to the proof of it, describing the deplorable condition of the Gentile world.

His transition is very handsome, and like an orator : he was ready to preach the gospel at Rome, though a place where the gospel was run down by those that called themselves the wits ; for, saith he, *I am not ashamed of it*, v. 16.

There is a great deal in the *gospel* which such a man as Paul might be tempted to be ashamed of, especially that he whose gospel it is, was a man hanged upon a tree, that the doctrine of it was plain, had little in it to set it off among scholars, the professors of it were mean and despised, and every where spoken against ; yet Paul was not ashamed to own it. I reckon him a christian indeed, that is neither ashamed of the *gospel*, nor a shame to it.

The reason of this bold profession, taken from the nature and excellency of the *gospel*, introduces his dissertation.

I. The proposition, v. 16, 17. The excellency of the *gospel* lies in this, that it reveals to us,

1. The salvation of believers as the end ; *it is the power of God unto salvation*. Paul is not ashamed of the *gospel*, how mean and contemptible soever it appear to a carnal eye ; for the *power of God works by it the salvation of all that believe* ; it shews us the way of salvation, (Acts 16. 17.) and is the great charter by which salvation is conveyed and made over to us. But,

(1.) *It is through the power of God* ; without that power the gospel is but a dead letter ; *the revelation of the gospel is the revelation of the arm of the Lord*, (Isa. 53. 1.) as power went along with the word of Christ, to heal diseases.

(2.) It is to those, and those only, *that believe* ; believing interests us in the *gospel-salvation* ; to others it is hidden. The medicine prepared will not cure the patient, if it be not taken.

To the Jew first. The lost sheep of the house of Israel had the first offer made them, both by Christ and his apostles. *You first* ; (Acts 3. 26.) but upon their refusal, the apostles turned to the Gentiles, Acts 13. 46. Jews and Gentiles now stand upon the same level, both equally miserable without a Saviour, and both equally welcome to the Saviour, Col. 3. 11. Such doctrine as this was surprising to the Jews, who had hitherto been the peculiar people, and had looked with scorn upon the Gentile world ; but the long-expected Messiah proves a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as the *Glory of his people Israel*.

2. The justification of believers as the way ; (v. 17.) *For therein*, that is, in this gospel, which Paul so much triumphs in, *is the righteousness of God revealed*. Our misery and ruin being the product and consequent of our iniquity, that which will shew us the way of salvation, must needs shew us the way of justification, and that the gospel does.

The gospel makes known a *righteousness*. While God is a just and holy God, and we are guilty sinners, it is necessary we have a *righteousness* wherein to appear before him ; and blessed be God, there is such a *righteousness* brought in by Messiah the Prince, (Dan. 9. 24.) and revealed in the *gospel* ; a *righteousness*, that is, a gracious method of reconciliation and acceptance, notwithstanding the guilt of our sins.

This evangelical *righteousness*, (1.) Is called the *righteousness of God* ; it is of God's appointing, of

God's approving and accepting. It is so called, to cut off all pretensions to a *righteousness* resulting from the merit of our own works. It is the *righteousness of Christ* ; who is God, resulting from a satisfaction of infinite value. (2.) It is said to be *from faith to faith* ; from the faithfulness of God revealing, to the faith of man receiving ; so some ; *from the faith of dependence upon God*, and dealing with him immediately, as Adam before the fall, to the faith of dependence upon a Mediator, and so dealing with God ; so others ; *from the first faith*, by which we are put into a justified state, to after faith, by which we live, and are continued in that state : and the faith that justifies us, is no less than our taking Christ for our Saviour, and becoming true christians, according to the tenor of the baptismal covenant ; *from faith* ingrafting us into Christ, to faith deriving virtue from him as our Root : both implied in the next words, *The just shall live by faith*. *Just by faith*, there is faith justifying us ; *live by faith*, there is faith maintaining us ; and so there is a *righteousness from faith to faith*. Faith is all in all, both in the beginning and progress of a christian life. It is not *from faith* to works, as if faith put us into a justified state, and then works preserved and maintained us in it ; but it is all along *from faith to faith*, as 2 Cor. 3. 18. *from glory to glory* ; it is increasing, continuing, persevering faith ; faith pressing forward, and getting ground of unbelief.

To shew that this is no novel, upstart doctrine, he quotes for it that famous scripture in the Old Testament, so often mentioned in the New, (Hab. 2. 4.) *The just shall live by faith*. Being justified by faith, he shall live by it both the life of grace, and of glory. The prophet there had placed himself upon the watch-tower, expecting some extraordinary discoveries, (v. 1.) and the discovery was of the certainty of the appearance of the promised Messiah in the fulness of time, notwithstanding seeming delays ; this is there called the vision, by way of eminence, as elsewhere the promise ; and while that time is coming, as well as when it is come, the just shall live by faith. Thus is the evangelical *righteousness from faith to faith* : from Old-Testament faith in a Christ to come, to New-Testament faith in a Christ already come.

II. The proof of this proposition, that both Jews and Gentiles stand in need of a *righteousness* wherein to appear before God, and that neither the one nor the other have any of their own to plead. Justification must be either by faith or works ; it cannot be by works, which he proves at large by describing the works both of Jews and Gentiles ; and therefore he concludes it must be by faith, ch. 3. 20, 28. The apostle, like a skilful surgeon, before he applies the plaster, searches the wound ; endeavours first to convince of guilt and wrath, and then to shew the way of salvation. This makes the gospel the more welcome. We must first see the *righteousness of God* condemning, and then the *righteousness of God* justifying will appear worthy of all acceptance.

In general, (v. 18.) the wrath of God is revealed. The light of nature, and the light of the law, reveal the wrath of God from sin to sin. It is well-for us that the gospel reveals the justifying *righteousness of God from faith to faith*. The antithesis is observable.

1. Here is the sinfulness of man described ; he reduceth it to two heads, *ungodliness and unrighteousness* ; *ungodliness* against the laws of the first table, *unrighteousness* against those of the second.

2. The cause of that sinfulness, and that is, *holding the truth in unrighteousness*. Some communions *notitæ*, some ideas they had of the being of God, and of the difference of good and evil ; but they held them in *unrighteousness*, that is, they knew and professed them in a consistency with their wicked

courses; *they held the truth as a captive or prisoner, that it should not influence them, as otherwise it would.* An unrighteous wicked heart is the dungeon, in which many a good truth is detained and buried: *Holding fast the form of sound words in faith and love, is the root of all religion,* (2 Tim. 1. 13.) *but holding it fast in unrighteousness, is the root of all sin.*

3. The displeasure of God against it; *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven; not only in the written word, which is given by inspiration of God, the Gentiles had not that, but in the providences of God, his judgments executed upon sinners, which do not spring out of the dust, or fall out by chance, nor are they to be ascribed to second causes, but they are a revelation from heaven; or wrath from heaven is revealed; it is not the wrath of a man like ourselves, but wrath from heaven, therefore the more terrible, and the more unavoidable.*

19. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:* 21. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. 24. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. 28. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30. Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31. Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without

natural affection, implacable, unmerciful 32. Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

In this last part of the chapter he applies what he had said particularly to the Gentile world: in which we may observe,

1. The means and helps they had to come to the knowledge of God. Though they had not such a knowledge of his law as Jacob and Israel had, (Ps. 147. 20.) yet among them *he left not himself without witness;* (Acts 14. 17. v. 19, 20.) *For that which may be known, &c.* Observe,

1. What discoveries they had; *That which may be known of God is manifest, in words—among them;* there were some even among them, that had the knowledge of God, were convinced of the existence of one supreme Numen. The philosophy of Pythagoras, Plato, and the Stoics, discovered a great deal of the knowledge of God, as appears by plenty of testimonies.

That which may be known; which implies, there is a great deal which may not be known. The being of God may be apprehended, but cannot be comprehended. We cannot by searching find him out, Job 11. 7—9. Finite understandings cannot perfectly know an infinite being; but, blessed be God, there is that which may be known, enough to lead us to our chief end, the glorifying and enjoying of him: and these things revealed belong to us and to our children, while secret things are not to be pried into, Deut. 29. 29.

2. Whence they had these discoveries; *God hath shewed it to them.* Those common natural notions which they had of God, were imprinted upon their hearts by the God of nature himself, who is the *Father of lights.*

This sense of a Deity, and a regard to that Deity, is so comate with the human nature, that some think we are to distinguish men from brutes by these rather than by reason.

3. By what way and means these discoveries and notices which they had, were confirmed and improved,—by the work of creation; (v. 20.) *For the invisible things of God, &c.*

(1.) Observe what they knew: *the invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead.* Though God be not the object of sense, yet he hath discovered and made known himself by those things that are sensible. The power and Godhead of God are invisible things, and yet are *clearly seen* in their products. He works in secret, (Job 23. 8, 9. Ps. 139. 15. Eccl. 11. 5.) but manifests what he has wrought, and therein makes known his *power and Godhead*, and his other attribute, which natural light apprehends in the idea of a God. They could not come by natural light to the knowledge of the three persons in the Godhead, (though some fancy they have found footsteps of that in Plato's writings,) but they did come to the knowledge of the Godhead, at least so much knowledge as was sufficient to have kept them from idolatry. This was that truth which they held in unrighteousness.

(2.) How they knew it; *by the things that are made;* which could not make themselves, nor fall into such an exact order and harmony by any casual hits; and therefore must have been produced by some first cause or intelligent agent; which first cause could be no other than an eternal powerful God. See Ps. 19. 1. Isa. 40. 26. Acts 17. 24. The workman is known by his work. The variety, multitude, order, beauty, harmony, different nature, and excellent contrivance, of the *things that are made*, the direction of them to certain ends, and the

concurrence of all the parts to the good and beauty of the whole, do abundantly prove a Creator and his eternal power and Godhead. Thus did the light shine in the darkness.

And *this from the creation of the world*. Understand it either, [1.] As the topic, from which the knowledge of them is drawn. To evince this truth, we have recourse to the great work of creation. And some think this *κτίσις κόσμου*, this *creature of the world*, (as it may be read,) is to be understood of man, the *κτίσις κατ' ἐξοχήν*—the most remarkable creature of the lower world, called *κτίσις*, Mark 16. 15.

The frame and structure of human bodies, and especially the most excellent powers, faculties, and capacities of human souls, do abundantly prove, that there is a Creator, and that he is God.

Or, [2.] As the date of the discovery. It is as old as the creation of the world. In this sense *ὡς κτίσις κόσμου*, is most frequently used in scripture. These notices concerning God are not any modern discoveries, hit upon of late, but ancient truths which were from the beginning. The way of the acknowledgment of God is a good old way; it was from the beginning. Truth got the start of error.

II. Their gross idolatry, notwithstanding these discoveries that God made to them of himself; described here, *v. 21–23, 25*. We shall the less wonder at the inefficacy of these natural discoveries to prevent the idolatry of the Gentiles, if we remember how prone even the Jews, who had scripture-light to guide them, were to idolatry; so miserably are the degenerate sons of men plunged in the mire of sense. Observe,

1. The inward cause of their idolatry, *v. 21, 22*. They are therefore without excuse, in that they did know God, and from what they knew might easily infer, that it was their duty to worship him, and him only. Though some have greater light and means of knowledge than others, yet all have enough to leave them inexcusable.

But the mischief of it was, that they *glorified him not as God*; their affections toward him, and their awe and adoration of him, did not keep pace with their knowledge. To glorify him as God, is to glorify him only; for there can be but one infinite: but they did not so glorify him, for they set up a multitude of other deities. To glorify him as God, is to worship him with spiritual worship; but they made images of him. Not to glorify God as God, is in effect not to glorify him at all; to respect him as a creature, is not to glorify him, but to dishonour him.

Neither were thankful; not thankful for the favours in general they received from God; (insensibleness of God's mercies is at the bottom of our sinful departures from him;) not thankful in particular for the discoveries God was pleased to make of himself to them. Those that do not improve the means of knowledge and grace, are justly reckoned unthankful for them.

But became vain in their imaginations, in τῶν διανοημάτων—in their reasonings, in their practical inferences. They had a great deal of knowledge of general truths, (*v. 19*.) but no prudence to apply them to particular cases. Or, in their notions of God, and the creation of the world, and the origination of mankind, and the chief good; in these things, when they quitted the plain truth, they soon disputed themselves into a thousand vain and foolish fancies. The several opinions and hypotheses of the various sects of philosophers concerning these things, were so many *vain imaginations*. When truth is forsaken, errors multiply in infinitum—infinity.

And their foolish heart was darkened. The foolishness and practical wickedness of the heart cloud and darken the intellectual powers and faculties. Nothing tends more to the binding and perverting

of the understanding, than the corruption and depravedness of the will and affections.

V. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. This looks black upon the philosophers, the pretenders to wisdom, and professors of it. Those that had the most luxuriant fancy in framing to themselves the idea of a God, fell into the most gross and absurd conceits: and it was the just punishment of their pride and self-conceitedness.

It has been observed, that the most refined nations, that made the greatest shew of wisdom, were the arrantest fools in religion. The barbarians adored the sun and moon, which of all others was the most specious idolatry; while the learned Egyptians worshipped an ox and an onion. The Grecians, who excelled them in wisdom, adored diseases and human passions; the Romans, the wisest of all, worshipped the furies: and at this day the poor Americans worship the thunder; while the ingenious Chinese adore the devil. Thus the *world by wisdom knew not God*, 1 Cor. 1. 21. As a profession of wisdom is an aggravation of folly, so a proud conceit of wisdom is the cause of a great deal of folly. Hence we read of few philosophers that were converted to christianity; and Paul's preaching was no where so laughed at and ridiculed as among the learned Athenians, Acts 17. 18, 32.

Φαύσαντες ἑαυτοὶ—conceiving themselves to be wise. The plain truth of the being of God would not content them; they thought themselves above that, and so fell into the greatest errors.

2. The outward acts of their idolatry, *v. 23, 25*.

(1.) Making images of God, (*v. 23*.) by which, as much as in them lay, they *changed the glory of the incorruptible God*. Compare Ps. 106. 20. Jer. 2. 11. They ascribed a deity to the most contemptible creatures, and by them represented God. It was the greatest honour God did to man, that he made man in the image of God; but it is the greatest dishonour man has done to God, that he has made God in the image of man. This was it that God so strictly warned the Jews against, Deut. 4. 15, &c. This the apostle shews the folly of in his sermon at Athens, Acts 17. 29. See Isa. 40. 18, &c. 44. 10, &c. This is called, (*v. 25*.) *changing the truth of God into a lie*. As it did dishonour his glory, so it did misrepresent his being. Idols are called lies, for they belie God, as if he had a body, whereas he is a Spirit, Jer. 25. 14. Hos. 7. 1. *Teachers of lies*, Hab. 2. 18.

(2.) Giving divine honour to the creature; *worshipped and served the creature, παρὰ τὴν κτίσιν*—beside the Creator. They did own a supreme Numen in their profession, but they did in effect disown him by the worship they paid the creature: for God will be all or none. Or, *above* the Creator; paying more respect to their inferior deities, stars, heroes, demons, thinking the supreme God inaccessible, or above their worship. The sin itself was their worshipping of the creature at all; but this is mentioned as an aggravation of the sin, that they worshipped the creature more than the Creator. This was the general wickedness of the Gentile world, and became twisted in with their laws and government; in compliance with which, even the wise men among them, who knew and owned a supreme God, and were convinced of the nonsense and absurdity of their polytheism and idolatry, yet did as the rest of their neighbours did. *Seneca*, in his book *de Superstitione*, as it is quoted by *Aug. de Civit. Dei*, lib. 6. cap. 10. (for the book itself is lost,) after he had largely shewed the great folly and impiety of the vulgar religion, in divers instances of it, yet concludes, *Quæ omnia sapiens servavit tanquam legibus jussa, non tanquam diis grata*—All which a wise man will observe as established by law, not imagining them grateful to the gods. And afterward, *Omnem istam ignobilem deorum turbam, quam longo*

ævo longa superstitione congegissit, sic adorabimus, ut meminerimus cultum ejus magis ad morem quam ad rem pertinere—All this ignoble rout of gods, which ancient superstition has amassed together by long prescription, we will so adore, as to remember that the worship of them is rather a compliance with custom than material in itself. Upon which Austin observes, *Colebat quod reprehendebat, agebat quod arguebat, quod culpabat adorabat—He worshipped that which he censured, he did that which he had proved wrong, and he adored what he found fault with.* I mention this thus largely, because methinks it doth fully explain that of the apostle here, (v. 18.) *who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

It is observable that upon the mention of the dishonour done to God by the idolatry of the Gentiles, the apostle, in the midst of his discourse, expresses himself in an awful adoration of God, *Who is blessed for ever. Amen.* When we see or hear of any contempt cast upon God or his name, we should from thence take occasion to think and speak highly and honourably of him. In this, as in other things, the worse others are, the better we should be. *Blessed for ever*, notwithstanding these dishonours done to his name : though there are those that do not glorify him, yet he is glorified, and will be glorified to eternity.

III. The judgments of God upon them for this idolatry : not many temporal judgments, (the idolatrous nations were the conquering, ruling nations of the world,) but spiritual judgments, giving them up to the most brutish and unnatural lusts. Παρέδωκεν ἑαυτούς—*He gave them up* ; it is thrice repeated here, v. 24, 26, 28. Spiritual judgments are of all others the sorest judgments, and to be most dreaded. Observe,

1. By whom they were given up. God gave them up, in a way of righteous judgment, as the just punishment of their idolatry ; taking off the bridle of restraining grace ; leaving them to themselves ; letting them alone : for his grace is his own, he is debtor to no man, he may give or withhold his grace at pleasure. Whether this giving up be a positive act of God, or only privative, we leave to the schools to dispute : but this we are sure of, that it is no new thing for God to give men up to their own heart's lusts, to send them strong delusions, to let Satan loose upon them, nay to lay stumbling-blocks before them. And yet God is not the Author of sin, but herein infinitely just and holy ; for though the greatest wickedness follow upon this giving up, the fault of that is to be laid upon the sinner's wicked heart. If the patient be obstinate, and will not submit to the methods prescribed, but wilfully takes and does that which is prejudicial to him ; the physician is not to be blamed, if he give him up as in a desperate condition ; and all the fatal symptoms that follow, are not to be imputed to the physician, but to the disease itself, and to the folly and wilfulness of the patient.

2. To what they were given up.

(1.) *To uncleanness and vile affections*, v. 24, 26, 27. They that would not entertain the more pure and refined notices of natural light, which tend to preserve the honour of God, justly forfeited those more gross and palpable sentiments, which preserve the honour of human nature. *Man, being in honour*, and refusing to *understand* the God that made him, thus becomes worse than the *beasts that perish*, Ps. 49. 20. Thus one, by the divine permission, becomes the punishment of another ; but it is (as it is said here) *through the lusts of their own hearts* ; there all the fault is to be laid. Those who dishonoured God, were given up to dishonour themselves. A man cannot be delivered up to a greater slavery than to be given up to his own lusts. Such are given over, like the Egyptians, (Isa. 19. 4.) into the hand of a cruel lord.

The particular instances of their uncleanness and vile affections, are, their unnatural lusts ; which many of the heathen, even of those among them who passed for wise men, as Solon and Zeno, were infamous for, against the plainest and most obvious dictates of natural light. The crying iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, for which God rained hell from heaven upon them, became not only commonly practised, but avowed, in the pagan nations. Perhaps, the apostle especially refers to the abominations that were committed in the worship of their idol-gods, in which the worst of uncleannesses were prescribed for the honour of their gods : dunghill service for dunghill gods ; the unclean spirits delight in such ministrations.

In the church of Rome, where the pagan idolatries are revived, images worshipped, and saints only substituted in the room of demons, we hear of these same abominations going barefaced, licensed by the pope (*Fox's Acts and Monuments*, vol. 1. p. 808.) and not only commonly perpetrated, but justified and pleaded for by some of their cardinals : the same spiritual plagues for the same spiritual wickednesses.

See what wickedness there is in the nature of man ! How abominable and filthy is man ! *Lord, what is man !* says David ; what a vile creature is he, when left to himself ! How much are we beholden to the restraining grace of God, for the preserving any thing of the honour and decency of the human nature ? For, were it not for that, man, who was made but little lower than the angels, would make himself a great deal lower than the devils. This is said to be that *recompense of their error, which was meet*. The Judge of all the earth does right, and observes a meetness between the sin and the punishment of it.

(2.) To a reprobate mind in these abominations, v. 28.

They did not like to retain God in their knowledge. The blindness of their understandings was caused by the wilful aversion of their wills and affections. They did not retain God in their knowledge, because they did not like it. They would neither know nor do any thing but just what pleased themselves. It is just the temper of carnal hearts ; the pleasing of themselves is their highest end.

There are many that have God in their knowledge, they cannot help it, the light shines so fully in their faces ; but they do not retain him there ; they say to the Almighty, *Depart* ; (Job 21. 14.) and they therefore do not retain God in their knowledge, because it thwarts and contradicts their lusts ; they do not like it.

In their knowledge—ἐν ἐπιγνώσει. There is a difference between γινώσις and ἐπιγνώσις, the knowledge and the acknowledgment of God ; the pagans knew God, but did not, would not, acknowledge him.

Answerable to which wilfulness of their's, in gaining the truth, God gave them over to a wilfulness in the grossest sins, here called a *reprobate mind*—εἰς ἀδόκιμον νῦν, a mind void of all sense and judgment to discern things that differ, so that they could not distinguish their right hand from their left in spiritual things. See whether a course of sin leads, and into what a gulf it plunges the sinner at last ; hither fleshly lusts have a direct tendency. *Eyes full of adultery cannot cease from sin*, 2 Pet. 2. 14. This reprobate mind was a blind, seared conscience, past feeling, Eph. 4. 19. When the judgment is once reconciled to sin, the man is in the suburbs of hell. At first Pharaoh hardened his heart, but afterward God hardened Pharaoh's heart. This wilful hardness is justly punished with judicial hardness.

To do those things which are not convenient. This phrase may seem to bespeak a diminutive evil, but here it is expressive of the grossest enormities ;

things that are not agreeable to men, but contradict the very light and law of nature.

And here he subjoins a black list of those unbecoming things which the Gentiles were guilty of, being delivered up to a reprobate mind. No wickedness so heinous, so contrary to the light of nature, to the law of nations, and to all the interests of mankind, but a reprobate mind will comply with it.

By the histories of those times, especially the accounts we have of the then prevailing dispositions and practices of the Romans, when the ancient virtue of that commonwealth was so degenerated, it appears that these sins here mentioned, were then and there reigning, national sins.

V. 29—31. Here are no less than twenty-three several sorts of sins and sinners specified. Here the devil's seat is, his name is Legion, for they are many. It was time to have the gospel preached among them, for the world had need of reformation.

[1.] Sins against the first table; *Haters of God.* Here is the devil in his own colours, sin appearing sin. Could it be imagined, that rational creatures should hate the chiefest Good, and depending creatures abhor the Fountain of their being? And yet so it is. Every sin has in it a hatred of God; but some sinners are more open and avowed enemies to him than others. *Zech. 11. 8.*

Proud and boasters cope with God himself, and put those crowns upon their own heads, which must be cast before his throne.

[2.] Sins against the second table. These are especially mentioned, because in these things they had a clearer light. In general here is a charge of unrighteousness; that is put first, for every sin is unrighteousness, it is withholding that which is due, perverting that which is right; it is especially put for second-table-sins, doing as we would not be done by.

Against the fifth commandment. *Disobedient to parents, and without natural affection—^{as gl'us}*, that is, parents unkind and cruel to their children. Thus when duty fails on one side, it commonly fails on the other. Disobedient children are justly punished with unnatural parents; and on the contrary, unnatural parents with disobedient children.

Against the sixth commandment. *Wickedness, doing mischief for mischief's sake; maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, (^{and contention}), malignity, spiteful, implacable, unmerciful*; all expressions of that hatred of our brother, which is heart-murder.

Against the seventh commandment. *Fornication*; he mentions no more, having spoken before of other uncleannesses.

Against the eighth commandment. *Unrighteousness, covetousness.*

Against the ninth commandment. *Deceit, whisperers, backbiters, covenant-breakers, lying and slandering.*

Here are two generals not yet mentioned—*inventors of evil things, and without understanding*; wise to do evil, and yet having no knowledge to do good. The more deliberate and politic sinners are in inventing evil things, the greater is their sin: so quick of invention in sin, and yet without understanding, stark fools, in the thoughts of God.

Here is enough to humble us all, in the sense of our original corruptions; for every heart by nature has in it the seed and spawn of all these sins.

In the close he mentions the aggravations of the sins, *v. 32.*

First, They knew the judgment of God; (1.) They knew the law. The judgment of God is that which his justice requireth; which, because he is just, he judgeth meet to be done. (2.) They knew the penalty; so it is explained here, they knew that *they who commit such things, are worthy of death, eternal death*; their own consciences could not but sug-

gest this to them, and yet they ventured upon it. It is a great aggravation of sin, when it is committed against knowledge, (James 4. 17.) especially against the knowledge of the judgment of God. It is daring presumption to run upon the sword's point. It argues the heart much hardened, and very resolutely set upon sin.

Secondly, They not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. The violence of some present temptation may hurry a man into the commission of such sins himself, in which the vitiated appetite may take a pleasure; but to be pleased with other people's sins, is to love sin for sin's sake: it is joining in a confederacy for the devil's kingdom and interest, *συνοδικῶς*; they do not only commit sin, but they defend and justify it, and encourage others to do the like. Our own sins are much aggravated by our concurrence with and complacency in, the sins of others.

Now lay all this together, and then say, whether the Gentile world, lying under so much guilt and corruption, could be justified before God by any works of their own.

CHAP. II.

The scope of the two first chapters of this epistle may be gathered from ch. 3. 9. We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. This he had proved upon the Gentiles; (ch. 1.) now in this chapter he proves it upon the Jews, as appears by *v. 17.* thou art called a Jew. 1. He proves in general that Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level before the justice of God, to *v. 17.* 2. He shews more particularly what sins the Jews were guilty of, notwithstanding their profession and vain pretensions, (*v. 17.*) to the end.

1. **T**HEREFORE thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. 2. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. 3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6. Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath. 9. Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11. For there is no respect of persons with God. 12. For as many as

have sinned without law shall also perish without law : and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law ; 13. (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : 15. Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another ;) 16. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

In the former chapter the apostle had represented the state of the Gentile world to be as bad and black as the Jews were ready enough to pronounce it. And now, designing to shew that the state of the Jews was very bad too, and their sins in many respects more aggravated ; to prepare his way, he sets himself in this part of the chapter to shew, that God would proceed upon equal terms of justice with Jews and Gentiles ; and not with such a partial hand as the Jews were apt to think he would use in their favour.

I. He arraigns them for their censoriousness and self-conceit ; (v. 1.) *Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest.* As he expresses himself in general terms, the admonition may reach those *many masters* (Jam. 3. 1.) of whatever nation or profession they are, that assume to themselves a power to censure, control, and condemn others. But he intends especially the Jews, and to them particularly he applies this general charge, (v. 21.) *Thou who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ?*

The Jews were generally a proud sort of people, that looked with a great deal of scorn and contempt upon the poor Gentiles, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock ; while in the mean time they were themselves as bad and immoral ; though not idolaters, as the Gentiles, yet sacrilegious, v. 22.

Therefore thou art inexcusable. If the Gentiles, who had but the light of nature, were inexcusable, (ch. 1. 20.) much more the Jews, who had the light of the law, the revealed will of God, and so had greater helps than the Gentiles.

II. He asserts the invariable justice of the divine government v. 2, 3. To drive home the conviction, he here shews what a righteous God that is with whom we have to do, and how just in his proceedings. It is usual with the apostle Paul, in his writings, upon mention of some material point, to make large digressions upon it ; as here concerning the justice of God, v. 2. That the *judgment of God is according to truth*, according to the eternal rules of justice and equity ; according to the heart, and not according to the outward appearance, (1 Sam. 16. 7.) according to the works, and not with respect to persons ; is a doctrine which *we are all sure of*, for he would not be God, if he were not just : but it behoves those especially to consider it, who condemn others for those things which they themselves are guilty of ; and so while they practise sin, and persist in that practice, think to bribe the divine justice by professing against sin, and exclaiming loudly upon others that are guilty ; as if preaching against sin would atone for the guilt of it.

But observe how he puts it to the sinner's conscience ; (v. 3.) *Thinkest thou this, O man.* O man,

a rational creature, a dependent creature, made by God, subject under him, and accountable to him.

The case is so plain, that we may venture to appeal to the sinner's own thoughts ; "*Canst thou think that thou shalt escape the judgment of God ? Can the heart-searching God be imposed upon by formal pretences, the righteous Judge of all so bribed and put off ? The most plausible politic sinners, who acquit themselves before men with the greatest confidence, cannot escape the judgment of God, cannot avoid being judged and condemned.*"

III. He draws up a charge against them, (v. 4, 5.) consisting of two branches.

1. Slighting the goodness of God, (v. 4.) *the riches of his goodness.* This is especially applicable to the Jews, who had singular tokens of the divine favour. Means are mercies, and the more light we sin against the more love we sin against.

Low and mean thoughts of the divine goodness are at the bottom of a great deal of sin. There is in every wilful sin an interpretative contempt of the goodness of God ; it is spurning at his bowels, particularly the goodness of his patience, his forbearance and long-suffering, taking occasion from thence to be so much the more bold in sin, Eccl. 8. 11.

Not knowing, not considering, not knowing practically and with application, that *the goodness of God leadeth thee*, the design of it is to lead thee, to *repentance*. It is not enough for us to know that God's goodness leads to repentance, but we must know that it leads *us ; thee* in particular.

See here what method God takes to bring sinners to repentance. He leads them, not drives them like beasts, but leads them like rational creatures, allures them ; (Hos. 2. 14.) and it is *goodness* that leads, bands of love, Hos. 11. 4. Compare Jer. 31. 3. The consideration of the goodness of God, his common goodness to all, (the goodness of his providence, of his patience, and of his offers,) should be effectual to bring us all to repentance ; and the reason why so many continue in impenitency, is, because they do not know and consider this.

2. Provoking the wrath of God, v. 5. The rise of his provocation is a *hard and impenitent heart ;* and the ruin of sinners is their walking after such a heart, being led by it. To sin is to *walk in the way of the heart ;* and when that is a hard and impenitent heart, (contracted hardness by long custom, beside that which is natural) how desperate must the course needs be ! The provocation is expressed by *treasuring up wrath*.

Those that go on in a course of sin, are *treasuring up unto themselves wrath*. A treasure denotes abundance, it is a treasure that will be spending to eternity, and yet never exhausted ; and yet sinners are still adding to it as to a treasure.

Every wilful sin adds to the score, and will inflame the reckoning ; it brings a *branch to their wrath*, as some read that (Ezek. 8. 17.) they *put the branch to their nose*. A treasure denotes secrecy ; the treasury or magazine of wrath is the heart of God himself, in which it lies hid, as treasures in some secret place, *sealed up* ; see Deut. 32. 34. Job 14. 17. But withal it denotes reservation to some further occasion ; as the treasures of the hail are reserved against the day of battle and war, Job 38. 22, 23. These treasures will be broken open like the fountains of the great deep, Gen. 7. 11. They are *treasured up against the day of wrath*, when they will be dispensed by the wholesale, poured out by full vials. Though the present day be a day of patience and forbearance toward sinners, yet there is a day of wrath coming ; wrath, and nothing but wrath. Indeed, every day is to sinners a day of wrath, for God is *angry with the wicked every day* ; (Ps. 7. 11.) but there is the *great day of wrath* coming, Rev. 6. 17.

And that day of wrath will be *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*. The wrath of God is not like our wrath, a heat and passion; no, fury is not in him, (Isa. 27. 4.) but it is a *righteous judgment*, his will to punish sin, because he hates it as contrary to his nature. This *righteous judgment of God* is now many times concealed in the prosperity and success of sinners, but shortly it will be manifested before all the world, these seeming disorders set to rights, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, Ps. 50. 6. *Therefore judge nothing before the time.*

IV. He describes the measures by which God proceeds in his judgment.

Having mentioned the *righteous judgment of God* in v. 5. he here illustrates that judgment, and the righteousness of it, and shews what we may expect from God, and by what rule he will judge the world.

The equity of distributive justice is the dispensing of frowns and favours with respect to deserts, and without respect of persons: such is the righteous judgment of God.

1. He will *render to every man according to his deeds*; (v. 6.) a truth often mentioned in scripture, to prove that the Judge of all the earth doth right.

(1.) In dispensing his favours; and that is mentioned twice here, both in v. 7. and v. 10. For he delights to shew mercy. Observe,

[1.] The objects of his favour—*Them who by patient continuance*. By this we may try our interest in the divine favour, and may from hence be directed what course to take, that we may obtain it. Those whom the righteous God will reward, are,

First, Such as fix to themselves the right end; that *seek for glory and honour and immortality*; the glory and honour which are immortal, acceptance with God here and for ever. There is a holy ambition which is at the bottom of all practical religion.

This is seeking the kingdom of God, looking in our desires and aims as high as heaven, and resolved to take up with nothing short of it. This seeking implies a loss, sense of that loss, desire to retrieve it, and pursuits and endeavours consonant to those desires.

Secondly, Such as, having fixed the right end, adhere to the right way; *a patient continuance in well doing*.

1. There must be *well-doing, working good*, v. 10. It is not enough to know well, and speak well, and profess well, and promise well, but we must do well: do that which is good, not only for the matter of it, but for the manner of it. We must do it well.

2. A continuance in well-doing. Not for a fit and a start, like the morning cloud and the early dew; but we must endure to the end: it is perseverance that wins the crown.

3. A patient continuance. This patience respects not only the length of the work, but the difficulties of it, and the oppositions and hardships we may meet with in it. Those that will do well and continue in it, must put on a deal of patience.

[2.] The product of his favour. He will render to such *eternal life*. Heaven is life, eternal life, and it is the reward of those that patiently continue in well doing; and it is called, (v. 10.) *glory, honour, and peace*. Those that *seek for glory and honour*, (v. 7.) shall have it. Those that seek for the vain glory and honour of this world, often miss of it, and are disappointed; but those that seek for immortal glory and honour, shall have it; and not only *glory and honour*, but *peace*. Worldly glory and honour are commonly attended with trouble; but heavenly glory and honour have peace with them, undisturbed everlasting peace.

(2.) In dispensing his frowns; (v. 8, 9.) *But unto them*. Observe,

[1.] The objects of his frowns. In general, those

that do evil; more particularly described to be such as are contentious, and do *not obey the truth*. *Contentious* against God. Every wilful sin is a quarrel with God, *it is striving with our Maker*; (Isa. 45. 9.) the most desperate contention. The Spirit of God strives with sinners, (Gen. 6. 3.) and impenitent sinners strive against the Spirit, rebel against the light, (Job 24. 13.) hold fast deceit, strive to retain that sin which the Spirit strives to part them from. *Contentious, and do not obey the truth*. The truths of religion are not only to be known, but to be obeyed; they are directing, ruling, commanding truths; truths relating to practice. Disobedience to the truth is interpreted a striving against it. *But obey unrighteousness*; do what unrighteousness bids them do. Those that refuse to be the servants of truth, will soon be the slaves of unrighteousness.

[2.] The products or instances of these frowns; *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*. These are the wages of sin. *Indignation and wrath*, the causes; *tribulation and anguish*, the necessary and unavoidable effects. And *this upon the soul*; souls are the vessels of that wrath, the subjects of that tribulation and anguish. Sin qualifies the soul for this wrath. The soul is that in, or of, man, which alone is immediately capable of this indignation, and the impressions or effects of anguish therefrom. Hell is eternal *tribulation and anguish*, the product of infinite *wrath and indignation*. This comes of contending with God, of setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa. 27. 4. Those that will not bow to his golden sceptre, will certainly be broken by his iron rod.

Thus will God render to every man according to his deeds.

2. *There is no respect of persons with God*, v. 11. As to the spiritual state, there is a respect of persons; but not as to outward relation or condition. Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level before God. This was Peter's remark upon the first taking down of the partition-wall, (Acts 10. 34.) that God is no Respector of persons; and it is explained in the next words, that *in every nation, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him*. God does not save men with respect to their external privileges, to their barren knowledge and profession of the truth, but according as their state and disposition really are.

In dispensing both his frowns and favours, it is both to Jew and Gentile. If to the *Jews first*, who had greater privileges, and made a greater profession, yet *also to the Gentiles*, whose want of such privileges will neither excuse them from the punishment of their ill-doing, nor bar them out from the reward of their well-doing; (see Col. 3. 11.) for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

V. He proves the equity of his proceedings with all, when he shall actually come to judge them, (v. 12—16.) upon this principle, that that which is the rule of man's obedience, is the rule of God's judgment.

Three degrees of light are revealed to the children of men.

1. The light of nature. That the Gentiles have, and by that they shall be judged; *As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law*; the unbelieving Gentiles, who had no other guide but natural conscience, no other motive but common mercies, and had not the law of Moses, nor any supernatural revelation, shall not be reckoned with for the transgression of the law they never had, nor come under the aggravation of the Jews' sin against, and judgment by, the written law; but they shall be judged by, as they sin against, the law of nature, not only as it is in their hearts, corrupted, defaced, and imprisoned in unrighteousness, but as in the uncorrupt original the Judge keeps by him.

Further to clear this, (v. 14, 15.) in a parenthesis, he evinces, that the light of nature was to the Gentiles instead of a written law. He had said, (v. 12.) they had *sinned without law*; which looks like a contradiction; for where there is no law there is no transgression. But, (says he,) though they had not the written law, (Ps. 147. 20.) they had that which was equivalent, not to the ceremonial, but to the moral law. They *had the work of the law*. He does not mean that work which the law commands, as if they could produce a perfect obedience; but that work which the law does. The work of the law is to direct us what to do, and to examine us what we have done. Now,

(1.) They had that which directed them what to do by the light of nature: by the force and tendency of their natural notions and dictates they apprehended a clear and vast difference between good and evil. They did *by nature the things contained in the law*. They had a sense of justice and equity, honour and purity, love and charity; the light of nature taught obedience to parents, pity to the miserable, conservation of public peace and order; forbade murder, stealing, lying, perjury, &c. Thus they were a *law unto themselves*.

(2.) They had that which examined them what they had done; *Their conscience also bearing witness*. They had that within them, which approved and commended what was well done, and which reproached them for what was done amiss. Conscience is a witness, and first or last will bear witness, though for a time it may be bribed or brow-beaten. It is instead of a thousand witnesses, testifying of that which is most secret; and their *thoughts accusing or excusing*, passing a judgment upon the testimony of conscience, by applying the law to the fact. Conscience is that candle of the Lord, which was not quite put out, no not in the Gentile world. The heathen have witnessed to the comfort of a good conscience;

—Hic murus aeneus esto,

Nil conscire sibi—

Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.—HON.

and to the terror of a bad one;

—Quos diri conscia facit

Mens habet attonitos, et surdo verberare cedit—

No lash is heard, and yet the guilty heart
Is tortur'd with a self-inflicted smart.—JUV. Sat. 13.

Their *thoughts the mean while*, *ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλήλων—among themselves*, or one with another. The same light and law of nature that witnesses against sin in them, and witnessed against it in others, accused or excused one another. *Vicissim*, so some read it, *by turns*: according as they observed or broke these natural laws and dictates, their consciences did either acquit or condemn them. All which did evidence that they had that which was to them instead of a law, which they might have been governed by, and which will condemn them, because they were not so guided and governed by it. So that the guilty Gentiles are left without excuse. God is justified in condemning them. They cannot plead ignorance, and therefore are like to perish, if they have not something else to plead.

2. The light of the law; that the Jews had, and by that they shall be judged: (v. 12.) *As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law*. They sinned, not only having the law, but *in viâ—* in the law, in the midst of so much law, in the face and light of so pure and clear a law, the directions of which were so very full and particular, and the sanctions of it so very cogent and enforcing. These shall be judged *by the law*; their punishment shall

be, as their sin is, so much the greater for their having the law. *The Jew first*, v. 9. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon. Thus Moses did accuse them, (John 5. 45.) and they fell under the many stripes of him that knew his master's will, and did it not, Luke 12. 47.

The Jews prided themselves very much in the law; but to confirm what he had said, the apostle shews, (v. 13.) that their having, and hearing, and knowing the law, would not justify them, but their doing of it. The Jewish doctors bolstered up their followers with an opinion, that all that were Jews, how bad soever they lived, should have a place in the world to come. This the apostle here opposes: it was a *great* privilege that they had the law, but not a *saving* privilege, unless they lived up to the law they had; which it is certain the Jews did not, and therefore they had need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God. We may apply it to the gospel: it is not hearing, but doing, that will save us, John 13. 17. James 1. 22.

3. The light of the gospel: and according to that, those that enjoy the gospel, shall be judged; (v. 16.) *According to my gospel*; not meant of any fifth gospel written by Paul, as some conceit; or of the gospel written by Luke, as Paul's amanuensis, (*Euseb. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 8.*) but the gospel in general, called Paul's, because he was a preacher of it. As many as are under that dispensation, shall be judged according to that dispensation, Mark 16. 16.

Some refer those words, *according to my gospel*, to what he says of the day of judgment: "There will come a day of judgment, according as I have in my preaching often told you; and that will be the day of the final judgment both of Jews and Gentiles." It is good for us to get acquainted with what is revealed concerning that day.

(1.) There is a day set for a general judgment *The day*, the great day, his day that is coming, Ps. 37. 13.

(2.) The judgment of that day will be put into the hands of *Jesus Christ*. God shall judge by Jesus Christ, Acts 17. 31. It will be part of the reward of his humiliation. Nothing speaks more terror to sinners, and more comfort to saints, than this, that Christ shall be the Judge.

(3.) The *secrets of men* shall then be judged. Secret services shall be then rewarded, secret sins shall be then punished, hidden things shall be brought to light. That will be the great discovering day, when that which is now done in corners, shall be proclaimed to all the world.

17. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, 18. And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; 19. And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 20. An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. 21. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22. Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23. Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the

law dishonourest thou God? 24. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. 25. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. 26. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 27. And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? 28. For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29. But he *is a Jew*, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and not in the letter*; whose praise *is not of men*, but of God.

In the latter part of the chapter the apostle directs his discourse more closely to the Jews, and shews what sins they were guilty of, notwithstanding their profession and vain pretensions. He had said, (v. 13.) that not the hearers, but the doers, of the law are justified; and he here applies that great truth to the Jews. Observe,

1. He allows their profession, (v. 17—20.) and specifies their particular pretensions and privileges, which they prided themselves in; that they might see he did not condemn them out of ignorance of what they had to say for themselves; no, he knew the best of their cause.

1. They were a peculiar people; separated and distinguished from all other by their having the written law, and the special presence of God among them.

Thou art called a Jew; not so much in parentage as profession. It was a very honourable title, salvation was of the Jews; and this they were very proud of, to be a people by themselves; and yet many that were so called, were the vilest of men. It is no new thing for the worst practices to be shrouded under the best names, for many of the synagogue of Satan to say they are Jews, (Rev. 2. 9.) for a generation of vipers to boast they have *Abraham* to their father, Matt. 3. 7—9.

And restest in the law. That is, they took a pride in this, that they had the law among them, had it in their books, read it in their synagogues. They were mightily puffed up with this privilege, and thought this enough to bring them to heaven, though they did not live up to the law. To rest in the law, with a rest of complacency and acquiescence, is good; to rest in it with a rest of pride, and slothfulness, and carnal security, is the ruin of souls. *The temple of the Lord*, Jer. 7. 4. *Bethel their confidence*, Jer. 48. 13. *Haughty because of the holy mountain*, Zeph. 3. 11. It is a dangerous thing to rest in external privileges, and not to improve them.

And makest thy boast of God. See how the best things may be perverted and abused. A believing, humble, thankful glorying in God, is the root and summary of all religion, Ps. 34. 2. Isa. 45. 25. 1 Cor. 1. 31. But a proud vainglorious boasting in God, and in the outward profession of his name, is the root and summary of all hypocrisy. Spiritual pride is of all kinds of pride the most dangerous.

2. They were a knowing people; (v. 18.) and *knowest his will*, τὸ βίλημα—the will. God's will is the will, the sovereign, absolute, irresistible will. The world will then, and not till then, be set to

rights, when God's will is the only will, and all other wills are melted into it. They did not only know the truth of God, but the will of God, that which he would have them do. It is possible for a hypocrite to have a great deal of knowledge in the will of God.

And approveth the things that are more excellent—δικαιμαζὺς τὰ διαφέροντα. Paul prays for it for his friends as a very great attainment, Phil. 1. 10. Ἐν τῷ δικαιμαζέειν ὑμᾶς τὰ διαφέροντα. Understand it, (1.) Of a good apprehension in the things of God, reading it thus, *Thou discernest things that differ*, knowest how to distinguish between good and evil, to separate between the precious and the vile, (Jer. 15. 19.) to make a difference between the unclean and the clean, Lev. 11. 47. Good and bad lie sometimes so near together, that it is not easy to distinguish them; but the Jews, having the touchstone of the law ready at hand, were, or at least thought they were, able to distinguish to cleave the hair in doubtful cases. A man may be a good casuist, and yet a bad christian; accurate in the notion, but loose and careless in the application. Or we may, with *De Dieu*, understand controversies by the τὰ διαφέροντα. A man may be well skilled in the controversies of religion, and yet a stranger to the power of godliness. (2.) Of a warm affection to the things of God, as we read it, *Approveth the things that are excellent*. There are excellencies in religion, which a hypocrite may approve of: there may be a consent of the practical judgment to the law, that it is good, and yet that consent overpowered by the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind;

—————Viduo meliora proboque
Deteriora sequor.

I see the better, but pursue the worse.

and it is common for sinners to make that approbation an excuse, which is really a very great aggravation of a sinful course.

They got this acquaintance with, and affection to, that which is good, by being instructed out of the law, κατεργασμένοι—being catechised. The word signifies an early instruction from childhood. It is a great privilege and advantage to be well catechised betimes. It was the custom of the Jews to take a great deal of pains in teaching their children when they were young, and all their lessons were out of the law; it were well if christians were but as industrious to teach their children out of the gospel.

Now this is called, (v. 20.) *The form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law*, that is, the show and appearance of it.

Those whose knowledge rests in an empty notion, and does not make an impression on their hearts, have only the form of it, like a picture well drawn and in good colours, but which wants life. A form of knowledge produces but a form of godliness, 2 Tim. 3. 5. A form of knowledge may deceive men, but cannot impose upon the piercing eye of the heart-searching God. A form may be the vehicle of the power; but he that takes up with that only, is like sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.

3. They were a teaching people, or at least thought themselves so; (v. 19, 20.) *And art confident that thou thyself.* Apply it,

(1.) To the Jews in general; they thought themselves guides to the poor blind Gentiles that sat in darkness, were very proud of this, that whoever would have the knowledge of God, must be beholden to them for it; all other nations must come to school to them, to learn what is good, and what the Lord requires; for they had the lively oracles.

(2.) To their rabbies and doctors and leading men among them, who were especially those that judged others; (v. 1.) these prided themselves much in the possession they had got of Moses's chair,

and the deference which the vulgar paid to their dictates; and the apostle expresses this in several terms, *a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes*, the better to set forth their proud conceit of themselves, and contempt of others. This was a string they loved to be harping upon, heaping up titles of honour upon themselves. The best work, when it is prided in, is unacceptable to God. It is good to instruct the foolish, and to teach the babes; but, considering our own ignorance, and folly, and inability to make these teachings successful without God, there is nothing in it to be proud of.

II. He aggravates their provocations, (v. 21—24.) from two things.

1. That they sinned against their knowledge and profession, did that themselves, which they taught others to avoid; *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* Teaching is a piece of that charity which begins at home, though it must not end there. It was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, *That they did not do as they taught*, (Matt. 23. 3.) but pulled down with their lives what they built up with their preaching; for who will believe those who do not believe themselves? Example will govern more than rules. The greatest obstructors of the success of the word, are those whose bad lives contradict their good doctrine; who in the pulpit preach so well, that it is pity they should ever come out; and out of the pulpit live so ill, that it is pity they should ever come in. He specifies three particular sins that abounded among the Jews.

(1.) *Stealing*. This is charged upon some that declared *God's statutes*; (Ps. 50. 16, 18.) *When thou savest a thief, then thou consentedst with him*. The Pharisees are charged with devouring widows' houses, (Matt. 23. 14.) and that is the worst of robberies.

(2.) *Adultery*, v. 22. This is likewise charged upon that sinner; (Ps. 50. 18.) *Thou hast been partner with adulterers*. Many of the Jewish rabbins are said to have been notorious for this sin.

(3.) *Sacrilege*. Robbing in holy things, which were then by special laws dedicated and devoted to God. And this is charged upon those that professed to abhor idols. So the Jews did remarkably, after their captivity in Babylon; that furnace parted them for ever from the dross of their idolatry, but *they dealt very treacherously in the worship of God*. It was in the latter days of the Old Testament church, that they were charged with *robbing God in tithes and offerings*, (Mal. 3. 8, 9.) converting that to their own use, and to the service of their lusts, which was, in a special manner, set apart for God. And this is almost equivalent to idolatry, though this sacrilege was cloked with the abhorrence of idols. Those will be severely reckoned with another day, who, while they condemn sin in others, do the same, or as bad, or worse, themselves.

2. That they dishonoured God by their sin, v. 23, 24. While God and his law were an honour to them, which they boasted of, and prided themselves in, they were a dishonour to God and his law, by giving occasion to those that were without, to reflect upon their religion, as if that did countenance and allow of such things; which, as it is *their sin*, who make such inferences, (for the faults of professors are not to be laid upon professions,) so it is *their sin*, who give occasion for those inferences, and will greatly aggravate their miscarriages. This was the condemnation in David's case, *that he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, 2 Sam. 12. 14. And the apostle here refers to the same charge against their forefathers; *as it is written*, v. 24. He does not mention the place, because he wrote this to those that were instructed in the law, (in labouring to convince, it is some advan-

tage to deal with those that have knowledge, and are acquainted with the scripture,) but he seems to point at Isa. 52. 5. Ezek. 36. 22, 23. and 2 Sam. 12. 14. It is a lamentation that those who were made *to be to God for a name and for a praise*, should be to him a shame and dishonour. The great evil of the sins of professors, is, the dishonour done to God and religion by their profession.

"Blasphemed through you; you give the occasion for it, it is through your folly and carelessness. The reproaches you bring upon yourselves, reflect upon your God, and religion is wounded through your sides." A good caution to professors to walk circumspectly. See 1 Tim. 6. 1.

III. He asserts the utter insufficiency of their profession to clear them from the guilt of these provocations; (v. 25—29.) *Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law*; obedient Jews shall not lose the reward of their obedience, but will gain this by their being Jews, that they have a clearer rule of obedience than the Gentiles have. God did not give the law, nor appoint circumcision in vain. This must be referred to the state of the Jews before the ceremonial polity was abolished, otherwise circumcision to one that professed faith in Christ, was forbidden, Gal. 5. 2. But he is here speaking to the Jews, whose Judaism would advantage them, if they would but live up to the rules and laws of it; but if not, *"thy circumcision is made uncircumcision"*, thy profession will do thee no good; thou wilt be no more justified than the uncircumcised Gentiles, but more condemned for sinning against greater light." The uncircumcised are in scripture branded as *unclean*, (Isa. 52. 1.) as *out of the covenant*; (Eph. 2. 11, 12.) and wicked Jews will be dealt with as such. See Jer. 9. 25, 26.

Further, to illustrate this,

1. He shews that *the uncircumcised Gentiles*, if they live up to the light they have, stand upon the same level *with the Jews*; if they keep the righteousness of the law, (v. 26.) fulfil the law, (v. 27.) that is, by submitting sincerely to the conduct of natural light, perform the matter of your law. Some understand it as putting the case of a perfect obedience to the law; "If the Gentiles could perfectly keep the law, they should be justified by it as well as the Jews." But it seems rather to be meant of such an obedience as some of the Gentiles did attain to. The case of Cornelius will clear it. Though he was a Gentile, and uncircumcised, yet, *being a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house*, (Acts 10. 2.) he was accepted, v. 4. Doubtless, there were many such instances: and they were the uncircumcision, that kept the righteousness of the law; and of such he saith,

(1.) That they were accepted with God, as if they had been circumcised; *their uncircumcision was counted for circumcision*: circumcision was indeed to the Jews a commanded duty, but it was not to all the world a necessary condition of justification and salvation.

(2.) That their obedience was a great aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews, who had the letter of the law, v. 27. Judge thee, that is, help to add to thy condemnation, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress. Observe, To carnal professors the law is but the letter; they read it as a bare writing, but are not ruled by it as a law. They did transgress, not only notwithstanding the letter and circumcision, but by it, they thereby hardened themselves in sin. External privileges, if they do not do us good, do us hurt.

The obedience of those that enjoy less means, and make a less profession, will help to condemn those that enjoy greater means, and make a greater profession, but do not live up to it.

2. He describes the true circumcision, v. 28, 29.

(1.) It is *not that which is outward in the flesh and in the letter*. This is not to drive us off from the observance of external institutions, (they are good in their place,) but from trusting to them, and resting in them as sufficient to bring us to heaven; taking up with a name to live, without being alive indeed. *He is not a Jew, that is, shall not be accepted of God as the seed of believing Abraham, nor owned as having answered the intention of the law. To be Abraham's children, is to do the works of Abraham,* John 8. 39, 40.

(2.) It is *that which is inward, of the heart, and in the spirit*. It is the heart, that God looks at, the *circumcising of the heart* that renders us acceptable to him. See Deut. 10. 6. This is the *circumcision that is not made with hands*, Col. 2. 11, 12. *Casting away the body of sin*. So it is *in the spirit*, in our spirit as the subject, and wrought by God's Spirit as the Author of it.

(3.) The praise thereof, though it be *not of men*, who judge according to outward appearance, yet it is *of God*, God himself will own and accept and crown this sincerity; *for he seeth not as man seeth*. Fair pretences and a plausible profession may deceive men; but God cannot be so deceived; he sees through shows to realities. This is alike true of christianity. *He is not a christian, that is one outwardly, nor is that baptism, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a christian, that is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

CHAP. III.

The apostle, in this chapter, carries on his discourse concerning justification. He had already proved the guilt both of Gentiles and Jews. Now in this chapter, I. He answers some objections that might be made against what he had said about the Jews, v. 1. . 8. II. He asserts the guilt and corruption of mankind in common, both Jews and Gentiles, v. 9. . 18. III. He argues from thence, that justification must needs be by faith, and not by the law; which he gives several reasons for, v. 19, to the end. The many digressions in his writings render his discourse sometimes a little difficult, but his scope is evident.

1. **WHAT** advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? 2. Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. 3. For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4. God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. 5. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.) 6. God forbid: for then how should God judge the world? 7. For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? 8. And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just. 9. What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all

under sin: 10. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. 15. Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16. Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17. And the way of peace have they not known: 18. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Here he answers several objections, which might be made, to clear his way. No truth so plain and evident, but wicked wits and corrupt carnal hearts will have something to say against it; but divine truths must be cleared from cavil.

Object. 1. If Jew and Gentile stand so much upon the same level before God, *what advantage then hath the Jew?* Hath not God often spoken with a great deal of respect for the Jews, as a nonsuch people, (Deut. 33. 29.) a *holy nation, a peculiar treasure, the seed of Abraham his friend?* Did not he institute circumcision as a badge of their church-membership, and a seed of their covenant-relation to God? Now doth not this levelling doctrine deny them all such prerogatives, and reflect dishonour upon the ordinance of circumcision, as a fruitless insignificant thing?

Answer. The Jews are, notwithstanding this, a people greatly privileged and honoured, have great means and helps, though these be not infallibly saving; (v. 2.) *Much every way*. The door is open to the Gentiles as well as Jews, but the Jews have a fairer way up to this door, by reason of their church-privileges, which are not to be undervalued, though many that have them perish eternally for not improving them. He reckons up many of the Jews' privileges; (Rom. 9. 4, 5.) he here mentions but one, which is indeed *instar omnium*—equivalent to all, *that unto them were committed the oracles of God*, that is, the scriptures of the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses, which is called the *lively oracles*, (Acts 7. 38.) and those types, promises, and prophecies, which relate to Christ and the gospel. The scriptures are the *oracles of God*; they are a divine revelation, they come from heaven, are of infallible truth, and of eternal consequence as oracles. The Septuagint call the *Urim and Thummim*, the *λογια*—the *oracles*. The scripture is our *breast-plate of judgement*. We must have recourse to the law and to the testimony, as to an oracle. The gospel is called the *oracles of God*, Heb. 5. 12. 1 Pet. 4. 11.

Now these *oracles were committed to the Jews*; the Old Testament was written in their language; Moses and the prophets were of their nation, lived among them, preached and wrote primarily to and for the Jews. They were *committed to them* as trustees for succeeding ages and churches. The Old Testament was deposited in their hands, to be carefully preserved pure and uncorrupt, and so transmitted down to posterity.

The Jews were the Christians' library-keepers, were intrusted with that sacred treasure for their own use and benefit in the first place, and then for the advantage of the world; and in preserving the letter of the scripture, they were very faithful to their trust, did not lose one iota or title; in which

we are to acknowledge God's gracious care and providence. The Jews had the *means* of salvation, but they had not the *monopoly* of salvation.

Now this he mentions with a *chiefly*—*πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ*; this was their prime and principal privilege. The enjoyment of God's word and ordinances is the chief happiness of a people, is to be put in the *imprimis* of their advantages, Deut. 4. 8.—33. 3. Ps. 147. 20.

Object. II. Against what he had said of the advantages the Jews had in the *lively oracles*, some might object the unbelief of many of them. To what purpose were the *oracles of God committed to them*, when so many of them, notwithstanding these oracles, continue strangers to Christ, and enemies to his gospel? *Some did not believe, v. 3.*

Answer. It is very true that some, nay most, of the present Jews, do not believe in Christ; *but shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* The apostle startles at such a thought; *God forbid!* The infidelity and obstinacy of the Jews could not invalidate and overthrow those prophecies of the Messiah, which were contained in the *oracles committed to them*. Christ will be glorious, though *Israel be not gathered*, Isa. 49. 5. God's words shall be accomplished, his purposes performed, and all his ends answered, though there be a generation that by their unbelief go about to make God a liar.

Let God be true, but every man a liar; let us abide by this principle, *that God is true* to every word which he has spoken, and will let none of his oracles fall *to the ground*, though thereby we give *the lie to man*; better question and overthrow the credit of all the men in the world than doubt of the faithfulness of God.

What David said in his haste, (Ps. 116. 11.) *that all men are liars*, Paul here asserts deliberately. Lying is a limb of that old man which we every one of us come into the world clothed with. All men are fickle, and mutable, and given to change; *vanity and a lie*, (Ps. 62. 9.) *altogether vanity*, Ps. 39. 5. *All men are liars*, compared with God. It is very comfortable, when we find every man a liar, (no faith in man,) that God is faithful. When *they speak vanity every one with his neighbour*, it is very comfortable to think, *that the words of the Lord are pure words*, Ps. 12. 2, 6.

For the further proof of this, he quotes Ps. 51. 4. *That thou mightest be justified*. The design of which is to shew, 1. That God doth and will preserve his own honour in the world, notwithstanding the sins of men. 2. That it is our duty, in all our conclusions concerning ourselves and others, to justify God, and to assert and maintain his justice, truth, and goodness, however it goes. David lays a load upon himself in his confession, that he might justify God, and acquit him from any injustice. So here, Let the credit and reputation of man shift for itself, the matter is not great whether it sink or swim; let us hold fast this conclusion, how specious soever the premises may be to the contrary, *that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*. Thus is God justified in his sayings, and cleared when he judges, (as it is Ps. 51. 4.) or, when *he is judged*, as it is here rendered. When men presume to quarrel with God and his proceedings, we may be sure the sentence will go on God's side.

Object. III. Carnal hearts might from hence take occasion to encourage themselves in sin. He had said, that the universal guilt and corruption of mankind gave occasion to the manifestation of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ. Now it may be suggested, If all our sin be so far from overthrowing God's honour, that it commends it, and his ends are secured, so that there is no harm done, is it not unjust for God to punish our sin and unbelief so severely! If the unrighteousness of the Jews

gave occasion to the calling in of the Gentiles, and so to God's greater glory, why are the Jews so much censured? (v. 5.) *If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? What inference may be drawn from thence? Is God unrighteous? μὴ δίκαιος ὁ Θεός—Is not God unrighteous,* (so it may be read, more in the form of an objection,) *who taketh vengeance?* Unbelieving hearts will gladly take any occasion to quarrel with the equity of God's proceedings, and so *condemn him that is most just*, Job 34. 17. *I speak as a man*, that is, I object this as the language of carnal hearts; it is suggested like a man, a vain foolish proud creature.

Answer. *God forbid.* Far be it from us to imagine such a thing. Suggestions that reflect dishonour upon God and his justice and holiness, are rather to be startled at than parleyed with. Get thee behind me, Satan; never entertain such a thought.

For then how shall God judge the world? v. 6. The argument is much the same with that of Abraham, (Gen. 18. 25.) *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* No doubt, he shall. If he was not infinitely just and righteous, he would be unfit to be the Judge of all the earth. *Shall even he that hateth right govern?* Job 34. 17. *Compare v. 18, 19.* The sin has never the less of malignity and demerit in it, though God bring glory to himself out of it. It is only accidentally that sin commends God's righteousness. No thanks to the sinner for that, who intends no such thing.

The consideration of God's judging the world should for ever silence all our doubtings of, and reflections upon, his justice and equity. It is not for us to arraign the proceedings of such an absolute Sovereign. The sentence of the supreme court, where lies no appeal, is not to be called in question.

Object. IV. The former objection is repeated and prosecuted; (v. 7, 8.) for proud hearts will hardly be beaten out of their refuge of lies, but will hold fast the deceit. But his setting off the objection in its own colours, is sufficient to answer it; *If the truth of God has more abounded through my lie*. He supposes the sophisters to follow their objection thus, "If my lie, my sin," (for there is something of a lie in every sin, especially in the sins of professors) "have occasioned the glorifying of God's truth and faithfulness, why should I be judged, and condemned as a sinner, and not rather thence take encouragement to go on in my sin, that grace may abound?" An inference which at first sight appears too black to be argued, and fit to be cast out with abhorrence. Daring sinners take occasion to boast in mischief, because the *goodness of God endures continually*, Ps. 52. 1. *Let us do evil, that good may come*, is oftener in the heart than in the mouth of sinners, so justifying themselves in their wicked ways. Mentioning this wicked thought, he observes, in a parenthesis, that there were those who charged such doctrines as this upon Paul and his fellow-ministers; *some affirm that we say so*. It is no new thing for the best of God's people and ministers to be charged with holding and teaching such things as they do most detest and abhor; and it is not to be thought strange, when our Master himself was said to be in league with Beelzebub. Many have been reproached as if they had said that, the contrary of which they maintain: it is an old artifice of Satan thus to cast dirt upon Christ's ministers, *Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit—Lay slander thickly on, for some will be sure to fix*. The best men and the best truths are subject to slander. Bishop Sanderson makes a further remark upon this, *as we are slanderously reported—βλασφημιοῦνθα*. Blasphemy in scripture usually signifies the highest degree of slander, speaking ill of God. The slander of a minister and his regular doctrine, is a more than ordinary slander, it is

a kind of blasphemy, not for his person's sake, but for his calling's sake, and his work's sake.

Answer. He says no more by way of confutation, but that, whatever they themselves may argue, the damnation of those is just. Some understand it of the slanderers; God will justly condemn those who unjustly condemn his truth. Or rather it is to be applied to those who embolden themselves in sin, under a pretence of God's getting glory to himself out of it. Those who deliberately *do evil, that good may come of it*, will be so far from escaping, under the shelter of that excuse, that it will rather justify their damnation, and render them the more inexcusable; for sinning upon such a surmise, and in such a confidence, argues a great deal both of the wit and of the will in the sin; a wicked will deliberately to choose the evil, and a wicked wit to palliate it with the pretence of good arising from it: therefore their damnation is just; and whatever excuses of this kind they may now please themselves with, they will none of them stand good in the great day; but God will be justified in his proceedings, and all flesh, even the proud flesh that now lifts up itself against him, shall be silent before him.

Some think Paul herein refers to the approaching ruin of the Jewish church and nation, which their obstinacy and self-justification in their unbelief hastened upon them apace.

Paul, having removed these objections, next reviews his assertion of the general guilt and corruption of mankind in common, both of Jews and Gentiles, *v. 9—18.*

“Are we better than they, we Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God? Does that recommend us to God, or will that justify us? No, by no means.” Or, *“Are we Christians (Jews and Gentiles) so much better antecedently than the unbelieving part, as to have merited God's grace? Alas! no: before free grace made the difference, those of us that had been Jews, and those that had been Gentiles, were all alike corrupted.”*

They are all under sin. 1. Under the guilt of sin; under it as under a sentence; under it as under a bond, by which they are bound over to eternal ruin and damnation; under it as under a burthen (Ps. 38. 4.) that will sink them to the lowest hell: we are guilty before God, *v. 19.* 2. Under the government and dominion of sin: under it as under a tyrant and cruel task-master; enslaved to it; under it as under a yoke; under the power of it, sold to work wickedness.

And this he had proved, *συνιστάμεθα*. It is a law term; *we have charged them with it*, and have made good our charge; we have proved the indictment, we have convinced them by the notorious evidence of the fact.

This charge and conviction he here further illustrates by several scriptures out of the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt depraved state of all men, till grace restrain or change them: so that herein as in a glass we may all of us behold our natural face. The 10th, 11th, and 12th verses are taken from Ps. 14. 1—3. which are repeated as a very weighty truth, Ps. 53. 1—3. The rest that follows here, is found in the Septuagint translation of the 14th Psalm, which some think the apostle chooses to follow as better known: but I rather think that Paul took these passages from other places of scripture here referred to; but in later copies of the LXX they were all added in Ps. 14. from this discourse of Paul. It is observable, that to prove the general corruption of nature, he quotes some scriptures which speak of the particular corruptions of particular persons, as of Doeg, (Ps. 140. 3.) of the Jews; (Isa. 59. 7, 8.) which shews, that the same sins that are committed by one, are in the nature of all. The times of David and Isaiah were some of the

better times, and yet to their days he refers. What is said Ps. 14. is expressly spoken of *all the children of men*, and that upon a particular view and inspection made by God himself; the *Lord looked down*, as upon the old world, Gen. 6. 5. And this judgment of God was according to truth. He who, when himself had made all, looked upon every thing that he had made, and behold, all was very good, now that man had marred all, looked, and behold, all was bad.

Let us take a view of the particulars. Observe, (1.) That which is habitual, which is twofold.

[1.] A habitual defect of every thing that is good; *There is none righteous*, none that has an honest good principle of virtue, or is governed by such a principle, none that retains any thing of that image of God, consisting in righteousness, wherein man was created; *no, not one*; implying, that if there had been but one, God would have found him out. When all the world was corrupt, God had his eye upon one righteous Noah. Even those who through grace are justified and sanctified, were none of them righteous by nature: no righteousness is born with us: the man after God's own heart owns himself conceived in sin.

None that understandeth, v. 11. The fault lies in the corruption of the understanding; that is blinded, depraved, perverted. Religion and righteousness have so much reason on their side, that if people had but any understanding, they would be better, and do better. But they do not understand. Sinners are fools. *None that seeketh after God*, none that has any regard to God, any desire after him. Those may justly be reckoned to have no understanding, that do not seek after God. The carnal mind is so far from seeking after God, that really it is enmity against him.

They are together become unprofitable, v. 12. Those that have forsaken God, soon grow good for nothing; useless burthens of the earth. Those that are in a state of sin, are the most unprofitable creatures under the sun; for it follows, *There is none that doeth good*; no, not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, Eccl. 7. 25. Even in those actions of sinners that have some goodness in them, there is a fundamental error in the principle and end; so that it may be said. There is none that doeth good. *Malum oritur ex quolibet defectu — Every defect is the source of evil.*

[2.] A habitual defection to every thing that is evil; *They are all gone out of the way.* No wonder that those miss the right way, who do not seek after God, the highest end. God made man in the way, set him in right, but he hath forsaken it. The corruption of mankind is an apostasy.

(2.) That which is *actual*. And what good can be expected from such a degenerate race; He instances,

[1.] In their words, (*v. 13, 14.*) in three things particularly.

First, Cruelty. Their throat is an *open sepulchre*; ready to swallow up the poor and innocent; waiting an opportunity to do mischief, like the old serpent seeking to devour, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, the destroyer. And when they do not openly avow this cruelty, and vent it publicly, yet they are underhand intending mischief; *the poison of asps is under their lips*, (Jam. 3. 8.) the most venomous and incurable poison, with which they blast the good name of their neighbour by reproaches, and aim at his life by false witness. These passages are borrowed from Ps. 5. 9. and 140. 3.

Secondly, Cheating. *With their tongues they have used deceit.* Herein they shew themselves the devil's children, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. *They have used it*: it intimates, that they make a trade of lying; it is their constant practice, especially belying the ways and people of God.

Thirdly, Cursing: reflecting upon God, and blaspheming his holy name; wishing evil to their brethren. Their mouth is full of *cursing and bitterness*. This is mentioned as one of the great sins of the tongue, Jam. 3. 9. But those that thus love cursing, shall have enough of it, Ps. 109. 17—19. How many, who are called Christians, do by these sins evidence that they are still under the reign and dominion of sin, still in the condition that they were born in.

[2.] In their ways; (v. 15—17.) *Their feet are swift to shed blood*, they are very industrious to compass any cruel design, ready to lay hold on all such opportunities. Wherever they go, *destruction and misery* go along with them; these are their companions; destruction and misery to the people of God, to the country and neighbourhood where they live, to the land and nation, and to themselves at last. Beside the *destruction and misery* that are at the end of their ways, (death is the end of these things,) destruction and misery are in their ways; their sin is its own punishment: a man needs no more to make him miserable, than to be a slave to his sins. And *the way of peace have they not known*; they know not how to preserve peace with others, nor how to obtain peace for themselves. They may talk of peace, such a peace as is in the devil's palace, while he keeps it, but they are strangers to all true peace; they know not the things that belong to their peace. These are quoted from Prov. 1. 16. Isa. 59. 7, 8.

[3.] The root of all this we have, (v. 18.) *There is no fear of God before their eyes*. The fear of God is here put for all practical religion, which consists in an awful and serious regard to the word and will of God as our rule, to the honour and glory of God as our end. Wicked people have not this before *their eyes*; they do not steer by it; they are governed by other rules, aim at other ends. This is quoted from Ps. 36. 1. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. The fear of God would lay a restraint upon our spirits, and keep them right, Neh. 5. 15. When once fear is cast off, prayer is restrained, (Job 15. 4.) and then all goes to wreck and ruin quickly.

So that we have here a short account of the general depravedness and corruption of mankind; and may say, O Adam! what hast thou done? God made man upright, but thus he hath sought out many inventions.

19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. 21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22. Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26. To declare, *I say*, at this time

his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 27. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. 29. *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *Is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30. Seeing *it is* one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. 31. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

From all this Paul infers, that it is in vain to look for justification by the works of the law, and that it is to be had only by faith; which is the point he hath been all along proving, from ch. 1. 17. and which he lays down (v. 28.) as the summary of his discourse, with a *Q. E. D.*—*which was to be demonstrated*; we conclude, *that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law*; neither the deeds of the first law of pure innocence, which left no room for repentance; nor the deeds of the law of nature, how highly soever improved; nor the deeds of the ceremonial law; (the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin); nor the deeds of the moral law, which are included; for he speaks of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, and those works which might be matter of boasting. Man, in his depraved state, under the power of such corruption, could never, by any works of his own, gain acceptance with God; but it must be resolved purely into the free grace of God, given through Jesus Christ to all true believers that receive it as a free gift.

If we had never sinned, our obedience to the law would have been our righteousness; “Do this, and live:” but having sinned, and being corrupted, nothing that we can do will atone for our former guilt. It was by their obedience to the moral law that the Pharisees looked for justification, Luke 18. 11.

Now there are two things from which the apostle here argues—the *guiltiness of man*, to prove that we cannot be justified by the works of the law; and *the glory of God*, to prove that we must be justified by faith.

I. He argues from *man's guiltiness*, to shew the folly of expecting justification by the works of the law. The argument is very plain; we can never be justified and saved by the law that we have broken. A convicted traitor can never come off by pleading the statute of 25 Edward III. for that law discovers his crime, and condemns him: indeed if he had never broken it, he might have been justified by it; but now it is past that he hath broken it, and there is no way of coming off but by pleading the act of indemnity, upon which he hath surrendered and submitted himself, and humbly and penitently claiming the benefit of it, and casting himself upon it.

Now concerning the guiltiness of man,

1. He fastens it particularly upon the Jews; for they were the men that made their boast of the law, and set up for justification by it. He had quoted several scriptures out of the Old Testament to shew this corruption; Now, says he, (v. 19.) *this that the law says, it says to them who are under the law*; this conviction belongs to the Jews as well as others, for it is written in their law. The Jews boasted of their being under the law, and placed a great deal of confidence in that: “But,” says he, “the law convicts and condemns you, you see it does.” *That every mouth may be stopped*; that all boasting may be si-

inned. See the method that God takes, both in justifying and condemning; he stops every mouth: those that are justified, have their mouths stopped by a humble conviction; those that are condemned, have their mouths stopped too; for they shall at last be convinced, (Jude 15.) and sent *speechless* to hell, Matt. 22. 12. *All iniquity shall stop her mouth*, Ps. 107. 42.

2. He extends it in general to all the world—that *all the world may become guilty before God*. If the world lies in wickedness, (1 John 5. 19.) to be sure it is guilty. *May become guilty*, may be proved guilty, liable to punishment, all by nature *children of wrath*, Eph. 2. 3. They must all plead guilty; those that stand most upon their own justification will certainly be cast. *Guilty before God* is a dreadful word, before an all-seeing God, that is not, nor can be, deceived in his judgment; before a just and righteous Judge, who will by no means clear the guilty. All are guilty, and therefore all have need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God. *For all have sinned*, (v. 23.) all are sinners by nature, by practice, and *have come short of the glory of God*, have failed of that which is the chief end of man. *Come short*, as the archer comes short of the mark, as the runner comes short of the prize; so come short, as not only not to win, but to be great losers. *Come short of the glory of God* (1.) *Come short of glorifying God*. See ch. 1. 21. *They glorified him not as God*. Man was placed in the top of the visible creation, actively to glorify that great Creator whom the inferior creatures could glorify only objectively: but man by sin comes short of this, and instead of glorifying God, dishonours him. It is a very melancholy consideration, to look upon the children of men, that were made to glorify God, and to think how few there be that do it. (2.) *Come short of glorifying before God*. There is no boasting of innocency: if we go about to glory before God, to boast of any thing we are, or have, or do, this will be an everlasting estoppel—that we have *all sinned*, and that will silence us. We may glory before men, who are short-sighted, and cannot search our hearts; who are corrupt, as we are, and well enough pleased with sin: but there is no glorying before God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity. (3.) *Come short of being glorified by God*. Come short of justification and acceptance with God, which is glory begun; come short of the holiness and sanctification which are the glorious image of God upon man; and have overthrown all hopes and expectations of being glorified with God in heaven, by any righteousness of their own. It is impossible now to get to heaven in the way of spotless innocency; that passage is blocked up; there is a cherub and a flaming sword set to keep that way to the tree of life.

3. Further, to drive us off from expecting justification by the law, he ascribes this conviction to the law; (v. 20.) *For by the law is the knowledge of sin*. That law which convicts and condemns us, can never justify us. The law is the *strait rule*, that *rectum* which is *index sui et obliqui*—that which *points out the right and the wrong*; it is the proper use and intendment of the law to open our wound, and therefore not likely to be the remedy. That which is searching, is not sanative. Those that would know sin, must get the knowledge of the law in its strictness, extent, and spiritual nature. If we compare our own hearts and lives with the rule, we shall discover wherein we have turned aside. Paul made this use of the law, ch. 7. 9. *Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight*. Observe,

(1.) *No flesh* shall be justified, no man, no corrupted man, (Gen. 6. 3.) *for that he also is flesh*; sinful and depraved; therefore not justified, because we are flesh. The corruption that remains in our

nature, will for ever obstruct any justification by our own works, which, coming from flesh, must needs taste of the cask, Job 14. 4.

(2.) Not justified *in his sight*. He does not deny that justification which was by the deeds of the law in the sight of the church: they were, in their church-estate, as embodied in a polity, a holy people, a nation of priests; but as the conscience stands in relation to God, *in his sight*, we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. The apostle refers to Ps. 143. 2.

11. He argues from *God's glory*, to prove that justification must be expected only by faith in Christ's righteousness. There is no justification by the works of the law. Must guilty man then remain eternally under wrath? Is there no hope? Is the wound become incurable because of transgression? No, blessed be God, it is not, (v. 21, 22.) there is another way laid open for us, *the righteousness of God without the law is manifested* now under the gospel. Justification may be obtained without the keeping of Moses's law: and this is called *the righteousness of God*, righteousness of his ordaining, and providing, and accepting; righteousness which he confers upon us; as the christian armour is called *the armour of God*, Eph. 6. 11.

Now concerning the righteousness of God, observe,

1. That it is manifested. The gospel-way of justification is a high-way, a plain way, it is laid open for us; the brazen serpent is lifted up upon the pole; we are not left to grope our way in the dark, but it is manifested to us.

2. It is *without the law*. Here he obviates the method of the judaizing christians, who would needs join Christ and Moses together; owning Christ for the Messiah, and yet too fondly retaining the law, keeping up the ceremonies of it, and imposing it upon the Gentile converts: no, says he, it is *without the law*. The righteousness that Christ hath brought in, is a complete righteousness.

3. Yet it is *witnessed by the law and the prophets*; there were types, and prophecies, and promises, in the Old Testament, that pointed at this. The law is so far from justifying us, that it directs us to another way of justification; points at Christ as our Righteousness, to whom bear all the prophets witness. See Acts 10. 43. This might recommend it to the Jews, who were so fond of the law and the prophets.

4. It is by the *faith of Jesus Christ*, that faith which hath Jesus Christ for its object; an *anointed Saviour*, so Jesus Christ signifies. Justifying faith respects Christ as a Saviour in all three anointed offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King; trusting to him, accepting of him, and adhering to him, in all these. It is by this that we become interested in that righteousness which God hath ordained, and which Christ hath brought in.

5. It is *to all, and upon all, them that believe*. In this expression he inculcates that which he had been often harping upon, that Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, stand upon the same level, and are alike welcome to God through Christ; *for there is no difference*. Or, it is *ἐν παντί τοῖς πιστεύουσιν*, *upon all that believe*; not only tendered to them, but put upon them as a crown, as a robe; they are, upon their believing, interested in it, and entitled to all the benefits and privileges of it.

But now, how is this for God's glory?

(1.) It is for the glory of his grace; (v. 24.) *Justified freely by his grace*—*δωρεάν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ χάριτι*. It is by his grace, not by the grace wrought in us, as the papists say, confounding justification and sanctification; but by the gracious favour of God to us

without any merit in us so much as *freeseen*. And to make it the more emphatical, he says, it is *freely by his grace*, to shew that it must be understood of grace in the most proper and genuine sense. It is said that *Joseph found grace* in the sight of his master; (Gen. 39. 4.) but there was a reason; he saw that what he did prospered; there was something in Joseph to invite that grace: but the grace of God communicated to us, comes *freely, freely*; it is free grace, mere mercy; nothing in us to deserve such favours: no, it is all *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. It comes freely to us, but Christ bought it, and paid dear for it; which yet is so ordered, as not to derogate from the honour of free grace. Christ's purchase is no bar to the freeness of God's grace; for grace provided and accepted this vicarious satisfaction.

(2.) It is for the glory of his justice and righteousness; (v. 25, 26.) *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, &c.*

Note, [1.] Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, or propitiatory Sacrifice, typified by the *issegior*, or *mercy-seat*, under the law. He is our throne of grace, in and through whom atonement is made for sin, and our persons and performances are accepted of God, 1 John 2. 2. He is all in all in our reconciliation, not only the maker, but the matter of it; our priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our all. God was in Christ, as in his mercy-seat, reconciling the world unto himself.

[2.] *God hath set him forth* to be so. God, the party offended, makes the first overtures towards a reconciliation, appoints the days-man; *προβήτο—fore-ordained* him to this, in the counsels of his love from eternity, appointed, anointed him to it, qualified him for it, and has exhibited him to a guilty world as their propitiation. See Matt. 3. 17. and 17. 5.

[3.] That *by faith in his blood* we become interested in this propitiation. Christ is the propitiation, there is the healing plaster provided. Faith is the applying of this plaster to the wounded soul. And this faith in the business of justification hath a special regard to the *blood of Christ*, as that which made the atonement; for such was the divine appointment, that without blood there should be no remission, and no blood but his would do it effectually. Here may be an allusion to the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices under the law, as Exod. 24. 8. Faith is the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is the blood of sprinkling.

[4.] That all who by faith are interested in this propitiation, have the *remission of their sins that are past*. It was for this that Christ was set forth to be a propitiation, in order to remission, to which the reprieves of his patience and forbearance were a very encouraging preface. *Through the forbearance of God*. Divine patience hath kept us out of hell, that we might have space to repent, and get to heaven.

Some refer the *sins that are past*, to the sins of the Old Testament saints, which were pardoned for the sake of the atonement which Christ in the fulness of time was to make, which looked backward as well as forward. *Past through the forbearance of God*. It is owing to the divine forbearance that we are not taken away in the very act of sin.

Several Greek copies make *ἐν τῷ ἀρχαῖ τῷ Θεῷ—through the forbearance of God*, to begin v. 26. and they denote two precious fruits of Christ's merit and God's grace; 1. Remission: *διὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν—for the remission*, and, 2. Reprieves, the *forbearance* of God. It is owing to the master's goodness and the dresser's mediation, that barren trees are let alone in the vineyard; and in both God's righteousness is declared, in that without a mediator and a propitiation he would not only not pardon, but not so much

as forbear, not spare a moment; it is owing to Christ, that there is ever a sinner on this side hell.

[5.] That God does in all this *declare his righteousness*. This he insists upon with a great deal of emphasis; *to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness*. It is repeated, as that which has in it something surprising. He declares his righteousness,

First, In the propitiation itself. Never was there such a demonstration of the justice and holiness of God, as there was in the death of Christ. It appears that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of Christ would satisfy for it. Finding sin, though but imputed, upon his own Son, he did not spare him, because he had made himself *sin for us*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. The iniquities of us all being laid upon him, though he was the Son of his love, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, Isa. 53. 10.

Secondly, In the pardon upon that propitiation; so it follows, by way of explication, *that he might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth*. *Mercy and truth* are so met together, *righteousness and peace* have so kissed each other, that it is now become not only an act of grace and mercy, but an act of righteousness, in God, to pardon the sins of penitent believers, having accepted the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to his justice for them. It would not stand with his justice to demand the debt of the principal, when the surety has paid it, and he has accepted that payment in full satisfaction. See 1 John 1. 9. He is just, faithful to his word.

(3.) It is for God's glory; for *boasting is thus excluded*, v. 27. God will have the great work of the justification and salvation of sinners carried on from first to last in such a way as might exclude boasting, that no flesh might glory in his presence, 1 Cor. 1. 29—31. Now if justification were by the works of the law, boasting would not be excluded. How should it? If we were saved by our own works, we might put the crown upon our own heads. But the *law of faith*, the way of justification by faith, doth for ever exclude boasting; for faith is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne: therefore it is most for God's glory, that thus we should be justified.

Observe, He speaks of the *law of faith*. Believers are not left lawless; *faith is a law*, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth; and yet, because it acts in a strict and close dependence upon Jesus Christ, it *excludes boasting*.

From all this he draws this conclusion, (v. 28.) *That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*.

Lastly, In the close of the chapter, he shews the extent of this privilege of justification by faith, and that it is not the peculiar privilege of the Jews, but pertains to the Gentiles also; for he had said, (v. 22.) that there is no difference; and so to this,

1. He asserts and proves it; (v. 29, 30.) *Is he the God of the Jews only?* He argues from the absurdity of such a supposition. Can it be imagined that a God of infinite love and mercy should limit and confine his favours to that little perverse people of the Jews, leaving all the rest of the children of men in a condition eternally desperate? That would by no means agree with the idea we have of the divine goodness, for his *tender mercies are over all his works*; therefore it is one God of grace that justifies *the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith*, that is, both in one and the same way; however the Jews, in favour of themselves, will needs fancy a difference, really there is no more difference than between *by* and *through*, that is, no difference at all.

2. He obviates an objection, (v. 31.) as if this doctrine did nullify the law, which, they knew, came from God; "No," says he, "though we do say that

the law will not justify us, yet we do not therefore say that it was given in vain, or is of no use to us; no, *we establish the right use of the law*, and secure its standing, by fixing it on the right basis. The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future; though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own it, and submit to it, as a rule in the hand of the Mediator, subordinate to the law of grace; and so are so far from overthrowing, that *we establish the law*." Let those consider this, who deny the obligation of the moral law on believers.

CHAP. IV.

The great gospel doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, was so very contrary to the notions the Jews had learnt from those that sat in Moses's chair, that it would hardly go down with them; and therefore the apostle insists very largely upon it, and labours much in the confirmation and illustration of it.

He had before proved it by reason and argument, now in this chapter he proves it by example, which in some places serves for confirmation, as well as illustration. The example he pitches upon, is that of Abraham, whom he chooses to mention, because the Jews gloried much in their relation to Abraham, put it in the first rank of their external privileges, that they were Abraham's seed, and truly they had Abraham to their father. Therefore this instance was likely to be more taking and convincing to the Jews than any other. His argument stands thus, "All that are saved are justified in the same way as Abraham was; but Abraham was justified by faith, and not by works; therefore all that are saved are so justified;" for it would easily be acknowledged that Abraham was the father of the faithful.

Now this is an argument, not only a *pari*—from an equal case, as they say, but a *fortiori*—from a stronger case. If Abraham, a man so famous for works, so eminent in holiness and obedience, was nevertheless justified by faith only, and not by those works; how much less can any other, especially any of those that spring from him, and come so far short of him in works, set up for a justification by their own works? And it proves likewise, *ex abundanti*—the more abundantly, as some observe, that we are not justified, no not by those good works which flow from faith, as the matter of our righteousness; for such were Abraham's works, and are we better than he?

The whole chapter is taken up with his discourse upon this instance, and there is this in it, which hath a particular reference to the close of the foregoing chapter, where he had asserted, that in the business of justification, Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level.

Now in this chapter, with a great deal of cogency of argument, I. He proves that Abraham was justified not by works, but by faith, v. 1. . 8. II. He observes when and why he was so justified, v. 9. . 17. III. He describes and commends that faith of his, v. 17. . 22. IV. He applies all this to us, v. 22. . 25. And if he had now been in the school of Tyrannus, he could not have disputed more argumentatively.

I. **WHAT** shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2. For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. 3. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4. Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt. 5. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 6. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. 7. *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Here the apostle proves that Abraham was justified not by works, but by faith. Those that of all men contended most vigorously for a share in righteousness by the privileges they enjoyed, and the works they performed, were the Jews, and therefore he appeals to the case of Abraham their father, and puts his own name to the relation, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews; *Abraham our father*. Now surely his prerogative must needs be as great as theirs, who claim it as his *seed according to the flesh*.

Now *what hath he found*? All the world is seeking; but while the most are wearying themselves for very vanity, none can be truly reckoned to have found, but those who are justified before God; and thus Abraham, like a wise merchant, *seeking goodly pearls, found this one pearl of great price*.

What has he found, *κατα σάρκα*—as pertaining to the flesh, that is, by circumcision and his external privileges and performances? Those the apostle calls *flesh*, Phil. 3. 3. Now what did he get by these? Was he justified by them? Was it the merit of his works that recommended him to God's acceptance? No, by no means; which he proves by several arguments.

I. If he was justified by works, room would be left for *boasting*, which must for ever be excluded. If so, he hath *whereof* to glory, (v. 2.) which is not to be allowed. "But," might the Jews say, "was not his name made great, (Gen. 12. 2.) and then *might not he glory*?" Yes, but not before God; he might deserve well of men, but he could never merit of God. Paul himself had *whereof* to glory before men, and we have him sometimes *glorying in it*, yet with humility; but *nothing to glory in before God*, 1 Cor. 4. 4. Phil. 3. 8, 9. So Abraham.

Observe, He takes it for granted, that man must not pretend to *glory in any thing before God*; no; not Abraham, great and good a man as he was; and therefore he fetches an argument from it; It would be absurd for him that *glorieth, to glory in any but the Lord*.

II. It is expressly said, *that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness*. *What saith the scripture?* v. 3. In all controversies in religion this must be our question, *What saith the scripture?* It is not what this great man, and the other good man, say, but *What saith the scripture?* Ask counsel at this *Abel*, and so end the matter, 2 Sam. 20. 18. *To the law, and to the testimony*; (Isa. 8. 20.) *thither is the last appeal*.

Now the scripture saith, that Abraham believed, and that was counted to him for righteousness; (Gen. 15. 6.) therefore he had not *whereof* to glory before God, it being purely of free grace that it was so imputed, and having not in itself any thing of the formal nature of a righteousness, further than as God himself was graciously pleased to count it to him. It is mentioned in *Genesis*, upon occasion of a very signal and remarkable act of faith concerning the *promised seed*; and the more observable, in that it followed upon a grievous conflict he had had with unbelief; his faith was now a victorious faith, newly returned from the battle. It is not the *perfect faith* that is required to justification, (there may be *acceptable faith*, where there are remainders of unbelief,) but the *prevailing faith*, the faith that has the upper-hand of unbelief.

III. If he were justified by works, the reward would have been of debt, and not of grace; which is not to be imagined. This is his argument; (v. 4, 5.) *Abraham's reward* was God himself; so he had told him but just before, Gen. 15. 1. *I am thy exceeding great reward*. Now if Abraham had merited this by the perfection of his obedience, it had not

been an act of *grace* in God, but Abraham might have demanded it with as much confidence as every labourer in the vineyard demanded the penny he had earned. But this cannot be; it is impossible for man, much more guilty man, to make God a debtor to him, Rom. 11. 35. No, God will have *free grace to have all the glory, grace for grace's sake*, John 1. 16. And therefore to him that *worketh not*, that can pretend to no such merit, nor shew any worth or value in his work, which may answer such a reward, but disclaiming any such pretension, casts himself wholly upon the *free grace* of God in Christ, by a lively, active, obedient *faith*; to such an one *faith is counted for righteousness*, is accepted of God as the qualification required in all those that shall be pardoned and saved.

Him that *justifieth the ungodly*, that is, him that was before *ungodly*. His former *ungodliness* was no bar to his justification upon his believing; *ὁ ἀσέβης*—that *ungodly one*, that is Abraham, who, before his conversion, it should seem, was carried down the stream of the Chaldean idolatry, Josh. 24. 2. No room therefore is left for despair; though God clears not the impenitent guilty, yet through Christ *he justifies the ungodly*.

IV. He further illustrates this, by a passage out of the *Psalms*, where David speaks of the remission of sins, the prime branch of justification, as constituting the happiness and blessedness of a man; pronouncing him blessed, not that has no sin, or none which deserved death, (for then, while man is so sinful, and God so righteous, where would be the blessed man?) but the man to whom the Lord *imputeth not sin*; who though he cannot plead not guilty, pleads the act of indemnity, and his plea is allowed. It is quoted from Ps. 32. 1, 2, where observe,

1. The nature of forgiveness. It is the remission of a debt or a crime; it is the *covering of sin*, as a filthy thing, as the nakedness and shame of the soul. God is said to *cast sin behind his back, to hide his face from it*; which, and the like expressions, imply, that the ground of our blessedness is not our innocency, or our not having sinned, (a thing is, and is filthy, though covered,) justification does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but God's not laying it to our charge; as it follows here; it is God's *not imputing of sin*, (v. 8.) which makes it wholly a gracious act of God, not dealing with us in strict justice, as we have deserved; *not entering into judgment; not marking iniquities*: all which being purely acts of grace, the acceptance and the reward cannot be expected as due debts; and therefore Paul infers, (v. 6.) that it is the *imputing of righteousness without works*.

2. The blessedness of it; *Blessed are they*. When it is said, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked*, the design is to shew the characters of those that are blessed; but when it is said, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven*, the design is to shew what that blessedness is, and what is the ground and foundation of it. Pardoned people are the only blessed people. The sentiments of the world are, Those are happy, that have a clear estate, and are out of debt to man; but the sentence of the word is, Those are happy, that have their debts to God discharged. O, how much therefore is our interest to make it sure to ourselves that our sins are pardoned! For that is the foundation of all other benefits. So and so I will do for them; for I will be merciful, Heb. 8. 12.

9. *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was

reckoned to Abraham for righteousness 10. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. 11. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: 12. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. 13. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, 17. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.)

St. Paul observes in this paragraph, when and why Abraham was thus justified; for he hath several things to remark upon that. It was before he was circumcised, and before the giving of the law; and there was a reason for both.

I. It was before he was circumcised; (v. 10.) *His faith was counted to him for righteousness, while he was in uncircumcision*. It was imputed, (Gen. 15. 6.) and he was not circumcised till ch. 17. Abraham is expressly said to be justified by faith fourteen years, some say twenty-five years, before he was circumcised. Now this the apostle takes notice of, in answer to the question, (v. 9.) *Cometh this blessedness then on the circumcision only, or on the uncircumcision also?* Abraham was pardoned and accepted in uncircumcision; a note which, as it might silence the fears of the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, so it might lower the pride and conceit of the Jews, who gloried in their circumcision, as if they had the monopoly of all happiness.

Here are two reasons why Abraham was justified by faith in uncircumcision.

1. *That circumcision might be a seal of the righteousness of faith*, v. 11. The tenor of the covenants must first be settled, before the seal can be annexed. Sealing supposes a bargain-precedent, which is confirmed and ratified by that ceremony. After Abraham's justification by faith had continued several years only a grant by parole, for the confirmation of Abraham's faith, God was pleased to appoint a sealing ordinance; and Abraham received it; though it was a bloody ordinance, yet he submitted to it, and even received it as a special favour, the sign of, &c. Now we may from hence observe,

(1.) The nature of sacraments in general; they are signs, and seals; signs to represent and instruct; seals to ratify and confirm; they are signs of absolute grace and favour; they are seals of the condi

tional promises : nay, they are mutual *seals* ; God does in the sacraments *seal* to us to be to us a God, and we do therein *seal* to him to be to him a people.

(2.) The nature of circumcision in particular ; it was the initiating sacrament of the Old Testament ; and it is here said to be,

[1.] *A sign ; a sign* of that original corruption which we are all born with, and which is cut off by spiritual circumcision ; a commemorating *sign* of God's covenant with Abraham ; a distinguishing *sign* between Jews and Gentiles ; a *sign* of admission into the visible church ; a *sign* prefiguring baptism, which comes in the room of circumcision, now under the gospel, when (the blood of Christ being shed) all bloody ordinances are abolished ; it was an outward and sensible *sign* of an inward and spiritual grace signified thereby.

[2.] *A seal of the righteousness of the faith*. In general, it was a *seal* of the covenant of grace, particularly of justification by faith ; the covenant of grace, called the righteousness which is of faith, (ch. 10. 6.) and it refers to an Old Testament promise, Deut. 30. 12.

Now if infants were then capable of receiving a *seal* of the covenant of grace, which proves that they then were within the verge of that covenant, how they come to be now cast out of the covenant, and incapable of the seal, and by what severe sentence they were thus rejected and incapacitated, those are concerned to make out, that not only reject, but nullify and reproach, the baptism of the seed of believers.

2. *That he might be the father of all them that believe*. Not but that there were those that were justified by faith before Abraham ; but of Abraham first it is particularly observed, and in him commenced a much clearer and fuller dispensation of the covenant of grace than any that had been before extant ; and therefore he is called the father of all that believe, because he was so eminent a believer, and so eminently justified by faith ; as Jabel was the father of shepherds, and Jubal of musicians, Gen. 4. 20, 21. *The father of all them that believe*, a standing pattern of faith ; as parents are examples to their children : and a standing precedent of justification by faith ; as the liberties, privileges, honours, and estates, of the fathers descend to their children. Abraham was the father of believers, because to him particularly the magna charta was renewed.

(1.) *The father of believing Gentiles, though they be not circumcised*. Zaccheus, a publican, if he believe, is reckoned a son of Abraham, Luke 19. 9. Abraham being himself uncircumcised when he was justified by faith, uncircumcision can never be a bar. Thus were the doubts and fears of the poor Gentiles anticipated, and no room left to question but that righteousness might be imputed to them also, Col. 3. 11. Gal. 5. 6.

(2.) *The father of believing Jews, not merely as circumcised, and of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh*, but because believers, because they are not of the circumcision only, are not only circumcised, but walk in the steps of that faith ; have not only the sign, but the thing signified ; not only are of Abraham's family, but follow the example of Abraham's faith. See here who are the genuine children and lawful successors of those that were the church's fathers : not those that sit in their chairs, and bear their names, but those that tread in their steps ; this is the line of succession, which holds, notwithstanding interruptions. It seems then, those were most loud and forward to call Abraham father, that had least title to the honours and privileges of his children. Thus they have most reason to call Christ Father, not that bear his name in being christians in profession, but that tread in his steps.

II. It was before the giving of the law, v. 13—16.

The former observation was levelled against those that confined justification to the circumcision, this to those that expected it by the law ; now the promise was made to Abraham long before the law. Compare Gal. 3. 17, 18. Now observe,

1. What that promise was—*that he should be the heir of the world*, that is, of the land of Canaan, the choicest spot of ground in the world ; or the father of many nations of the world, who sprang from him, beside the Israelites ; or the heir of the comforts of the life which now is. *The meek are said to inherit the earth*, and the world is their's. Though Abraham had so little of the world in possession, yet he was heir of it all. Or rather, it points at Christ, the Seed here mentioned ; compare Gal. 3. 16. *To thy seed, which is Christ*. Now Christ is the heir of the world, the ends of the earth are his possession, and it is in him that Abraham was so. And it refers to that promise, (Gen. 12. 3.) *In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed*.

2. How it was made to him, *not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith ; not through the law*, for that was not yet given ; but it was upon that believing which was counted to him for righteousness ; it was upon his trusting God, in his leaving his own country when God bid him, Heb. 11. 8.

Now being by faith, it could not be by the law ; which he proves by the opposition that is between them ; (v. 14, 15.) *If they who are of the law be heirs*, they, and they only, and they by virtue of the law ; the Jews did, and still do, boast, that they are the rightful heirs of the world, because to them the law was given ; but if so, then faith is made void ; for if it were requisite to an interest in the promise, that there should be a perfect performance of the whole law, then the promise can never take its effect, nor is it to any purpose for us to depend upon it, since the way to life by perfect obedience to the law, and apostles, sinless innocency, is wholly blocked up, and the law in itself opens no other way. This he proves, v. 15. *The law worketh wrath*—wrath in us to God ; it irritates and provokes that carnal mind which is enmity to God, as the damming up of a stream makes it swell—wrath in God against us, it works this, it discovers it ; or our breach of the law works it. Now it is certain that we can never expect the inheritance by a law that worketh wrath.

How the law works wrath, he shews very concisely in the latter part of the verse ; *Where no law is, there is no transgression* ; an acknowledged maxim, which implies, Where there is a law, there is transgression, and that transgression is provoking, and so the law worketh wrath.

3. Why the promise was made to him by faith ; for three reasons, v. 16.

(1.) *That it might be by grace*, that grace might have the honour of it ; *by grace, and not by the law ; by grace, and not of debt, not of merit ; that Grace, grace*, might be cried to every stone, especially to the top-stone, in this building. Faith hath particular reference to grace granting, as grace hath reference to faith receiving. *By grace*, and therefore *through faith*, Eph. 2. 8. For God will have every crown thrown at the feet of grace, free grace, and every song in heaven sung to that tune, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise*.

(2.) *That the promise might be sure*. The first covenant, being a covenant of works, was not sure ; but, through man's failure, the benefits designed by it were cut off ; and therefore, the more effectually to ascertain and ensure the conveyance of the new covenant, there is another way found out, *not by works*, (were it so, the promise would not be sure, because of the continual frailty and infirmity of the flesh,) but by faith, which receives all from Christ, and acts in a continual dependence upon him, as the

great trustee of our salvation, and in whose keeping it is safe. The covenant is *therefore* sure, because it is so well ordered in all things, 2 Sam. 23. 5.

(3.) *That it might be sure to all the seed.* If it had been by the law, it had been limited to the Jews, to whom pertained the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law; (ch. 9. 4.) but therefore it was by faith, that Gentiles as well as Jews might become interested in it; the spiritual as well as the natural seed of faithful Abraham. God would contrive the promise in such a way as might make it most extensive, to comprehend all true believers, that circumcision and uncircumcision might break no squares; and for this, (v. 17.) he refers us to Gen. 17. 5. where the reason of the change of his name from Abram—a high father, to Abraham—the high father of a multitude, is thus rendered; *For a father of many nations have I made thee*; that is, all believers, both before and since the coming of Christ in the flesh, should take Abraham for their pattern, and call him father. The Jews say, that Abraham was the father of all proselytes to the Jewish religion. *Behold, he is the father of all the world, which are gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty.* Maimonides.

17. — Before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which he not as though they were. 18. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: 20. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21. And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Having observed *when* Abraham was justified by faith, and *why*, for the honour of Abraham, and for example to us who call him father, the apostle here describes and commends the faith of Abraham; where observe,

1. *Whom he believed; God who quickeneth.* It is God himself that faith fastens upon; *other foundation can no man lay.* Now observe, what in God Abraham's faith had an eye to—to that, certainly, which would be most likely to confirm his faith concerning the things promised:

1. *God who quickeneth the dead.* It was promised that he should be the father of many nations, when he and his wife were now as good as dead; (Heb. 11. 11, 12.) and therefore he looks upon God as a God that could breathe life into dry bones. *He that quickeneth the dead,* can do any thing, can give a child to Abraham when he is old; can bring the Gentiles, who are dead in trespasses and sins, to a divine and spiritual life, Eph. 2. 1. Compare Eph. 1. 19, 20.

2. *Who calleth things which are not, as though they were;* that is, creates all things by the word of his power, as in the beginning, Gen. 1. 3. 2 Cor. 4. 6.

The justification and salvation of sinners, the espousing of the Gentiles that had not been a people, were a gracious calling of things which are not, as though they were, giving being to things that were

not. This expresses the sovereignty of God, and his absolute power and dominion; a mighty stay to faith, when all other props sink and totter.

It is the holy wisdom and policy of faith, to fasten particularly on that in God, which is accommodated to the difficulties wherewith it is to wrestle, and will most effectually answer the objections. It is faith indeed to build upon the all-sufficiency of God for the accomplishment of that which is impossible to any thing but that all-sufficiency.

Thus Abraham became the father of many nations before him whom he believed; that is, in the eye and account of God; or like him whom he believed; as God was a common Father, so was Abraham. It is by faith in God that we become accepted of him, and conformable to him.

II. How he believed. He here greatly magnifies the strength of Abraham's faith, in several expressions.

1. *Against hope, he believed in hope, v. 18.* There was a hope against him, a natural hope; all the arguments of sense and reason and experience, which in such cases usually beget and support hope, were against him; no second causes smiled upon him, or in the least favoured his hope; but against all those inducements to the contrary, he believed; for he had a hope for him; he believed in hope, which arse, as his faith did, from the consideration of God's all-sufficiency.

That he might become the father of many nations. Therefore God, by his almighty grace, enabled him thus to believe against hope, that he might pass for a pattern of great and strong faith to all generations. It was fit that he, who was to be the father of the faithful, should have something more than ordinary in his faith; that in him faith should be set in its highest elevation, and so the endeavours of all succeeding believers be directed, raised, and quickened. Or this is mentioned as the matter of the promise that he believed; and he refers to Gen. 15. 5. *So shall thy seed be,* as the stars of heaven, so innumerable, so illustrious. This was that which he believed, when it was counted to him for righteousness, v. 6. And it is observable, that that particular instance of his faith was against hope, against the surmises and suggestions of his unbelief. He had just before been concluding hardly that he should go childless, that one born in his house was his heir; (v. 2, 3.) and that unbelief was a foil to his faith, and bespeaks it a believing against hope.

2. *Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, v. 19.* Observe, His own body was now dead, become utterly unlikely to beget a child, though the new life and vigour that God gave him continued after Sarah was dead, witness his children by Keturah. When God intends some special blessing, some child of promise, for his people, he commonly puts a sentence of death upon the blessing itself, and upon all the ways that lead to it. Joseph must be enslaved and imprisoned before he be advanced. But Abraham did not consider this, *εὐχρηστος*—he did not dwell in his thoughts upon it. He said indeed, *Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old?* Gen. 17. 17. But that was the language of his admiration, and his desire to be further satisfied, not of his doubting and distrust; his faith passed by that consideration, and thought of nothing but the faithfulness of the promise, with the contemplation whereof he was swallowed up, and this kept up his faith. *Being not weak in faith, he considered not.* It is mere weakness of faith, that makes a man lie poring upon the difficulties and seeming impossibilities that lie in the way of a promise. Though it may seem to be the wisdom and policy of carnal reason, yet it is the weakness of faith, to look into the bottom of all the difficulties that arise against the promise.

3. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief*, (v. 20.) and he *therefore staggered not*, because he considered not the frowns and discouragements of second causes; ὁ δὲ διακρίβη—*he disputed not*; he did not hold any self-consultation about it, did not take time to consider whether he should close with it or no, did not hesitate or stumble at it, but by a resolute and peremptory act of his soul, with a holy boldness, ventured all upon the promise. He took it not for a point that would admit of argument or debate, but presently determined it as a ruled case, did not at all hang in suspense about it; he *staggered not through unbelief*. Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises. It is not the promise that fails, but our faith that fails when we stagger.

4. *He was strong in faith, giving glory to God*, ἐν τῇ πίστει—*he was strengthened in faith*, his faith got ground by exercise—*crescit cundo*. Though weak faith shall not be rejected, the bruised reed not broken, the smoking flax not quenched, yet strong faith shall be commended and honoured. The strength of his faith appeared in the victory it won over his fears.

And hereby he gave glory to God, for as unbelief dishonours God, by making him a liar, (1 John 5. 10.) so faith honours God, by setting to its seal, that he is true, John 3. 33. Abraham's faith gave God the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and especially of his faithfulness, resting upon the word that he had spoken. Among men we say, "He that trusts another, gives him credit, and honours him by taking his word;" thus Abraham gave glory to God by trusting him. We never hear our Lord Jesus commending any thing so much as great faith; (Matt. 8. 10. and 15. 28.) *therefore* God gives honour to faith, great faith, because faith, great faith, gives honour to God.

5. *He was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform*, πλὴν ἐπεὶ ἐπαγγελήθη—*was carried on with the greatest confidence and assurance*; it is a metaphor taken from ships that come into the harbour with full sail. Abraham saw the storms of doubts and fears and temptations likely to rise against the promise, upon which many a one would have shrunk back, and lain by for fairer days, and waited a smiling gale of sense and reason. But Abraham, having taken God for his pilot, and the promise for his card and compass, resolves to weather his point, and like a bold adventurer sets up all his sails, breaks through all the difficulties, regards neither winds nor clouds, but trusts to the strength of his bottom and the wisdom and faithfulness of his pilot, and bravely makes to the harbour, and comes home an unspeakable gainer. Such was his full persuasion, and it was built on the omnipotence of God: *he was able*. Our waverings rise mainly from our distrust of the divine power; and therefore to fix us, it is requisite we believe not only that he is faithful, but that he is able, that hath promised.

And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, v. 22. Because with such a confidence he ventured his all in the divine promise, God graciously accepted him; and not only answered, but outdid, his expectation. This way of glorifying God by a firm reliance on his bare promise, was so very agreeable to God's design, and so very conducive to his honour, that he graciously accepted it as a righteousness, and justified him, though there was not that in the thing itself, which could merit such an acceptance. This shows why faith is chosen to be the prime condition of our justification, because it is a grace that of all others gives glory to God.

23. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: 24. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed

ed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

In the close of the chapter, he applies all to us; and having abundantly proved that Abraham was justified by faith, he here concludes that his justification was to be the pattern or sampler of our's.

It was not written for his sake alone. It was not intended only for an historical commendation of Abraham, or a relation of something peculiar to him: (as some antipædobaptists will needs understand that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of the faith, v. 11.) only to Abraham himself, and no other; no, the scripture did not intend hereby to describe some singular way of justification that belonged to Abraham as his prerogative. The accounts we have of the Old Testament saints were not intended for histories only, barely to inform and divert us, but for precedents to direct us, for examples, (1 Cor. 10. 11.) for our learning, ch. 15. 4. And this particularly concerning Abraham was written for us also, to assure us what that righteousness is, which God requireth and accepteth to our salvation; for us also, that are mean and vile, that come so far short of Abraham in privileges and performances; us Gentiles as well as the Jews, for the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles through Christ; for us on whom the ends of the world are come, as well as for the patriarchs; for the grace of God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

His application of it is but short. Only we may observe,

1. Our common privilege; it shall be imputed to us, that is, righteousness shall: the gospel-way of justification is by an imputed righteousness, μὴ ἐκ ἰσχυρῶς—*it shall be imputed*; he uses a future verb, to signify the continuation of this mercy in the church, that as it is the same now, so it will be while God has a church in the world, and there are any of the children of men to be justified; for there is a fountain opened that is inexhaustible.

2. Our common duty, the condition of this privilege, and that is believing. The proper object of this believing is a divine revelation: the revelation to Abraham was concerning a Christ to come, the revelation to us is concerning a Christ already come, which difference in the revelation does not alter the case.

Abraham believed the power of God in raising up an Isaac from the dead womb of Sarah; we are to believe the same power exerted in a higher instance, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Isaac was in a figure, (Heb. 11. 19.) the resurrection of Christ was real. Now we are to believe on him that raised up Christ; not only believe his power, that he could do it, but depend upon his grace in raising up Christ as our surety; so he explains it, v. 25. where we have a brief account of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, which are the two main hinges on which the door of salvation turns.

(1.) He was delivered for our offences. God the Father delivered him, he delivered up himself as a sacrifice for sin; he died indeed as a malefactor, because he died for sin; but it was not his own sin, but the sins of the people; he died to make atonement for our sins, to expiate our guilt, to satisfy divine justice.

(2.) He was raised again for our justification, for the perfecting and completing of our justification. By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he took out our acquittance; when he was buried he lay a prisoner in execution for our

debt, which as a surety he had undertaken to pay; on the third day an angel was sent to roll away the stone, and so to discharge the prisoner, which was the greatest assurance possible that divine justice was satisfied, the debt paid, or else he would never have released the prisoner: and therefore the apostle puts a special emphasis on Christ's resurrection; it is Christ that died, *yea, rather, that is risen again*, ch. 8. 34.

So that upon the whole matter it is very evident, that we are not justified by the merit of our own works, but by a fiducial obediencial dependence upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness, as the condition on our part of our right to impunity and salvation; which was the truth that Paul in this and the foregoing chapter had been fixing as the great spring and foundation of all our comfort.

CHAP. V.

The apostle, having made his point, and fully proved justification by faith, in this chapter proceeds in the explication, illustration, and application, of that truth. 1. He shews the fruits of justification, v. 1...5. 11. He shews the fountain and foundation of justification in the death of Jesus Christ, which he discourses of at large in the rest of the chapter.

1. **T**HEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4. And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

The precious benefits and privileges which flow from justification, are such as should quicken us all, to give diligence to make it sure to ourselves that we are justified, and then to take the comfort it renders to us, and to do the duty it calls for from us. The fruits of this tree of life are exceeding precious.

1. *We have peace with God*, v. 1. It is sin that breeds the quarrel between us and God, creates not only a strangeness, but an enmity; the holy righteous God cannot in honour be at peace with a sinner, while he continues under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. And such are the benignity and good will of God to man, that, immediately upon the removing of that obstacle, the peace is made. By faith we lay hold on God's arm, and on his strength, and so are at peace, Isa. 27. 4, 5. There is more in this peace than barely a cessation of enmity, there is friendship and loving-kindness, for God is either the worst enemy or the best friend.

Abraham, being justified by faith, was called the *friend of God*, (Jan. 2. 23.) which was his honour, but not his peculiar honour; Christ has called his disciples *friends*, John 15. 13—15. And surely a man needs no more to make him happy than to have God his friend!

But this is *through our Lord Jesus Christ*; through him as the great Peace-maker, the *Mediator between God and man*, that blessed Day's-man that has laid his hand upon us both. Adam, in innocency, had peace with God immediately; there needed no such mediator; but to guilty sinful man it is a very dreadful thing to think of God out of Christ; *for he is our peace*, Eph. 2. 14. not only the maker,

but the matter and maintainer, of our peace, Col. 1. 20.

11. *We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*, v. 2. This is a further privilege, not only *peace*, but *grace*, *this grace*, this favour. Observe,

1. The saints' happy state; it is a state of *grace*, God's loving kindness to us, and our conformity to God; he that hath God's love and God's likeness, is in a state of grace. Now *into this grace we have access*, *περὶ εὐχρησμεν*—an introduction; which implies that we were not born in this state; we are *by nature children of wrath*, and the *carnal mind is enmity against God*; but we are brought into it. We could not have got into it of ourselves, nor have conquered the difficulties in the way, but we have a manuduction, a leading by the hand: are led into it, as blind, or lame, or weak people are led; are introduced as pardoned offenders; are introduced by some favourite at court to kiss the king's hand, as strangers, that are to have audience, are conducted.

Περὶ εὐχρησμεν ἐν χάριτι—*We have had access*. He speaks of those that are already brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. Paul, in his conversion, had this access; then he was made nigh; Barnabas introduced him to the apostles, (Acts 9. 27.) and there were others *that led him by the hand to Damascus*, (v. 8.) but it was Christ that introduced and led him by the hand into this grace.

By whom we have access by faith; by Christ, as the author and principal agent; by faith, as the means of this access. Not by Christ, in consideration of any merit or desert of ours; but in consideration of our believing dependence upon him, and resignation of ourselves to him.

2. Their happy standing in this state; *wherein we stand*. Not only wherein we are, but *wherein we stand*: a posture that denotes our discharge from guilt; *we stand in the judgment*; (Ps. 1. 5.) not cast, as convicted criminals, but our dignity and honour secured, not thrown to the ground, as abjects. The phrase denotes also our progress; while we stand, we are going; we must not lie down, as if *we had already attained*, but stand, as those that are pressing forward, stand, as servants attending on Christ our master. The phrase denotes, further, our perseverance; we stand firm and safe, upheld by the power of God; stand as soldiers stand, that keep their ground, not borne down by the power of the enemy. It denotes not only our admission to, but our confirmation in, the favour of God. It is not in the court of heaven as in earthly courts, where high places are slippery places: but we stand in a humble confidence of this very thing, *that he who has begun the good work, will perform it*, Phil. 1. 6.

111. *We rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. Beside the happiness in hand, there is a happiness in hope, *the glory of God*, *the glory* which God will put upon the saints in heaven; *glory* which will consist in the vision and fruition of God.

1. Those, and those only, *that have access by faith into the grace of God now*, may hope for *the glory of God* hereafter. There is no good hope of *glory* but what is founded in *grace*; *grace is glory begun*, the earnest and assurance of *glory*. He will give *grace and glory*, Ps. 84. 11.

2. Those who hope for *the glory of God* hereafter, have enough to rejoice in now. It is the duty of those that hope for heaven to rejoice in those hopes.

IV. *We glory in tribulations also*; not only *notwithstanding* our tribulations, (those do not hinder our rejoicing in hope of *the glory of God*;) but even in our tribulations, as those are *working for us the weight of glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

Observe, What a growing increasing happiness the happiness of the saints is; *not only so*. One would think, such *peace*, such *grace*, such *glory*, and such a joy in hope of it, were more than such

poor undeserving creatures as we are could pretend to; and yet it is *not only so*, there are more instances of our happiness; *we glory in tribulations also*; especially *tribulation for righteousness' sake*; which seemed the greatest objection against the saints' happiness; whereas really their happiness did not only consist with, but take rise from, those *tribulations*. *They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer*, Acts 5. 41.

This being the hardest point, he sets himself to shew the grounds and reasons of it. How come we to *glory in tribulations*? Why, because tribulations, by a chain of causes, greatly befriended hope; which he shews in the method of its influence.

1. *Tribulation worketh patience*, not in and of itself, but the powerful grace of God working in and with the tribulation. It proves, and, by proving, improves *patience*; as parts and gifts increase by exercise. It is not the efficient cause, but yields the occasion, as steel is hardened by the fire. See how God *brings meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong*! That which *worketh patience*, is matter of joy; for *patience* does us more good than *tribulations* can do us hurt. *Tribulation* in itself *worketh* impatience; but, as it is sanctified to the saints, it *worketh patience*.

2. *Patience, experience*, v. 4. It works an *experience* of God, and the songs he gives in the night; the patient sufferers have the greatest *experience* of the divine consolations, which abound as afflictions abound. It works an *experience* of ourselves. It is by *tribulation* that we make an experiment of our own sincerity, and therefore such *tribulations* are called *trials*. It works, *δοκιμὴν*—an *approbation*, as he is approved, that has passed the test. Thus Job's *tribulation wrought patience*, and that *patience* produced an approbation, that *still he holds fast his integrity*, Job 2. 3.

3. *Experience, hope*. He who, being thus tried, comes forth as gold, will thereby be encouraged to hope. This experiment, or approbation, is not so much the ground, as the evidence, of our hope, and a special friend to it. *Experience* of God is a prop to our hope; he that hath delivered, doth and will. *Experience* of ourselves helps to evidence our sincerity.

4. This *hope maketh not ashamed*, it is a hope that will not deceive us. Nothing confounds more than disappointment. *Everlasting shame and confusion will be caused by the perishing of the expectation of the wicked, but the hope of the righteous shall be gladness*, Prov. 10. 28. See Ps. 22. 5.—71. 1. Or, *It maketh not ashamed of our sufferings*. Though *we are counted as the offscouring of all things, and trodden under foot as the mire in the streets*; yet, having hopes of glory, we are *not ashamed* of these sufferings. It is in a good cause, for a good master, and in good hope; and therefore we are *not ashamed*. We will never think ourselves disparaged by sufferings that are likely to end so well.

Because the love of God is shed abroad. This hope will not disappoint us, because it is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of love. It is the gracious work of the blessed Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of all the saints. The love of God, that is, the sense of God's love to us, drawing out love in us to him again. Or, The great effects of his love: (1.) Special grace; and, (2.) The pleasant gust or sense of it. *It is shed abroad*, as sweet ointment, perfuming the soul; as rain watering it, and making it fruitful: the ground of all our comfort and holiness, and perseverance in both, is laid in the *shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts*; it is that which constrains us, 2 Cor. 5. 14. Thus are we drawn and held by the bonds of love. Sense of God's love to us, will make us *not ashamed*, either of our hope in him, or our sufferings for him.

6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. 12. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: 13. (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. 20. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The apostle here describes the fountain and foundation of justification, laid in the death of the Lord Jesus. The streams are very sweet, but if you run them up to the spring-head, you will find it to be Christ's dying for us; it is in the precious stream of Christ's blood that all these privileges come flowing to us: and therefore he enlarges upon the instance of that love of God, which is shed abroad.

Three things he takes notice of for the explication and illustration of this doctrine.

1. The persons he died for, v. 6—8.
2. The precious fruits of his death, v. 9—11.
3. The parallel he runs between the communication of sin and death by the first Adam, and of righteousness and life by the second Adam, v. 12. to the end.

I. The character we were under when Christ died for us:

1. *We were without strength*, (v. 6.) in a sad condition; and, which is worse, altogether unable to help ourselves out of that condition; lost, and no visible way open for our recovery; our condition, deplorable, and in a manner desperate; and therefore our salvation is here said to come in *due time*. God's time to help and save is when those that are to be saved *are without strength*, that his own power and grace may be the more magnified, Deut. 32. 36. It is the manner of God to help at a dead lift.

2. *He died for the ungodly*: not only helpless creatures, and therefore likely to perish, but guilty sinful creatures, and therefore deserving to perish; not only mean and worthless, but vile and obnoxious; unworthy of such favour with the holy God. Being *ungodly*, they had need of one to die for them, to satisfy for guilt, and to bring in a righteousness. This he illustrates (v. 7, 8.) as an unparalleled instance of love; herein *God's thoughts and ways were above our's*. Compare John 15. 13, 14. *Greater love has no man*.

(1.) One would hardly *die for a righteous man*, that is, an innocent man, one that is unjustly condemned; every body will pity such a one, but few will put such a value upon his life, as either to hazard, or much less, to deposit, their own in his stead.

(2.) It may be, one might perhaps be persuaded to *die for a good man*, that is, a useful man, that is more than barely a *righteous man*. Many that are good themselves, yet do but little good to others; but those that are useful, commonly get themselves well beloved, and meet with some that in a case of necessity would venture to be their *ἀντιλήψεις*—*would engage life for life*, would be their bail, body for body. Paul was, in this sense, a *very good man*, one that was very useful, and he met with some, that for his life *laid down their own necks*, ch. 16. 4. And yet observe how he qualifies this; it is but *some* that *would* do so, and it is a *daring* act if they do it; it must be some bold venturing soul; and after all, it is but a *peradventure*.

(3.) *But Christ died for sinners*; (v. 8.) neither *righteous* nor *good*; not only such as are useless, but such as were guilty and obnoxious; not only such as there would be no loss of, should they perish, but such whose destruction would greatly redound to the glory of God's justice, being malefactors and criminals that ought to die.

Some think he alludes to a common distinction the Jews had of their people into צדיקים—*righteous*, חסידים—*merciful*, (compare Isa. 57. 1.) and רשעים—*wicked*.

Now herein *God commended his love*, not only proved and evidenced his love, (he might have done that at a cheaper rate,) but he magnified it, and made it illustrious. This circumstance did magnify greatly and advance his love, not only put it past dispute, but rendered it the object of the greatest wonder and admiration; "Now my creatures shall see that I love them, I will give them such an instance of it, as shall be without parallel." *Commendeth his love*, as merchants commend their goods when they would put them off. This *commending of his love* was in order to the *shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*. He evidences

his love in the most winning, affecting, endearing way imaginable.

While we were yet sinners, implying, that *we were* not to be always *sinners*; there should be a change wrought; *for he died to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins*; but *we were yet sinners when he died for us*.

(4.) *Nay*, which is more, *we were enemies*, (v. 10.) not only malefactors, but traitors and rebels; in arms against the government; the worst kind of malefactors, and of all others the most obnoxious. *The carnal mind is not only an enemy to God*, but *enmity itself*, ch. 8. 7. Col. 1. 21. This *enmity* is a mutual *enmity*; God loathing the sinner, and the sinner loathing God, Zech. 11. 8. And that for such as these Christ should die, is such a mystery, such a paradox, such an unprecedented instance of love, that it may well be our business to eternity, to adore and wonder at it! This is a *commendation of love* indeed! Justly might he who had *thus loved us*, make it one of the laws of his kingdom, that *we should love our enemies*.

II. The precious fruits of his death:

1. Justification and reconciliation are the first and primary fruit of the death of Christ; *We are justified by his blood*, (v. 9.) *reconciled by his death*, v. 10. Sin is pardoned, the sinner accepted as righteous, the quarrel taken up, the enmity slain, an end made of iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. This is done, that is, Christ has done all that was requisite on his part to be done in order hereunto, and immediately upon our believing, we are actually put into a state of *justification and reconciliation*.

Justified by his blood. Our *justification* is ascribed to the *blood of Christ*, because *without blood there is no remission*, Heb. 9. 22. *The blood is the life*, and that must go to make atonement. In all the propitiatory sacrifices, the *sprinkling of the blood* was of the essence of the sacrifice. It was the *blood that made an atonement for the soul*, Lev. 17. 11.

2. From hence results *salvation from wrath*; *saved from wrath*, (v. 9.) *saved by his life*, v. 10. When that which hinders our salvation is taken away, the salvation must needs follow. *Nay*, the argument holds very strongly; if God justified and reconciled us *when we were enemies*, and put himself to so much charges to do it, *much more will he save us when we are justified and reconciled*. He that has done the greater, which is, of enemies to make us friends, will certainly do the lesser, which is, when we are friends to use us friendly, and to be kind to us. And therefore the apostle, once and again, speaks of it with a *much more*. He that hath digged so deep to lay the foundation, will, no doubt, build upon that foundation.

We shall be saved from wrath, from hell and damnation. It is the *wrath of God* that is the fire of hell; the *wrath to come*, so it is called, 1 Thess. 1. 10. The final justification and absolution of believers at the great day, together with the fitting and preparing of them for it, are the *salvation from wrath* here spoken of; it is the *perfecting of the work of grace*.

Reconciled by his death, saved by his life. His life here spoken of, is net to be understood of his life in the flesh, but his life in heaven, that life which ensued after his death. Compare ch. 14. 9. *He was dead, and is alive*, Rev. 1. 18. *We are reconciled by Christ humbled, we are saved by Christ exalted*. The dying Jesus laid the foundation, in satisfying for sin, and slaying the *enmity*, and so making us salvable; thus is the *partition-wall broken down*, atonement made, and the attainer reversed; but it is the living Jesus that perfects the work, *he lives to make intercession*, Heb. 7. 25. It is Christ in his exaltation, that by his word and Spirit effectually

calls and changes, and *reconciles us to God*, is our *Advocate with the Father*, and so completes and consummates our salvation. Compare *ch. 4. 25.* and *8. 34.* Christ dying was the testator, who bequeathed us the legacy; but Christ living is the executor, who pays it. Now the arguing is very strong: He that puts himself to the charge of purchasing our salvation, will not decline the trouble of applying it.

3. All this produces, as a further privilege, our *joy in God*, *v. 11.* God is now so far from being a terror to us, that he is our *joy*, and our *hope in the day of evil*, *Jer. 17. 17.* *We are reconciled and saved from wrath.* Iniquity, blessed be God, *shall not be our ruin.* And not only so, there is more in it yet, a constant stream of favours; we not only go to heaven, but go to heaven triumphantly; not only get into the harbour, but come in with full sail; *we joy in God*, not only *saved from his wrath*, but *soliciting ourselves in his love*, and *this through Jesus Christ*, who is the *Alpha and Omega*, the foundation-stone and the top-stone of all our comforts and hopes; not only *our salvation*, but *our strength and our song*; and all this (which he repeats as a string he loved to be harping upon) by virtue of the *atonement*; for *by him we christians*, we believers, *have now*, now in gospel-times, or *now* in this life, *received the atonement*, which was typified by the *sacrifices under the law*, and is an earnest of our happiness in heaven. *True believers do by Jesus Christ receive the atonement.* *Receiving the atonement* is our actual reconciliation to God in justification, grounded upon Christ's satisfaction.

To receive the atonement is,

(1.) To give our consent to the *atonement*, approving of, and agreeing to, those methods which infinite wisdom hath taken of saving a guilty world by the blood of a crucified Jesus, being willing and glad to be saved in a gospel-way, and upon gospel-terms.

(2.) To take the comfort of the *atonement*, which is the fountain and foundation of our *joy in God*. Now *we joy in God*, now we do indeed *receive the atonement*, *καυχόμενοι*—glorying in it. God hath received the atonement; (*Matt. 3. 17.*—*17. 5.*—*28. 2.*) if we but receive it, the work is done.

III. The parallel that the apostle runs between the communication of sin and death by the first Adam, and of righteousness and life by the second Adam, (*v. 12.* to the end,) which not only illustrates the truth he is discoursing of, but tends very much to the commending of the love of God, and the comforting of the hearts of true believers; in shewing a correspondence between our fall and our recovery; and not only a like, but a much greater, power in the second Adam to make us happy, than there was in the first to make us miserable.

Now for the opening of this, observe,

1. A general truth laid down as the foundation of his discourse—That Adam was a type of Christ; (*v. 14.*) *Who is the figure of him that was to come.* Christ is therefore called the *last Adam*, *1 Cor. 15. 45.* Compare *v. 22.* In this, Adam was a type of Christ, that in the covenant-transactions that were between God and him, and in the consequent events of those transactions, Adam was a public person; God dealt with Adam, and Adam acted as such an one, as a common father and factor, root and representative, of and for all his posterity; so that what he did in that station, as agent for us, we may be said to have done in him; and what was done to him, may be said to have been done to us in him. Thus Jesus Christ, the Mediator, acted as a public person, the head of all the elect; dealt with God for them, as their father, factor, root, and representative; died for them, rose for them, entered within the veil for them, did all for them. When Adam failed, we failed with him; when Christ performed, he performed for us. Thus was *Adam πῶτος τῷ μέλλοντος*

—the figure of him that was to come, to come to repair that breach which Adam had made.

2. A more particular explication of the parallel—in which observe,

(1.) How Adam, as a public person, communicated sin and death to all his posterity; (*v. 12.*) *By one man sin entered.* We see the world under a deluge of sin and death, full of iniquities, and full of calamities. Now, it is worth while to inquire what is the spring that feeds it, and you will find that to be the general corruption of nature; and at what gap it entered, and you will find that to have been Adam's first sin. It was *by one man*, and he the first man; for if any had been before him, they would have been free; that one man from whom, as from the root, we all spring.

[1.] By him *sin entered.* When God pronounced all very good, (*Gen. 1. 31.*) there was no sin in the world; it was when Adam ate forbidden fruit, that sin made its entry. Sin had before entered into the world of angels, when many of them revolted from their allegiance, and left their first estate; but it never entered into the world of mankind till Adam sinned; entered as an enemy, to kill and destroy; as a thief, to rob and despoil; and a dismal entry it was. Then entered the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to posterity, and a general corruption and depravedness of nature.

Εφ' ὅ—for that, so we read it; rather in *whom* all have sinned. Sin entered into the world by Adam, for in him we all sinned. As (*1 Cor. 15. 22.*) *in Adam all die*; so here, in *him all have sinned*: for it is agreeable to the law of all nations, that the acts of a public person are accounted their's whom they represent; and what a whole body does, every member of the same body may be said to do. Now Adam acted thus as a public person, by the sovereign ordination and appointment of God, and yet that founded upon a natural necessity; for God, as the author of nature, had made this the law of nature, that man should beget in his own likeness, and so the other creatures. In Adam therefore, as in a common receptacle, the whole nature of man was reposit, from him to flow down in a channel to his posterity; for all mankind is made of *one blood*, (*Acts 17. 26.*) so that according as this nature proves through his standing or falling, before he puts it out of his hands, accordingly it is propagated from him. Adam therefore sinning and falling, the nature became guilty and corrupted, and is so derived. Thus in *him all have sinned*.

[2.] *Death by sin*; for death is the wages of sin. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. When sin came, of course death came along with it. Death is here put for all that misery which is the due desert of sin, temporal, spiritual, eternal death. If Adam had not sinned, he had not died: the threatening was, *In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die*, *Gen. 2. 17.*

So death passed, a sentence of death was passed, as upon a criminal, *διεβλήν*—*passed through* all men, as an infectious disease *passes through* a town, so that none escape it. It is the universal fate, without exception, death passes upon all. There are common calamities incident to human life, which do abundantly prove this.

Death reigned, *v. 14.* He speaks of death as a mighty prince, and his monarchy the most absolute, universal, and lasting monarchy. None are exempted from its sceptre; it is a monarchy that will survive all other earthly rule, authority, and power, for it is the last enemy, *1 Cor. 15. 26.* Those sons of Belial that will be subject to no other rule, cannot avoid being subject to this.

Now all this we may thank Adam for; from him sin and death descend. Well may we say, as that good man, observing the change that a fit of sickness

had made in his countenance, O Adam! what hast thou done?

Further, to clear this, he shews, that sin did not commence with the law of Moses, but was in the world, until, or before, that law; therefore that law of Moses is not the only rule of life; for there was a rule, and that rule transgressed, before the law was given. It likewise intimates that we cannot be justified by our obedience to the law of Moses, any more than we were condemned by and for our disobedience to it. Sin was in the world before the law; witness Cain's murder, the apostasy of the old world, the wickedness of Sodom.

First, His inference from hence, is, Therefore there was a law; for *sin is not imputed where there is no law*. Original sin is a *want of conformity to*, and actual sin is a *transgression of*, the law of God: therefore all were under some law.

Secondly, His proof of it, is, *Death reigned from Adam to Moses*, v. 14. It is certain that death could not have reigned, if sin had not set up the throne for him. This proves that sin was in the world before the law, and original sin, for death reigned over those that had not sinned any actual sin, that *had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, never sinned in their own persons as Adam did; which is to be understood of infants, that were never guilty of actual sin, and yet died, because Adam's sin was imputed to them.

This reign of death seems especially to refer to those violent and extraordinary judgments which were long before Moses, as the deluge, and the destruction of Sodom, which involved infants. It is a great proof of original sin, that little children, who were never guilty of any actual transgression, are yet liable to very terrible diseases, casualties, and deaths; which could by no means be reconciled with the justice and righteousness of God, if they were not chargeable with guilt.

(2.) How, in correspondence to this, Christ, as a public person, communicates righteousness and life to all true believers that are his spiritual seed. And in this he shews not only wherein the resemblance holds, but *ex abundanti*, wherein the communication of grace and love by Christ goes beyond the communication of guilt and wrath by Adam.

[1.] Wherein the resemblance holds; that is laid down most fully, v. 18, 19.

First, *By the offence and disobedience of one, many were made sinners, and judgment came upon all men to condemnation*. Where observe,

1. That Adam's sin was disobedience, disobedience to a plain and express command: and it was a command of trial. The thing he did was *therefore* evil, because it was forbidden, and not otherwise; but that opened the door to other sins, though itself seemingly small.

2. That the malignity and poison of sin are very strong and spreading, else the guilt of Adam's sin would not have reached so far, nor have been so deep and long a stream. Who would think there should be so much evil in sin?

3. That by Adam's sin many are made sinners: many, that is, all his posterity: said to be many, in opposition to the one that offended. *Made sinners*, κατεργασθῆσαν. It denotes the making of us such by a judicial act: we were cast as sinners by due course of law.

4. That judgment is come to condemnation upon all those that by Adam's disobedience were made sinners. Being convicted, we are condemned. All the race of mankind lie under a sentence, like an attainder upon a family. There is judgment given and recorded against us in the court of heaven; and if the judgment be not reversed, we are likely to sink under it to eternity.

Secondly, In like manner, by the righteousness and

obedience of one, (and that one is Jesus Christ, the second Adam,) are many made righteous, and so the free gift comes upon all. It is observable, how the apostle inculcates this truth, and repeats it again and again, as a truth of very great consequence. Here observe,

1. The nature of Christ's righteousness, how it is brought in; it is by his obedience. The disobedience of the first Adam ruined us, the obedience of the second Adam saves us: his obedience to the law of mediation, which was, that he should fulfil all righteousness, and then make his soul an offering for sin. By his obedience to this law he wrought out a righteousness for us, satisfied God's justice, and so made way for us into his favour.

2. The fruit of it.

(1.) There is a free gift come upon all men, it is made and offered promiscuously to all. The salvation wrought is a common salvation; the proposals are general, the tender free; whoever will, may come, and take of these waters of life.

This free gift is to all believers, upon their believing, unto justification of life. It is not only a justification that frees from death, but that entitles to life.

(2.) Many shall be made righteous; many compared with one, or as many as belong to the election of grace; which, though but a few as they are scattered up and down in the world, yet will be a great many when they come all together. *κατασβεσθῆναι*—they shall be constituted righteous, as by letters patent. Now the antithesis between these two, our ruin by Adam, and our recovery by Christ, is obvious enough.

[2.] Wherein the communication of grace and love by Christ goes beyond the communication of guilt and wrath by Adam; and this he shews, v. 15—17. It is designed for the magnifying of the riches of Christ's love, and for the comfort and encouragement of believers, who, considering what a wound Adam's sin has made, might begin to despair of a proportionable remedy.

His expressions are a little intricate, but this he seems to intend,

First, If guilt and wrath be communicated, much more shall grace and love: for it is agreeable to the idea we have of the divine goodness, to suppose that he should be more ready to save upon an imputed righteousness, than to condemn upon an imputed guilt: Much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace. God's goodness is, of all his attributes, in a special manner his glory, and it is that grace that is the root, (his favour to us in Christ,) and the gift is by grace. We know that God is rather inclined to shew mercy; punishing is his strange work.

Secondly, If there were so much power and efficacy, as it seems there were, in the sin of a man, who was of the earth, earthy, to condemn us; much more are there power and efficacy in the righteousness and grace of Christ, who is the Lord from heaven, to justify and save us. The one man that saves us, is Jesus Christ. Surely Adam could not propagate so strong a poison, but Jesus Christ could propagate as strong an antidote, and much stronger.

Thirdly, It is but the guilt of one single offence of Adam's that is laid to our charge; the judgment was *ἐξ ἑνὸς κατ' ἑμῆς*, by one, that is, by one offence, v. 16, 17. *Margin*. But from Jesus Christ we receive and derive an abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. The stream of grace and righteousness is deeper and broader than the stream of guilt; for this righteousness doth not only take away the guilt of that one offence, but of many other offences, even of all. God in Christ forgives all trespasses. Col. 2. 13.

Fourthly, By Adam's sin death reigned; but by Christ's righteousness there is not only a period put to the reign of death, but believers are preferred to reign in life, v. 17. In and by the righteousness

of Christ, we have not only a charter of pardon, but a patent of honour; are not only freed from our chains, but, like Joseph, advanced to the second chariot, and made unto our God kings and priests; not only pardoned, but preferred. See this observed, Rev. 1. 5, 6.—5. 9, 10. We are by Christ and his righteousness entitled to, and instated in, more and greater privileges than we lost by the offence of Adam. The plaster is wider than the wound, and more healing than the wound is killing.

Lastly, In the two last verses he seems to anticipate an objection, which is expressed Gal. 3. 19. *Wherefore then serveth the law?* Answer,

1. *The law entered, that the offence might abound.* Not to make sin to abound the more in itself, otherwise than as sin takes occasion by the commandment; but to discover the abounding sinfulness of it. The glass discovers the spots, but does not cause them. When the commandment came into the world *sin revived*; as the letting in of a clearer light into a room discovers the dust and filth which were there before, but were not seen. It was like the searching of a wound, which is necessary to the cure. *The offence, τὸ παράπτωμα*—that offence, the sin of Adam, the extending of the guilt of it to us, and the effect of the corruption in us, are the abounding of that offence which appeared upon the entry of the law.

2. That grace might *much more abound*; that the terrors of the law might make gospel-comforts so much the sweeter. Sin abounded among the Jews; and to those of them that were converted to the faith of Christ did not grace much more abound in the remitting of so much guilt and the subduing of so much corruption? The greater the strength of the enemy, the greater the honour of the conqueror.

This abounding of grace he illustrates, v. 21. As the reign of a tyrant and oppressor is a foil to set off the succeeding reign of a just and gentle prince, and to make it the more illustrious; so doth the reign of sin set off the reign of grace. *Sin reigned unto death*, it was a cruel, bloody reign; but *grace reigns to life*, eternal life, and this *through righteousness*, righteousness imputed to us for justification implanted in us for sanctification; and both by *Jesus Christ our Lord*, through the power and efficacy of Christ, the great prophet, priest, and king, of his church.

CHAP. VI.

The apostle having at large asserted, opened, and proved, the great doctrine of justification by faith, for fear lest any should suck poison out of that sweet flower, and turn that grace of God into wantonness and licentiousness, he, with a like zeal, copiousness of expression, and cogency of argument, presses the absolute necessity of sanctification and a holy life, as the inseparable fruit and companion of justification; for wherever Jesus Christ is made of God unto any soul righteousness, he is made of God unto that soul sanctification, 1 Cor. 1. 30. The water and the blood came streaming together out of the pierced side of the dying Jesus. And what God hath thus joined together, let not us dare to put asunder.

1. **WHAT** shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound! 2. God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*: 6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7. For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13. Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 16. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. 19. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. 20. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. 22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness; and the end everlasting life. 23. For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The apostle's transition, which joins this discourse with the former, is observable, "*What shall we say then?*" v. 1. What use shall we make of this sweet and comfortable doctrine? Shall we do evil that good may come, as some say we do? ch. 3. 8. *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* Shall we from hence take encouragement to sin with sc

much the more boldness, because the more sin we commit, the more will the grace of God be magnified in our pardon? Is this a use to be made of it?" No, it is an abuse, and the apostle startles at the thought of it; (v. 2.) "*God forbid*; far be it from us to think such a thought." He entertains the objection as Christ did the devil's blackest temptation; (Matt. 4. 10.) *Get thee hence, Satan*. Those opinions that give any countenance to sin, or open a door to practical immoralities, how specious and plausible soever they be rendered, by the pretension of advancing free grace, are to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence; for the truth as it is in Jesus, is a truth according to godliness, Tit. 1. 1.

The apostle is very full in pressing the necessity of holiness in this chapter, which may be reduced to two heads.

I. His exhortations to holiness, which shew the nature of it.

II. His motives or arguments to enforce those exhortations, which shew the necessity of it.

1. For the first, We may hence observe the nature of sanctification, what it is, and wherein it consists. In general it has two things in it, *mortification*, and *vivification*; dying to sin, and living to righteousness; elsewhere expressed by putting off the old man, and putting on the new; ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well.

1. *Mortification*, putting off the old man; several ways that is expressed.

(1.) We must *live no longer in sin*, (v. 2.) we must not be as we have been, nor do as we have done. The time past of our life must suffice, 1 Pet. 4. 3. Though there are none that live without sin, yet, blessed be God, there are those that do not *live in sin*; do not live in it as their element, do not make a trade of it: that is to be sanctified.

(2.) *The body of sin must be destroyed*, v. 6. The corruption that dwelleth in us is the *body of sin*, consisting of many parts and members, as a body. This is the root to which the axe must be laid. We must not only cease from the acts of sin; (that may be done through the influence of outward restraints, or other inducements;) but we must get the vicious habits and inclinations weakened and destroyed: not only cast away the idols out of the sanctuary, but the idols of iniquity out of the heart.

That henceforth we should not serve sin. The actual transgression is certainly in a great measure prevented by the crucifying and killing of the original corruption. Destroy the body of sin, and then, though there should be Canaanites remaining in the land, yet the Israelites will not be slaves to them. It is the body of sin that sways the sceptre, wields the iron rod; destroy that, and the yoke is broken. The destruction of Egion the tyrant, is the deliverance of oppressed Israel from the Moabites.

(3.) *We must be dead indeed unto sin*, v. 11. As the death of the oppressor is a release, so much more is the death of the oppressed, Job 3. 17, 18. Death brings a writ of ease to the weary. Thus must we be dead to sin, obey it, observe it, regard it, fulfil its will no more than he that is dead doth his *quondam* taskmasters; be as indifferent to the pleasures and delights of sin, as a man that is dying is to his former diversions. He that is dead is separated from his former company, converse, business, enjoyments, employments, is not what he was, does not what he did, has not what he had. Death makes a mighty change; such a change doth sanctification make in the soul, it cuts off all correspondence with sin.

(4.) *Sin must not reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it*, v. 12. Though sin may remain as an outlaw, though it may oppress as a tyrant, yet let it not reign as a king. Let it not make laws, nor preside in councils, nor command the militia; let it

not be uppermost in the soul, so that we should obey it. Though we may be sometimes overtaken and overcome by it, yet let us never be obedient to it in the lusts thereof: let not sinful lusts be a law to you, to which you would yield a consenting obedience. *In the lusts thereof*—*ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτῆς*. It refers to the body, not to sin. Sin lies very much in gratifying of the body, and humouring that. And there is reason implied in that, *your mortal body*; because it is a mortal body, and hastening apace to the dust; therefore let not sin reign in it. It was sin that made our bodies mortal, and therefore do not yield obedience to such an enemy.

(5.) *We must not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness*, v. 13. The members of the body are made use of by the corrupt nature as tools, by which the wills of the flesh are fulfilled; but we must not consent to that abuse. The members of the body are fearfully and wonderfully made; it is pity they should be the devil's tools of *unrighteousness unto sin*, instruments of the sinful actions, according to the sinful dispositions. *Unrighteousness is unto sin*; the sinful acts confirm and strengthen the sinful habits; one sin begets another; it is like the letting forth of water, therefore leave it before it be meddled with. The members of the body may perhaps, through the prevalence of temptation be forced to be instruments of sin; but do not yield them to be so, do not consent to it. This is one branch of sanctification, the mortification of sin.

2. *Vivification*, or living to righteousness; and what is that?

(1.) It is to *walk in newness of life*, v. 4. Newness of life supposes newness of heart, for out of it are the issues of life; and there is no way to make the stream sweet but by making the spring so. Walking, in scripture, is put for the course and tenour of the conversation, which must be new. Walk by new rules, toward new ends, from new principles; make a new choice of the way; choose new paths to walk in, new leaders to walk after, new companions to walk with: old things should pass away, and all things become new. The man is what he was not, does what he did not.

(2.) It is to *be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, v. 11. To converse with God, to have a regard to him, a delight in him, a concern for him, the soul upon all occasions carried out toward him, as towards an agreeable object, in which it takes a complacency: this is to be *alive to God*. The love of God reigning in the heart, is the life of the soul towards God; *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat*—*The soul is where it loves, rather than where it lives*; the affections and desires alive toward God.

Or, living (our life in the flesh) unto God, to his honour and glory as our end, by his word and will as our rule; in all our ways to acknowledge him, and to have our eyes ever toward him; that is to live unto God.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is our spiritual life; there is no living to God but through him. He is the Mediator; there can be no comfortable receivings from God, or acceptable regards to God, but in and through Jesus Christ; no intercourse between sinful souls and a holy God, but by the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Through Christ, as the author and maintainer of this life; through Christ, as the head from whom we receive vital influence; through Christ, as the root by which we derive sap and nourishment, and so live. In living to God, Christ is all in all.

(3.) It is to *yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead*, v. 13. The very life and being of holiness lie in the dedication of ourselves to the Lord, giving our own selves to the Lord, 2 Cor. 8. 5. "Yield yourselves to him, not only as the

conquered yields to the conqueror, because he can stand it out no longer; but as the wife yields herself to her husband, to whom her desire is; as the scholar yields himself to the teacher, the apprentice to his master, to be taught and ruled by him. Not yield your estates to him, but yield yourselves; nothing less than your whole selves;" *παρεστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς, accommodate vos ipsos Deo—accommodate yourselves to God*; so Tremellius, from the *Syriac*. "Not only submit to him, but comply with him; not only present yourselves to him once for all, but be always ready to him. Yield yourselves to him as wax to the seal, to take any impression, to be, and have, and do, what he pleases." When Paul said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts 9. 6.) he was then yielded to God.

As those that are alive from the dead. To yield a dead carcase to a living God, is not to please him, but to mock him: "Yield yourselves as those that are alive and good for something, a *living sacrifice*," *ch. 12. 1.* The surest evidence of our spiritual life is the dedication of ourselves to God. It becomes those that are *alive from the dead*, (it may be understood of a death in law,) that are justified and delivered from death, to give themselves to him that hath so redeemed them.

(4.) It is to yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God. The members of our bodies, when withdrawn from the service of sin, are not to lie idle, but to be made use of in the service of God. When the strong man armed is dispossessed, let him whose right it is, divide the spoils. Though the powers and faculties of the soul be the immediate subjects of holiness and righteousness, yet the members of the body are to be instruments; the body must be always ready to serve the soul in the service of God. Thus, (v. 14.) "*Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.* Let them be under the conduct, and at the command of the righteous law of God, and that principle of inherent righteousness, which the Spirit, as a sanctifier, plants in the soul.

Righteousness unto holiness; which intimates growth, and progress, and ground got. As every sinful act confirms the sinful habit, and makes the nature more and more prone to sin; hence the members of a natural man are here said to be servants to *iniquity unto iniquity*; one sin makes the heart more disposed for another; so every gracious act confirms the gracious habit: serving righteousness is *unto holiness*; one duty fits us for another; and the more we do, the more we may do, for God. Or serving righteousness, *εἰς ἁγιασμόν—as an evidence of sanctification.*

II. For the second, The motives or arguments here used to shew the necessity of sanctification. There is such an antipathy in our hearts by nature to holiness, that it is no easy matter to bring them to submit to it: it is the Spirit's work, who persuades by such inducements as these set home upon the soul.

1. He argues from our sacramental conformity to Jesus Christ. Our baptism, and the design and intention of it, carry in it a great reason why we should die to sin, and live to righteousness. Thus we must improve our baptism as a bridle of restraint to keep us in from sin, as a spur of constraint to quicken us to duty. Observe his reasoning.

(1.) In general, we are *dead to sin*, that is, in profession, and in obligation. Our baptism signifies our cutting off from the kingdom of sin. We profess to have no more to do with sin. We are dead to sin by a participation of virtue and power for the killing of it, and by our union with Christ and interest in him, in and by whom it is killed. All this is in vain if we persist in sin; we contradict a profession, violate an obligation, return to that to which we were dead, like walking ghosts; than which no-

thing is more unbecoming and absurd. For (v. 7.) he that *is dead, is freed from sin*; that is, he that is dead to it, is freed from the rule and dominion of it; as the servant that is dead, is freed from his master, Job 3. 19. Now shall we be such fools as to return to that slavery from which we are discharged? When we are delivered out of Egypt, shall we talk of going back to it again?

(2.) In particular, being baptized into Jesus Christ, we were baptized into his death, v. 3. We were baptized *εἰς Χριστόν—unto Christ*, as 1 Cor. 10. 2. *εἰς Μωσὴν—unto Moses*. Baptism binds us to Christ, it sets us apprentice to Christ, as our teacher, it is our allegiance to Christ as our sovereign. Baptism is *externa ansa Christi—the external handle of Christ*, by which Christ lays hold on men, and men offer themselves to Christ. Particularly, we were baptized into his death, into a participation of the privileges purchased by his death, and into an obligation both to comply with the design of his death, which was to redeem us from iniquity, and to conform to the pattern of his death, that, as Christ died for sin, so we should die to sin. This was the profession and promise of our baptism, and we do not do well if we do not answer this profession, and make good this promise.

[1.] Our conformity to the death of Christ obliges us to die unto sin; thereby we know the *fellowship of his sufferings*, Phil. 3. 10. Thus we are here said to be planted together in the *likeness of his death*, (v. 5.) *συνεψύχματι*, not only a conformity, but a *conformation*; as the ingrafted stock is planted together into the likeness of the shoot, of the nature of which it doth participate. *Planting* is in order to life and fruitfulness: we are planted in the vineyard, in a likeness to Christ; which likeness we should evidence in sanctification. Our creed concerning Jesus Christ, is, among other things, that he was *crucified, dead and buried*; now baptism is a sacramental conformity to him in each of these, as the apostle here takes notice.

First, Our old man is crucified with him, v. 6. The death of the cross was a slow death; the body, after it was nailed to the cross, gave many a throe and many a struggle: but it was a sure death, long in expiring, but expired at last: such is the mortification of sin in believers. It was a cursed death, Gal. 3. 13. Sin dies as a malefactor, devoted to destruction, it is an accursed thing. Though it be a slow death, yet it must needs hasten it, that it is an old man that is crucified; not in the prime of its strength, but decaying; that which waxeth old, is ready to vanish away, Heb. 8. 13. *Crucified with him—συνεσταυρώθη*, not in respect of time, but in respect of causality. The crucifying of Christ for us, has an influence upon the crucifying of sin in us.

Secondly, We are dead with Christ, v. 8. Christ was obedient to death: when he died, we might be said to die with him, as our dying to sin is an act of conformity both to the design and to the sampler of Christ's dying for sin. Baptism signifies and seals our union with Christ, our ingrafting into Christ; so that we are dead with him, and engaged to have no more to do with sin than he had.

Thirdly, We are buried with him by baptism, v. 4. Our conformity is complete. We are in profession quite cut off from all commerce and communion with sin, as those that are buried are quite cut off from the world; not only not of the living, but no more among the living, have nothing more to do with them. Thus must we be, as Christ was, separate from sin and sinners.

We are buried, in profession and obligation: we profess to be so, and we are bound to be so: it was our covenant and engagement in baptism; we are sealed to be the Lord's, therefore to be cut off from sin. Why this burying in baptism should so much

as allude to any custom of dipping under water in baptism, any more than our baptismal crucifixion and death should have any such references, I confess I cannot see. It is plain, that it is not the sign, but the thing signified, in baptism, that the apostle here calls being *buried with Christ*; and the expression of burying alludes to Christ's burial. As Christ was buried, that he might rise again to a new and more heavenly life, so we are in baptism buried, cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life of faith and love.

[2.] Our conformity to the resurrection of Christ obliges us to rise again to newness of life. That is *the power of his resurrection* which Paul was so desirous to know, Phil. 3. 10. Christ was raised up *from the dead by the glory of the Father*, that is, by the power of the Father; the power of God is his glory; it is glorious power, Col. 1. 11. Now in baptism we are obliged to conform to that pattern, to be planted in the *likeness of his resurrection*, (v. 5.) *to live with him*, v. 8. See Col. 2. 12. Conversion is the first resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and this resurrection is conformable to Christ's resurrection. This conformity of the saints to the resurrection of Christ, seems to be intimated in the rising of so many of the bodies of the saints; which, though mentioned before by anticipation, is supposed to have been concomitant with Christ's resurrection, Matt. 27. 52. We are all risen with Christ.

In two things we must conform to the resurrection of Christ.

First, He rose, *to die no more*, v. 9. We read of many others that were raised from the dead, but they rose to die again; but when Christ rose, he rose to die no more; therefore he left his grave-clothes behind him, whereas Lazarus, who was to die again, brought them out with him, as one that should have occasion to use them again: but over Christ *death has no more dominion*; he was dead indeed, but he is alive, and so alive, that he lives for evermore, Rev. 1. 18.

Thus we must rise from the grave of sin, never again to return to it, or to have any more fellowship with the works of darkness, having quitted that grave, that land of darkness, as darkness itself.

Secondly, He rose to live unto God, (v. 10.) to live a heavenly life, to receive that glory which was set before him. Others that were raised from the dead, returned to the same life in every respect which they had before lived; but so did not Christ, he rose again *to leave the world*. *Now I am no more in the world*, John 13. 1.—17. 11. He rose *to live to God*, that is, to intercede and rule, and all to the glory of the Father.

Thus must we rise *to live to God*: that is it which he calls *newness of life*, (v. 4.) to live from other principles, by other rules, with other aims, than we have done. A life devoted to God is a new life; before, self was the chief and highest end, but now God. To live indeed, is to live to God, with our eyes ever toward him, making him the centre of all our actions.

2. He argues from the precious promises and privileges of the new covenant, v. 14. It might be objected, that we cannot conquer and subdue sin, it is unavoidably too hard for us; "No," says he, "you wrestle with an enemy that may be dealt with and subdued, if you will but keep your ground and stand to your arms; it is an enemy that is already foiled and baffled; there is strength laid up in the covenant of grace for your assistance, if you will but use it. *Sin shall not have dominion*." God's promises to us are more powerful and effectual for the mortifying of sin than our promises to God. Sin may struggle in a believer, and may create him a great deal of trouble; but it shall not have dominion; may vex him, but it shall not rule over him.

For we are not under the law, but under grace, not under the law of sin and death, but under the law of the spirit of life, which is Christ Jesus: we are actuated by other principles than we have been: new lords, new laws. Or, not under the covenant of works, which requires brick, and gives no straw, which condemns upon the least failure, which runs thus, "Do this, and live; do it not, and die;" but under the covenant of grace, which accepts sincerity as our gospel-perfection, which requires nothing but what it promises strength to perform; which is herein well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant does not put us out of covenant; and especially, that it does not leave our salvation in our own keeping, but lays it up in the hands of the Mediator, who undertakes for us, that sin shall not have dominion over us; hath himself condemned it, and will destroy it; so that, if we pursue the victory, we shall come off more than conquerors. Christ rules by the golden sceptre of grace, and he will not let sin have dominion over those that are willing subjects to that rule. This is a very comfortable word to all true believers: if we were under the law, we were undone, for the law curses every one that continues not in every thing; but we are under grace, grace which accepts the willing mind, which is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, which leaves room for repentance, which promises pardon upon repentance: and what can be to an ingenious mind a stronger motive than this to have nothing to do with sin? Shall we sin against so much goodness, abuse such love?

Some perhaps might suck poison out of this flower, and disingenuously use this as an encouragement to sin. See how the apostle starts at such a thought; (v. 15.) *Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid*. What can be more black and ill-natured than from a friend's extraordinary expressions of kindness and good-will, to take occasion to affront and offend him? To spurn at such bowels, to spit in the face of such love, is that which, between man and man, all the world would cry out shame on.

3. He argues from the evidence that this will be of our state, making for us, or against us; (v. 16.) *To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are*. All the children of men are either the servants of God, or the servants of sin; these are the two families. Now, if we would know to which of these families we belong, we must inquire to which of these masters we yield obedience. Our obeying the laws of sin will be an evidence against us, that we belong to that family on which death is entailed. As on the contrary, our obeying the laws of Christ will evidence our relation to Christ's family.

4. He argues from their former sinfulness, (v. 17.—21.) where we may observe,

(1.) What they had been and done formerly. We have need to be often reminded of our former state. Paul frequently remembers it concerning himself, and those to whom he writes.

[1.] Ye were the *servants of sin*. Those that are now the servants of God, would do well to remember the time when they were the *servants of sin*; to keep them humble, penitent, and watchful, and to quicken them in the service of God. It is a reproach to the service of sin, that so many thousands have quitted the service, and shaken off the yoke; and never any that sincerely deserted it, and gave up themselves to the service of God, have returned to the former drudgery. "God be thanked that ye were so," that is, that though ye were so, yet ye have obeyed. Ye were so; God be thanked that we can speak of it as a thing past: ye were so, but ye are not now so. Nay, your having been so formerly tends much to the magnifying of divine mercy and grace in the happy change. God be thanked that

the former sinfulness is such a foil, and such a spur to your present holiness."

[2.] *Ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity*, v. 19. It is the misery of a sinful state, that the body is made a drudge to sin, than which there could not be a baser or a harder slavery, like that of the *prodigal that was sent into the fields to feed swine*. *Ye have yielded*. Sinners are voluntary in the service of sin. The devil could not force them into the service, if they did not yield themselves to it. This will justify God in the ruin of sinners, that they sold themselves to work wickedness, it was their own act and deed.

To iniquity unto iniquity. Every sinful act strengthens and confirms the sinful habit; *to iniquity as the work, unto iniquity as the wages*. Sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind; growing worse and worse, more and more hardened.

This he speaks *after the manner of men*, that is, he fetches a similitude from that which is common among men, even the change of services and subjections.

[3.] *Ye were free from righteousness*; (v. 20.) not free by any liberty given, but by a liberty taken, which is licentiousness; "*Ye were* altogether void of that which is good, void of any good principles, motions, or inclinations; void of all subjection to the law and will of God, of all conformity to his image; and this ye were pleased with, as a freedom and a liberty; but a freedom from *righteousness* is the worst kind of slavery."

(2.) How the blest change was made, and where-in it did consist.

[1.] *Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you*, v. 17. This describes conversion, what it is; it is our conformity to, and compliance with, the gospel which was delivered you by Christ and his ministers. Margin. *Whereto ye were delivered*; *εἰς τὸ ἀπαρτίσθαι*—into which ye were delivered. And so observe,

First, The rule of grace, *that form of doctrine*—*τὸν οὖν δόξα*. The gospel is the great rule both of truth and holiness; it is the stamp, grace is the impression of that stamp; it is the form of healing words, 2 Tim. 1. 13.

Secondly, The nature of grace, as it is our conformity to that rule.

It is to *obey from the heart*. The gospel is a doctrine not only to be believed, but to be *obeyed*; and that *from the heart*; which denotes the sincerity and reality of that obedience; not in profession only, but in power; *from the heart*, the innermost part, the commanding part of us.

It is to be *delivered into it*, as into a mould, as the wax is cast into the impression of the seal, answering it line for line, stroke for stroke, and wholly representing the shape and figure of it. To be a christian indeed, is to be transformed into the likeness and similitude of the gospel, our souls answering to it, complying with it, conformed to it: understanding, will, affections, aims, principles, actions, all according to that form of doctrine.

[2.] *Being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness*, v. 18. *Servants to God*, v. 22. Conversion is, *First*, A freedom from the service of sin; it is the shaking off of that yoke, resolving to have no more to do with it. *Secondly*, A resignation of ourselves to the service of God and *righteousness*; to God as our master, to *righteousness* as our work. When we are *made free from sin*, it is not that we may live as we list, and be our own masters; no: when we are delivered out of Egypt, we are, as Israel, led to the holy mountain, to receive the law, and are there brought into the bond of the covenant.

Observe, We cannot be made the *servants of God*, till we are freed from the power and dominion

of sin; we cannot serve two masters so directly opposite one to another, as God and sin are. We must, with the prodigal, quit the drudgery of the citizen of the country, before we can come to our Father's house.

(3.) What apprehensions they now had of their former work and way. He appeals to themselves, (v. 21.) whether they had not found the service of sin, [1.] An unfruitful service; "*What fruit had ye then?* Did ye ever get any thing by it? Sit down, and cast up the account, reckon your gains, *what fruit had ye then?*" Besides the future losses, which are infinitely great, the very present gains of sin are not worth mentioning. *What fruit?* Nothing that deserves the name of fruit; the present pleasure and profit of sin do not deserve to be called fruit; they are but *chaff, ploughing iniquity, sowing vanity, and reaping the same*. [2.] It is an unbecoming service; it is that of which, *we are now ashamed*; ashamed of the folly, ashamed of the filth of it. Shame came into the world with sin, and is still the certain product of it; either the shame of repentance, or, if rot that, eternal shame and contempt. Who would wilfully do that which, sooner or later he is sure to be ashamed of?

5. *Lastly*, He argues from the end of all these things; it is the prerogative of rational creatures, that they are endued with a power of prospect, are capable of looking forward, considering the latter end of things. To persuade us from sin to holiness, here are *blessing and cursing, good and evil, life and death, set before us*; and we are put to our choice.

(1.) The end of sin is death; (v. 21.) *The end of those things is death*. Though the way may seem pleasant and inviting, yet the end is dismal; *at the last it bites*; it will be bitterness in the latter end.

The wages of sin is death, v. 23. *Death* is as due to a sinner when he hath sinned, as *wages* are to a servant when he hath done his work. This is true of every sin; there is no sin in its own nature venial; *death is the wages of the least sin*; sin is here represented, either as the work for which the *wages* are given, or as the master by whom the *wages* are given; all that are sin's servants, and do sin's work, must expect to be thus paid.

(2.) *If the fruit be unto holiness*, if there be an active principle of true and growing grace, *the end will be everlasting life*; a very happy end! Though the way be up-hill, though it be narrow, and thorny, and beset, yet *everlasting life at the end of it* is sure. So, v. 23. *The gift of God is eternal life*. Heaven is life, consisting in the vision and fruition of God; and it is *eternal life*, no infirmities attending it, no death to put a period to it. This is *the gift of God*. The *death is the wages of sin*, it comes by desert; but the *life is a gift*, it comes by favour. Sinners merit hell, but saints do not merit heaven; there is no proportion between the glory of heaven and our obedience; we must thank God and not ourselves, if ever we get to heaven. And this gift is *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. It is Christ that purchased it, prepared it, prepares us for it, preserves us to it; he is the *Alpha and Omega*, All in all in our salvation.

CHAP. VII.

We may observe, in this chapter, I. Our freedom from the law further urged as an argument to press upon us sanctification, v. 1. 6. II. The excellency and usefulness of the law asserted and proved from the apostle's own experience, notwithstanding, v. 7. 14. III. A description of the conflict between grace and corruption in the heart, v. 14, 15, to the end.

1. **K**NOW ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how

that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2. For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. 3. So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

Among other arguments used in the foregoing chapter to persuade us against sin, and to holiness, this was one, (v. 14.) that *we are not under the law*; and that argument he is here further insisting upon and explaining; (v. 6.) *We are delivered from the law*. What does he mean by that? And how is it an argument why sin should *not* reign over us, and why we should *walk in newness of life*?

I. *We are delivered from that power of the law*, which curses and condemns us for the sin committed by us. The sentence of the law against us is vacated and reversed, by the death of Christ, to all true believers. The law saith, *The soul that sins shall die*; but *we are delivered from the law*. *The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die*. *We are redeemed from the curse of the law*, Gal. 3. 13.

II. *We are delivered from that power of the law*, which irritates and provokes the sin that dwelleth in us. This the apostle seems especially to refer to, (v. 5.) *The motions of sin which were by the law*. The law, by commanding, forbidding, threatening, corrupt and fallen man, but offering no grace to cure and strengthen, did but stir up the corruption, and, like the sun shining upon a dunghill, excite and draw up the filthy steams. We being lamed by the fall, the law comes and directs us, but provides nothing to heal and help our lameness, and so makes us halt and stumble the more. Understand this not of the law as a rule, but as a covenant of works.

Now each of these is an argument why we should be holy; for here is encouragement to endeavours, though in many things we come short. We are *under grace*, which promises strength to do what it commands, and pardon upon repentance when we do amiss. This is the scope of these verses in general, that in point of profession and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works; under the gospel of Christ, and not under the law of Moses. The difference between a law-state and a gospel-state, he had before illustrated, by the similitude of rising to a new life, and serving a new master; now here he speaks of it under the similitude of being married to a new husband.

1. Our first marriage was to the law, which, according to the law of marriage, was to continue only

during the life of the law. The law of marriage is obliging only till the death of one of the parties, no matter which, and no longer. The death of either discharges both.

For this he appeals to themselves, as persons knowing the law; (v. 1.) *I speak to them that know the law*. It is a great advantage to discourse with those that have knowledge; for such can more readily understand and apprehend a truth. Many of the Christians at Rome were such as had been Jews, and so were well acquainted with the law. One has some hold of knowing people.

The law hath power over a man as long as he liveth; in particular, the law of marriage hath power; or, in general, every law is so limited: the laws of nations, of relations, families.

(1.) The obligation of laws extends no further; by death the servant who, while he lived, was under the yoke, is *freed from his master*, Job 3. 19.

(2.) The condemnation of laws extends no further; death is the finishing of the law. *Actio moritur cum personâ*—*The action expires with the person*. The severest laws could but kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do.

Thus while we were alive to the law, we were under the power of it; while we were in our Old Testament state, before the gospel came into the world, and before it came with power into our hearts.

Such is the law of marriage; (v. 2.) the woman is *bound to her husband* during life, so bound to him, that she cannot marry another; if she do, she shall be reckoned an *adulteress*, v. 3. It will make her an adulteress, not only to be defiled by, but to be married to, another man; for that is so much the worse, upon this account, that it abuses an ordinance of God, by making it to patronise the uncleanness.

Thus were we married to the law; (v. 5.) *When we were in the flesh*, that is, in a carnal state, under the reigning power of sin and corruption; in the flesh, as in our element; then the *motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members*, we were carried down the stream of sin; and the law was but as an imperfect dam, which made the stream to swell the higher, and rage the more; our desire was to sin, as that of the wife to her husband, and sin ruled over us; we embraced it, loved it, devoted all to it, conversed daily with it, made it our care to please it; we were under a law of sin and death, as the wife under the law of marriage; and the product of this marriage was *fruit brought forth unto death*, that is, actual transgressions were produced by the original corruptions, such as deserve death. Lust, having conceived by the law, (which is the strength of sin, 1 Cor. 15. 56.) *bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*, Jam. 1. 15. There is the posterity that springs from this marriage to sin and the law. This comes of the *motions of sin working in our members*. And this continues during life, while the law is alive to us, and we to the law.

2. Our second marriage is to Christ: and how comes that about? Why,

(1.) We are freed, by death, from our obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her obligation to her husband, v. 3. This application is not very close, nor needed it to be, (v. 4.) *Ye are become dead to the law*. He does not say, "The law is dead;" some think, because he would avoid giving offence to those who were yet zealous for the law; but, which comes all to one, *Ye are dead to the law*; as the crucifying of the world to us, and of us to the world, amounts to one and the same thing; so doth the law dying, and our dying to it. We are *delivered from the law*; (v. 6.) *κατηργήθημεν*—*we are null as to the law*; our obligation to it, as a husband, cassated and made void. And then he speaks of the law being dead, as far as it was an imprisoned

law to us, *that being dead wherein we were held*; not the law itself, but its obligation to punishment, and its provocation to sin, that is dead, it has lost its power; and this, (v. 4.) *by the body of Christ*, that is, by the sufferings of Christ in his body, by his crucified body, which abrogated the law, answered the demands of it, made satisfaction for our violation of it, purchased for us a covenant of grace, in which righteousness and strength are laid up for us, such as were not, nor could be, by the law. We are dead to the law by our union with the mystical *body of Christ*; by being incorporated into Christ in our baptism professedly, in our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, have no more to do with it than the dead servant, that is free from his master, hath to do with his master's yoke.

(2.) We are married to Christ. The day of our believing is the day of our espousals to the Lord Jesus. We enter upon a life of dependence on him, and duty to him. *Married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead*; a periphrasis of Christ, very pertinent here; for as our dying to sin and the law is in conformity to the death of Christ, and the crucifying of his body; so our devotedness to Christ in newness of life, is in conformity to the resurrection of Christ. We are married to the raised exalted Jesus; a very honourable marriage. Compare 2 Cor. 11. 2. Eph. 5. 29. Now we are thus married to Christ,

[1.] That we should *bring forth fruit unto God*. One end of marriage is fruitfulness: God instituted the ordinance, that he might seek a *godly seed*, Mal. 2. 15. The wife is compared to the fruitful vine, and children are called the fruit of the womb. Now the great end of our marriage to Christ, is, our fruitfulness in love, and grace, and every good work. That is *fruit unto God*, pleasing to God, according to his will, aiming at his glory. As our old marriage to sin produced fruit unto death, so our second marriage to Christ produces fruit unto God, fruits of righteousness.

Good works are the children of the new nature, the products of our union with Christ; as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its union with the root. Whatever our professions and pretensions be, there is no fruit *brought forth to God*, till we are married to Christ; it is in Christ Jesus that we are created unto good works, Eph. 2. 10. That is the only fruit turning to a good account, which is brought forth in Christ. This distinguishes the good works of believers from the good works of hypocrites and self-justifiers, that they are brought forth in marriage, done in union with Christ, in the name of the Lord Jesus, Col. 3. 17. This is, without controversy, one of the great mysteries of godliness.

[2.] That we should *serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*, v. 6. Being married to a new husband, we must change our way. Still we must serve, but it is a service that is perfect freedom, whereas the service of sin was a perfect drudgery: we must now serve in *newness of spirit*, by new spiritual rules, from new spiritual principles, in the spirit, and in truth, John 4. 24. There must be a renovation of our spirits, wrought by the Spirit of God, and in that we must serve.

Not in the oldness of the letter; we must not rest in mere external services, as the carnal Jews did, who gloried in their adherence to the letter of the law, and minded not the spiritual part of worship. The letter is said to kill with its bondage and terror, but we are delivered from that yoke, that we might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, Luke 1. 74, 75. We are under the dispensation of the Spirit, and therefore must be spiritual, and serve in the spirit. Compare with this 2 Cor. 3. 3, 6, &c. It becomes us to worship within the veil, and no longer in the outward court.

7. What shall we say then? *Is the law sin*? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. 9. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10. And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death. 11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. 12. Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13. Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. 14. For we know that the law is spiritual:—

To what he had said in the former paragraph, the apostle here raises an objection, which he answers very fully; *What shall we say then? Is the law sin?* When he had been speaking of the dominion of sin, he had said so much of the influence of the law as a covenant upon that dominion, that it might easily be misinterpreted as a reflection upon the law; to prevent which he shews from his own experience the great excellency and usefulness of the law, not as a covenant, but as a guide; and further discovers how sin took occasion by the commandment.

Observe in particular,

I. The great excellency of the law in itself. Far be it from Paul to reflect upon the law; no, he speaks honourably of it.

1. It is *holy, just, and good*, v. 12. *The law* in general is so, every particular commandment is so; laws are as the law-makers are; God, the greater lawgiver, is holy, just, and good, therefore his law must needs be so. The matter of it is holy, it commands holiness, encourages holiness; it is holy, for it is agreeable to the holy will of God, the original of holiness; it is just, for it is consonant to the rules of equity and right reason; the ways of the Lord are right. It is good in the design of it; it was given for the good of mankind, for the conservation of peace and order in the world; it makes the observers of it good; the intention of it was to better and reform mankind. Wherever there is true grace, there is an assent to this—that the law is holy, just, and good.

2. *The law is spiritual*, (v. 14.) not only in regard of the effect of it, as it is a means of making us spiritual; but in regard of the extent of it, it reaches our spirits, it lays a restraint upon, and gives direction to the motions of the inward man; *it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, (Heb. 4. 12.) it forbids spiritual wickedness, heart-murder, and heart-adultery; it commands spiritual service requires the heart, obliges us to worship God in the spirit. It is a spiritual law, for it is given by Gods who is a Spirit and the Father of spirits; it is given to man, whose principal part is spiritual; the soul is the best part, and the leading part of the man, and therefore the law to the man, must needs be a law to the soul. Herein the law of God is above all other laws, that it is a spiritual law. Other laws may forbid *compassing and imagining*, &c. which

is treason in the heart, but cannot take cognizance thereof, unless there be some overt act; but the law of God takes notice of the iniquity regarded in the heart, though it go no further. *Wash thy heart from wickedness*, Jer. 4. 14.

We know that. Wherever there is true grace, there is an experimental knowledge of the spirituality of the law of God.

II. The great advantage that he had found by the law.

1. It was discovering; *I had not known sin but by the law*, v. 7. As that which is straight discovers that which is crooked, as the looking-glass shews us our natural face with all its spots and deformities; so there is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to repentance, and consequently to peace and pardon, but by comparing our hearts and lives with the law.

Particularly he came to the knowledge of the sinfulness of lust, by the law of the tenth commandment. By *lust* he means sin dwelling in us, sin in its first motions and workings, the corrupt principle. This he came to know when the law said, *Thou shalt not covet*; the law spake in other language than the Scribes and Pharisees made it to speak in; it spake in the spiritual sense and meaning of it. By this he knew that lust is sin, and a very sinful sin; that those motions and desires of the heart toward sin, which never came into act, are sinful, exceeding sinful. Paul had a very quick and piercing judgment, all the advantages and improvements of education, and yet never got the right knowledge of indwelling sin, till the Spirit by the law made it known to him. There is nothing about which the natural man is more blind, than about original corruption, concerning which the understanding is altogether in the dark till the Spirit by the law reveal it, and make it known.

Thus the law is a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ; opens and searches the wound, and so prepares it for healing. Thus sin by the commandment does appear *sin*; (v. 13.) it appears in its own colours, appears to be what it is, and you cannot call it by a worse name than its own. Thus, by the commandment it becomes *exceeding sinful*; it appears to be so. We never see the desperate venom and malignity there are in sin, till we come to compare it with the law, and the spiritual nature of the law, and then we see it to be an evil and a bitter thing.

2. It was humbling; (v. 19.) *I was alive*; he thought himself in a very good condition; he was alive in his own opinion and apprehension; very secure and confident of the goodness of his state. Thus he was *once*, *πρὸς*—*in times past*, when he was a Pharisee; for it was the common temper of that generation of men, that they had a very good conceit of themselves; and Paul was then like the rest of them, and the reason was, he was then *without the law*. Though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, though himself a great student in the law, a strict observer of it, and a zealous stickler for it; yet *without the law*. He had the letter of the law, but he had not the spiritual meaning of it; the shell, but not the kernel. He had the law in his hand and in his head, but he had it not in his heart; the notion of it, but not the power of it. There are a great many who are spiritually dead in sin, that yet are alive in their own opinion of themselves, and it is their strangeness to the law, that is the cause of the mistake.

But *when the commandment came*, came in the power of it, (not to his eyes only, but to his heart,) *sin revived*, as the dust in a room rises, that is, appears when the sun-shine is let into it. Paul then saw that in sin which he had never seen before; he they saw *sin in its causes*, the bitter root, the corrupt

bias, the bent to backslide; *sin in its colours*, deforming, defiling, breaking a righteous law, affronting an awful Majesty, profaning a sovereign crown by casting it to the ground; *sin in its consequences*, sin with death at the heels of it, sin and the curse entailed upon it. "Thus sin revived, and then *I died*; I lost that good opinion which I had had of myself, and came to be of another mind. *Sin revived*, and *I died*; the Spirit, by the commandment, convinced me to be in a state of sin, and in a state of death because of sin."

Of this excellent use is the law, it is a lamp and a light, it converts the soul, opens the eyes, prepares the way of the Lord in the desert, rends the rocks, levels the mountains, makes ready a people prepared for the Lord.

III. The ill use that his corrupt nature made of the law notwithstanding.

1. *Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence*, v. 8. Observe, Paul had in him *all manner of concupiscence*, though one of the best unregenerate men that ever was; as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless, and yet sensible of all manner of concupiscence. And it was sin that *wrought* it, indwelling sin, his corrupt nature; (he speaks of a sin that did *work* sin;) and it took *occasion by the commandment*. The corrupt nature would not have swelled and raged so much, if it had not been for the restraints of the law; as the peccant humours in the body are raised, and more inflamed, by a purge that is not strong enough to carry them off. It is incident to corrupt nature, *in vetitum niti—to lean towards what is forbidden*. Ever since Adam ate forbidden fruit, we have all been fond of forbidden paths; the diseased appetite is carried out most strongly toward that which is hurtful and prohibited. *Without the law sin was dead*, as a snake in winter, which the sun-beams of the law quicken and irritate.

2. *It deceived me*. Sin puts a cheat upon the sinner, and it is a fatal cheat, v. 11. *By it*, by the commandment, *slew me*. There being in the law no such express threatening against sinful lustings, sin, that is, his own corrupt nature, took occasion from thence to promise him impunity, and to say, as the serpent to our first parents, *Ye shall not surely die*. Thus it deceived and slew him.

3. *It wrought death in me by that which is good*, v. 13. That which works concupiscence, works death, for sin bringeth forth death. Nothing so good but a corrupt and vicious nature will pervert it, and make it an occasion of sin; no flower so sweet but it will suck poison out of it. Now in this, *sin appears sin*. The worst thing that sin does, and most like itself, is the perverting of the law, and taking occasion from it to be so much the more malignant.

Thus the commandment, which was *ordained to life*, was intended as a guide in the way to comfort and happiness, proved unto *death*, through the corruption of nature, v. 10. Many a precious soul splits upon the rock of salvation. And the same word which to some is an occasion of life unto life, is to others an occasion of death unto death. The same sun that makes the garden of flowers more fragrant, makes the dunghill more noisome: the same heat that softens wax, hardens clay; and the same child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The way to prevent this mischief, is, to bow our souls to the commanding authority of the word and law of God, not striving against, but submitting to it.

14.—But I am carnal, sold under sin.
15. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16. If then I do that which

I would not, I consent unto the law, that *it* is good. 17. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. 19. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25. I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Here is a description of the conflict between grace and corruption in the heart; between the law of God and the law of sin. And it is applicable two ways:

I. To the struggles that are in a convinced soul, but yet unregenerate: in the person of whom it is supposed, by some, that Paul speaks.

II. To struggles that are in a renewed sanctified soul, but yet in a state of imperfection, as others apprehend. And a great controversy there is, of which of these we are to understand the apostle here. So far does the evil prevail here, when he speaks of one sold under sin, doing it, not performing that which is good; that it seems hard to apply it to the regenerate, who are described to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And yet so far does the good prevail in hating sin, consenting to the law, delighting in it, serving the law of God with the mind, that it is more hard to apply it to the unregenerate that are dead in trespasses and sins.

I. Applying it to the struggles that are in a convinced soul, that is yet in a state of sin, knows his Lord's will, but does it not, approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and yet lives in the constant breach of it, (*ch.* 2. 17—23.) though he has that within him, that witnesses against the sin he commits, and it is not without a great deal of reluctancy that he does commit it; the superior faculties striving against it, natural conscience warning against it before it is committed, and smiting for it afterward, yet the man continues a slave to his reigning lusts.

It is not thus with every unregenerate man, but with those only that are convinced by the law, but not changed by the gospel. The apostle had said, (*ch.* 6. 14.) *That sin shall not have dominion, because ye are not under the law, but under grace.* For the proof of which he here shews that a man under the law, and not under grace, may be, and is, under the dominion of sin; the law may discover sin, and convince of sin, but it cannot conquer and subdue sin, witness the predominancy of sin in many that are under very strong legal convictions. It discovers the defilement, but will not wash it off. It makes a man *weary and heavy laden*, (*Matt.* 11. 28.) burthens him with his sin; and yet, if rested in, it yields no help toward the shaking off of that

burthen; that is to be had only in Christ. The law may make a man cry out, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?* and yet leave him thus fettered and captivated, as being too weak to deliver him, (*ch.* 8. 3.) give him a spirit of bondage to fear, *ch.* 8. 15. Now a soul, advanced thus far by the law, is in a fair way towards a state of liberty by Christ; though many rest here, and go no further. Felix trembled, but never came to Christ. It is possible for a man to go to hell with his eyes open, (*Numb.* 24. 3, 4.) illuminated with common convictions; and to carry about with him a self-accusing conscience, even in the service of the devil; he may *consent to the law, that it is good; delight to know God's ways*, (as they, *Isa.* 58. 2.) may have that within him, that witnesses *against* sin, and *for* holiness; and yet all this overpowered by the reigning love of sin. Drunkards and unclean persons have some faint desires to leave off their sins, and yet persist in them notwithstanding, such are the impotency and insufficiency of their convictions.

Of such as these there are many that will needs have all this understood, and contend earnestly for it: though it is very hard to imagine why, if the apostle intended this, he should speak all along in his own person; and not only so, but in the present tense. Of his own state under conviction he had spoken at large, as of a thing past; (*v.* 7, &c.) *I died; the commandment I found to be unto death*; and if here he speaks of the same state as his present state, and the condition he was now in, surely he did not intend to be so understood: and therefore,

II. It seems rather to be understood of the struggles that are between grace and corruption in sanctified souls. That there are remainders of indwelling corruption, even there where there is a living principle of grace, is past dispute; that that corruption is daily breaking forth in sins of infirmity, (such as are consistent with a state of grace,) is no less certain. If we say that we have no sin, *we deceive ourselves*, 1 John 1. 8, 10. That true grace strives against these sins and corruptions, does not allow of them, hates them, mourns over them, groans under them as a burthen, is likewise certain; (*Gal.* 5. 17.) *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* These are the truths which, I think, are contained in this discourse of the apostle's. And his design is further to open the nature of sanctification, that it does not attain to a sinless perfection in this life: and therefore to quicken us to, and encourage us in, our conflicts with remaining corruptions; our case is not singular, that which we do sincerely strive against, shall not be laid to our charge; and through grace the victory is sure at last. The struggle here is like that between Jacob and Esau in the womb, between the Canaanites and the Israelites in the land, between the house of Saul and the house of David: but great is the truth and will prevail.

Understanding it thus, we may observe here,

1. What he complains of; the remainder of indwelling corruptions, which he here speaks of, to shew that the law is insufficient to justify even a regenerate man, that the best man in the world hath enough in him to condemn him, if God should deal with him according to the law; which is not the fault of the law, but of our own corrupt nature, which cannot fulfil the law. The repetition of the same things over and over again in this discourse, shews how much Paul's heart was affected with what he wrote, and how deep his sentiments were.

Observe the particulars of this complaint.

(1.) *I am carnal, sold under sin*, *v.* 14. He speaks of the Corinthians as *carnal*, 1 Cor. 3. 1. Ever, where there is spiritual life, there are remain-

ders of carnal affections, and a man may be so far *sold under sin*; he does not sell himself to work wickedness, as Ahab did, (1 Kings 21. 25.) but he was *sold* by Adam when he sinned and fell; sold, as a poor slave that does his master's will against his own will; sold under sin, because conceived in iniquity and born in sin.

(2.) *What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I*, v. 15. And to the same purport, v. 19, 21. *When I would do good, evil is present with me*. Such was the strength of corruptions, that he could not reach at that perfection in holiness which he did desire and breathe after. Thus, while he was pressing forward toward perfection, yet he acknowledges that he had not already attained, neither was already perfect, Phil. 3. 12. Fain he would be free from all sin, and perfectly do the will of God, such was his settled judgment; but his corrupt nature drew him another way; it was like a clog, that checked and kept him down when he would have soared upward; like the bias in a bowl, which, when it is thrown straight, yet draws it aside.

(3.) *In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good*, v. 18. Here he explains himself concerning the corrupt nature, which he calls *flesh*; as far as that goes, there is no good to be expected; any more than one would expect good corn growing upon a rock, or on the sand which is by the sea-side. As the new nature, as far as that goes, cannot commit sin, (1 John 3. 9.) so the *flesh*, the old nature, as far as that goes, cannot perform a good duty. How should it? For the *flesh serveth the law of sin*, (v. 25.) it is under the conduct and government of that law; and while it is so, it is not like to do any good.

The corrupt nature is elsewhere called *flesh*, (Gen. 6. 3. John 3. 6.) and though there may be good things dwelling in those that have this flesh, yet, as far as the flesh goes, there is no good, the flesh is not a subject capable of any good.

(4.) *I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind*, v. 23. The corrupt and sinful inclination is here compared to a law, because it controlled and checked him in his good motions. It is said to be seated in *his members*; because Christ having set up his throne in his heart, it was only the rebellious members of the body that were the instruments of sin. In the sensitive appetite, or we may take it more generally, for all that corrupt nature which is the seat not only of sensual but of more refined lusts. This wars against the *law of the mind*, the new nature; it draws the contrary way, drives on a contrary interest; which corrupt disposition and inclination are as great a burthen and grief to the soul, as the worst drudgery and captivity could be. *It brings me into captivity*.

To the same purport, (v. 25.) *With the flesh I serve the law of sin*; that is the corrupt nature, the unregenerate part is continually working toward sin.

(5.) His general complaint we have v. 24. *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* The thing he complains of, is, a body of death; either the body of flesh, which is a mortal dying body; (while we carry this body about with us, we shall be troubled with corruption; when we are dead, we shall be freed from sin, and not before;) or the body of sin, the old man, the corrupt nature, which tends to death, that is, to the ruin of the soul; or, comparing it to a dead body, the touch of which was by the ceremonial law defiling. If actual transgressions be *dead works*, (Heb. 9. 14.) original corruption is a *dead body*. It was as troublesome to Paul as if he had had a dead body tied to him, which he must have carried about with him. This made him cry out, *O wretched man that I am!* A man that had learned in every state to be content, yet complains thus of his corrupt nature. Had I been to have spoken of Paul, I should have said, "O

blessed man that thou art, an ambassador of Christ, a favourite of heaven, a spiritual father of thousands!" But in his own account he was a wretched man, because of the corruption of nature, because he was not so good as he fain would be; had not yet attained, neither was already perfect. Thus miserably does he complain.

Who shall deliver me? He speaks like one that was sick of it, that would give any thing to be rid of it; looks to the right hand and to the left for some friend that would part between him and his corruptions. The remainders of indwelling sin are a very grievous burthen to a gracious soul.

2. What he comforts himself with. The case was sad, but there were some allays. Three things comforted him.

(1.) That his conscience witnessed for him, that he had a good principle ruling and prevailing in him, notwithstanding. It is well when all does not go one way in the soul. The rule of this good principle which he had, was, the *law of God*; to which he here speaks of a threefold regard he had; which is certainly to be found in all that are sanctified, and no others.

[1.] *I consent unto the law that it is good*, v. 16. *συμφωνῶ*—*I give my vote* to the law; there is the approbation of the judgment. Wherever there is grace, there is not only a dread of the severity of the law, but a consent to the goodness of the law; it is good in itself, it is good for me. This is a sign that the law is written in the heart, that the soul is delivered to the mould of it. To consent to the law, is so far to approve of it as not to wish it otherwise constituted than it is. The sanctified judgment not only concurs to the equity of the law, but to the excellency of it, as convinced that a conformity to the law is the highest perfection of the human nature, and the greatest honour and happiness we are capable of.

[2.] *I delight in the law of God after the inward man*, v. 22. His conscience bore witness to a complacency in the law. He delighted not only in the promises of the word, but in the precepts and prohibitions of the word; *συνηδοναί*, it speaks a becoming *delight*. He did herein concur in affection with all the saints. All that are savingly regenerate and born again, do truly delight in the law of God; delight to know it, to do it; cheerfully submit to the authority of it, and take a complacency in that submission; never better pleased than when heart and life are in the strictest conformity to the law and will of God.

After the inward man; that is, *First*, The mind or rational faculties, in opposition to the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh. The soul is the *inward man*, and that is the seat of gracious delights, which are therefore sincere and serious, but secret; it is the renewing of the inward man, 2 Cor. 4. 16. *Secondly*, The new nature. The new man is called the *inner man*, (Eph. 3. 16.) the *hidden man of the heart*, 1 Pet. 3. 4. Paul, as far as he was sanctified, had a delight in the law of God.

[3.] *With the mind I myself serve the law of God*, v. 25. It is not enough to consent to the law, and to delight in the law, but we must serve the law; our souls must be entirely delivered up into the obedience of it. Thus it was with Paul's mind; thus it is with every sanctified renewed mind; that is the ordinary course and way; thitherward goes the bent of the soul. *I myself*—*αὐτὸς ἑγώ*, plainly intimating that he speaks in his own person, and not in the person of another.

(2.) That the fault lay in that corruption of his nature, which he did really bewail and strive against; *It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*. This he mentions twice, (v. 17, 20.) not as an excuse for the guilt of his sin, (it is enough to condemn us,

if we were under the law, that the sin which does the evil, *dwell*eth in us,) but as a salvo for his evidences, that he might not sink in despair, but take comfort from the covenant of grace, which accepts the willingness of the spirit, and has provided pardon for the weakness of the flesh.

He likewise herein enters a protestation against all that which this indwelling sin produced. Having professed his consent to the law of God, he here professes his dissent from the law of sin. "It is not I, I disown the fact, it is against my mind that it is done." As when in the senate the major part are bad, and carry every thing the wrong way, it is indeed the act of the senate, but the honest party strive against it, bewail what is done, and enter their protestation against it; so that it is no more they that do it.

*Dwell*eth in me, as the Canaanites among the Israelites, though they were put under tribute: *dwell*eth in me, and is likely to dwell there, while I live.

(3.) His great comfort lay in Jesus Christ; (v. 25.) *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* In the midst of his complaints he breaks out into praises. It is a special remedy against fears and sorrows, to be much in praise: many a poor drooping soul hath found it so. And in all our praises, this should be the burthen of the song, "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ."

Who shall deliver me? says he, (v. 24.) as one at a loss for help. At length, he finds an all-sufficient friend, even Jesus Christ. When we are under the sense of the remaining power of sin and corruption, we shall see reason to bless God, *through Christ*, (for as he is the mediator of all our prayers, so he is of all our praises,) to bless God *for Christ*; it is he that stands between us and the wrath due to us for this sin. If it were not for Christ, this iniquity that dwells in us, would certainly be our ruin. He is our advocate with the Father, and through him God pities, and spares, and pardons, and lays not our iniquities to our charge.

It is Christ that has purchased deliverance for us in due time. Through Christ death will put an end to all these complaints, and waft us to an eternity which we shall spend without sin or sigh. *Blessed be God that giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

CHAP. VIII.

The apostle, having fully explained the doctrine of justification, and pressed the necessity of sanctification, in this chapter, applies himself to the consolation of the Lord's people. Ministers are helpers of the joy of the saints. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, so runs our commission, Isa. 40. 1. It is the will of God, that his people should be a comforted people. And we have here such a draught of the gospel-charter, such a display of the unspeakable privileges of true believers, as may furnish us with an abundant matter for joy and peace in believing, that by all these immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. Many of the people of God have, accordingly, found this chapter a well-spring of comfort to their souls, living and dying; and have sucked and been satisfied from these breasts of consolation, and with joy drawn water out of these wells of salvation. There are three things in this chapter: I. The particular instances of Christians' privileges, v. 1. . 28. II. The ground thereof laid in predestination, v. 29, 30. III. The apostle's triumph herein, in the name of all the saints, v. 31. to the end.

THERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3. For what the law could not do in that it was

weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 5. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The apostle here begins with one signal privilege of true Christians, and describes the character of those to whom it belongs.

I. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* This is his triumph after that melancholy complaint and conflict in the foregoing chapter; sin remaining, disturbing, vexing, but blessed be God, not ruining. The complaint he takes to himself; but humbly transfers the comfort with himself to all true believers, who are all interested in it.

I. It is the unspeakable privilege and comfort of all these *that are in Christ Jesus*, that there is therefore now *no condemnation to them*. He does not say, "There is no accusation against them," for that there is; but the accusation is thrown out, and the indictment quashed. He does not say, "There is nothing in them that deserves condemnation," for that there is, and they see it, and own it, and mourn over it, and condemn themselves for it; but it shall not be their ruin. He does not say, "There is no cross, no affliction to them, nor no displeasure in the affliction," for that there may be; but no condemnation. They may be chastened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world. Now this arises from their being in *Christ Jesus*; by virtue of their union with him through faith, they are thus secured. They are in Christ Jesus, as in their city of refuge, and so are protected from the avenger of blood. He is their advocate, and brings them off. There is *therefore* no condemnation, because they are interested in the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to the law. In Christ, God does not only not condemn them, but is well pleased with them, Matt. 17. 5.

II. It is the undoubted character of all those who are so in Christ Jesus, as to be freed from condemnation, that *they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit*. Observe, The character is given from their *walk*, not from any one particular act, but from their course and way. And the great question is, What is the principle of the walk, the flesh or the Spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? Which of these do we mind, for which of these do we make provision, by which of these are we governed, which of these do we take part with?

This great truth thus laid down he illustrates in the following verses; and shows how we come by this great privilege, and how we may answer this character.

1. How we come by these privileges—the privilege of justification, that *there is no condemnation to us*—the privilege of sanctification, that *we walk*

after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, which is no less our privilege than it is our duty. How comes it about?

(1.) The law could not do it, *v. 3*. It could neither justify nor sanctify, neither free us from the guilt, nor from the power of sin, having not the promises either of pardon or grace. The law made nothing perfect; *It was weak*. Some attempt the law made toward these blessed ends, but alas, it was weak, it could not accomplish them: yet that weakness was not through any defect in the law, but *through the flesh*, through the corruption of human nature, by which we became incapable either of being justified or sanctified by the law. We were become unable to keep the law, and in case of failure, the law, as a covenant of works, made no provision, and so left us as it found us. Or, understand it of the ceremonial law; that was a plaster not wide enough for the wound, it could never take away sin, *Heb. 10. 4*.

(2.) The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus does it, *v. 2*. The covenant of grace made with us in Christ, is a treasury of merit and grace, and from thence we receive pardon and a new nature; *are freed from the law of sin and death*, that is, both from the guilt and power of sin; from the curse of the law, and the conduct of the flesh. We are under another covenant, another master, another husband, under the law of the Spirit, the law that gives the Spirit, spiritual life to qualify us for eternal.

The foundation of this freedom is laid in Christ's undertaking for us, of which he speaks *v. 3*. *God sending his own Son*. Observe, When the law failed, God provided another method. Christ comes to do that which the law could not do. Moses brought the children of Israel to the borders of Canaan, and then died, and left them there; but Joshua did that which Moses could not do, and put them in possession of Canaan. Thus what the law could not do, Christ did. The best exposition of this verse we have *Heb. 10. 1—10*. To make the sense of the words clear, which in our translation is a little intricate, we may read it thus, with a little transposal, *God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, that the—v. 4*. Observe,

[1.] How Christ appeared; *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. Not sinful, for he was holy, harmless, undefiled; but in the likeness of that flesh which was sinful. He took upon him that nature which was corrupt, though perfectly abstracted from the corruptions of it. His being circumcised, redeemed, baptized with John's baptism, speak the likeness of sinful flesh. The bitings of the fiery serpents were cured by a serpent of brass, which had the shape, though free from the venom, of the serpents that bit them. It was great condescension, that he who was God, should be made in the likeness of flesh; but much greater, that he who was holy, should be made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

And for sin, there the best Greek copies place the comma. God sent him, *ἐν ὁμοιωσει σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτίας*—in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin. The LXX call a sacrifice for sin no more than *ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτίας*—for sin; so Christ was a sacrifice; he was sent to be so, *Heb. 9. 26*.

[2.] What was done by this appearance of his; *sin was condemned*, that is, God did therein more than ever manifest his hatred of sin; and not only so, but for all that are Christ's both the damning and the domineering power of sin is broken and taken out of the way. He that is condemned, can neither accuse nor rule; his testimony is null, and his authority null. Thus by Christ is sin condemned; though it live and remain, its life in the saints is still but like that of a condemned malefactor. It was by the condemning of sin that death was disarmed, and

the devil, who had the power of death destroyed. The condemning of sin saved the sinner from condemnation. Christ was *made sin for us*, (*2 Cor. 5. 21.*) and, being so made, when we were condemned—sin was condemned in the flesh of Christ; condemned in the human nature: So was satisfaction made to divine justice, and way made for the salvation of the sinner.

[3.] The happy effect of this upon us; (*v. 4.*) *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*. Both in our justification and in our sanctification, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled. A righteousness of satisfaction for the breach of the law is fulfilled by the imputation of Christ's complete and perfect righteousness, which answers the utmost demands of the law as the mercy-seat was as long and as broad as the ark. A righteousness of obedience to the commands of the law is fulfilled in us, when by the Spirit the law of love is written upon the heart, and that love is the fulfilling of the law, *ch. 13. 10*. Though the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by us, yet, blessed be God, it is fulfilled in us; there is that to be found upon and in all true believers, which answers the intention of the law. *Us who walk not*. There is the description of all those that are interested in this privilege—they act from spiritual, and not from carnal, principles; as for others, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled upon them in their ruin. Now,

2. Observe how we may answer to this character, *v. 5, &c.*

(1.) By looking to our minds. How may we know whether we are after the flesh, or after the Spirit? By examining what we mind, the things of the flesh, or the things of the Spirit. Carnal pleasure, worldly profit and honour, the things of sense and time, are the things of the flesh, which unregenerate people mind. The favour of God, the welfare of the soul, the concerns of eternity, are the things of the Spirit, which they that are after the Spirit, do mind.

The man is as the mind is. The mind is the forge of thoughts. *As he thinketh in his heart, so is he*, *Prov. 23. 7*. Which way do the thoughts move with most pleasure? On what do they dwell with most satisfaction? The mind is the seat of wisdom. Which way go the projects and contrivances? whether are we more wise for the world, or for our souls! *τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονεῖν*—they savour the things of the flesh; so the word is rendered, *Matt. 16. 23*. It is a great matter what our savour is; what truths, what tidings, what comforts, we do most relish, and are most agreeable to us.

Now, to caution us against this carnal-mindedness, he shews the great misery and malignity of it, and compares it with the unspeakable excellency and comfort of spiritual-mindedness.

[1.] It is death, *v. 6*. It is spiritual death, the certain way to eternal death. It is the death of the soul; for it is its alienation from God, in union and communion with whom the life of the soul consists. A carnal soul is a dead soul; dead as a soul can die. She that *liveth in pleasure, is dead*, (*1 Tim. 5. 6.*) not only dead in law as guilty, but dead in state as carnal. Death includes all misery; carnal souls are miserable souls. But to be *spiritually minded*, *φρόνημα τὸ πνευματικόν*—a spiritual savour, the wisdom that is from above, a principle of grace, is life and peace; it is the felicity and happiness of the soul. The life of the soul consists in its union with spiritual things by the mind. A sanctified soul is a living soul; and that life is peace, it is a very comfortable life. All the paths of spiritual wisdom are paths of peace. It is life and peace in the other world, as well as in this. Spiritual-mindedness is eternal life and peace begun, and an assuring earnest of the perfection of it.

[2.] It is enmity to God, (*v. 7.*) and this is worse

than the former. The former speaks the carnal sinner a dead man, that is bad; but this speaks him a devil of a man. It is not only an enemy, but enmity itself. It is not only the alienation of the soul from God, but the opposition of the soul against God; it rebels against his authority, thwarts his design, opposes his interest, spits in his face, spurns at his bowels. Can there be a greater enmity? An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. How should this humble us for, and warn us against, carnal-mindedness! Shall we harbour and indulge that which is enmity to God our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor? To prove this, he urges, that *it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. The holiness of the law of God, and the unholiness of the carnal mind, are as irreconcilable as light to darkness. The carnal man may, by the power of divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the *carnal mind* never can; that must be broken and expelled. See how wretchedly the corrupt will of man is enslaved to sin; as far as the carnal mind prevails, there is no inclination to the law of God; therefore wherever there is a change wrought, it is by the power of God's grace, not by the freedom of man's will.

From hence he infers, (v. 8.) *They that are in the flesh cannot please God*. They that are in a carnal unregenerate state, under the reigning power of sin, cannot do the things that please God; wanting grace, the pleasing principle, and an interest in Christ, the pleasing Mediator. The very *sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination*, Prov. 15. 8. Pleasing God is our highest end, of which they that are in the flesh cannot but fall short; they cannot please him, nay they cannot but displease him.

We may know our state and character,

[2.] By inquiring whether we have the Spirit of God and Christ, or no; (v. 9.) *Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit*. This expresses states and conditions of the soul vastly different. All the saints have *flesh*, and *spirit* in them; but to be *in the flesh*, and to be *in the Spirit*, are contrary. It denotes our being overcome and subdued by one of these principles. As we say, A man is *in love*, or *in drink*, that is, overcome by them. Now the great question is, whether we are *in the flesh*, or *in the Spirit*; and how may we come to know it? Why, by inquiring whether the *Spirit of God dwell in us*. The Spirit dwelling in us, is the best evidence of our being in the Spirit, for the indwelling is mutual; (1 John 4. 16.) *Dwelleth in God, and God in him*.

The Spirit visits many that are unregenerate, with his motions, which they resist and quench; but in all that are sanctified he dwells; there he resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where he is constant and welcome, and has the dominion. Shall we put this question to our own hearts. Who dwells, who rules, who keeps house, here? Which interest has the ascendant?

To this he subjoins a general rule of trial; *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. To be Christ's, to be a christian indeed, one of his children, his servants, his friends, in union with him, is a privilege and honour which many pretend to, that have no part nor lot in the matter. None are his but those that have his Spirit; that is, [1.] That are spirited as he was spirited: are meek, and lowly, and humble, and peaceable, and patient, and charitable, as he was. We cannot tread in his steps unless we have his Spirit; the frame and disposition of our souls must be conformable to Christ's pattern. [2.] That are actuated and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, as a Sanctifier, Teacher, and Comforter. Having the *Spirit of Christ* is the same with having the *Spirit of God to dwell in us*. But those two come much to one; for all that are actuated by

the Spirit of God as their rule, are conformable to the Spirit of Christ as their pattern.

Now this description of the character of those to whom belongs this first privilege of freedom from condemnation, is to be applied to all the other privileges that follow.

10. And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. 11. But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

In these verses the apostle represents two more excellent benefits, which belong to true believers.

I. *Life*. The happiness is not barely a negative happiness, not to be condemned; but it is positive, it is an advancement to a life that will be the unspeakable happiness of the man; (v. 10, 11.) *If Christ be in you*. Observe, If the Spirit be in us, Christ is in us. He dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. 3. 17. Now we are here told what becomes of the bodies and souls of those in whom Christ is.

1. We cannot say but that the *body is dead*; it is a frail, mortal, dying body, and it will be dead shortly; it is a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. The life purchased and promised does not immortalize the body in its present state.

It is *dead*, it is appointed to die, it is under a sentence of death: as we say, One that is condemned, is a dead man. In the midst of life we are in death: be our bodies ever so strong, and healthful and handsome, they are *as good as dead*, (Heb. 11. 12.) and this *because of sin*. It is sin that kills the body. This effect the first threatening has; (Gen. 3. 19.) *Dust thou art*. Methinks, were there no other argument, love to our bodies should make us hate sin, because it is such an enemy to our bodies. The death even of the bodies of the saints is a remaining token of God's displeasure against sin.

2. But the *spirit*, the precious soul, that is *life*; it is now spiritually alive, nay it is life. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the life of the saint lies in the soul, while the life of the sinner goes no farther than the body. When the body dies, and returns to the dust, the *spirit is life*; not only living and immortal, but swallowed up of life. Death to the saints is but the freeing the heaven-born spirit from the clog and load of this body, that it may be fit to partake of eternal life. When Abraham was dead, yet God was the God of Abraham, for even then his spirit was life, Matt. 22. 31, 32. See Ps. 49. 15. And this *because of righteousness*. The righteousness of Christ imputed to them, secures the soul, the better part, from death; the righteousness of Christ inherent in them, the renewed image of God upon the soul, preserves it, and, by God's ordination, at death elevates it, and improves it, and makes it meet

to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. The eternal life of the soul consists in the vision and fruition of God, and both assimilating, for which the soul is qualified by the righteousness of sanctification. I refer to Ps. 17. 15. *I will behold thy face in righteousness.*

3. There is a life reserved too for the poor body at last; *He shall also quicken your mortal bodies*, v. 11. The Lord is for the body; and though at death it is cast aside as a despised broken vessel, a vessel in which is no pleasure, yet God will have a desire to the work of his hands, (Job 14. 15.) will remember his covenant with the dust, and will not lose a grain of it; but the body shall be re-united to the soul, and clothed with a glory agreeable to it. Vile bodies shall be new fashioned, Phil. 3. 21, 1 Cor. 15. 42.

Two great assurances of the resurrection of the body are mentioned.

(1.) The resurrection of Christ; *He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken*. Christ rose as the head and first-fruits and forerunner of all the saints, 1 Cor. 15. 20. The body of Christ lay in the grave, under the sin of all the elect imputed, and broke through it. O grave, then, where is thy victory? It is in the virtue of Christ's resurrection that we shall rise.

(2.) The indwelling of the Spirit. The same Spirit that raiseth the soul now, will raise the body shortly; by *his Spirit that dwelleth in you*. The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 3. 16.—6. 19. Now though these temples may be suffered for a while to lie in ruins, yet they shall be rebuilt again. The tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, shall be repaired, whatever great mountains may be in the way. The Spirit, breathing upon dead and dry bones, will make them live, and the saints even in their flesh shall see God.

From hence the apostle by the way infers, how much it is our duty to walk *not after the flesh*, but after the Spirit, v. 12, 13. Let not our life be after the wills and motions of the flesh.

Two motives he mentions here.

[1.] *We are not debtors to the flesh*; neither by relation, gratitude nor any other bond or obligation. We owe no suit or service to our carnal desires; we are indeed bound to clothe, and feed, and take care of, the body, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. We are not debtors to it; the flesh never did us so much kindness as to oblige us to serve it. It is implied that we are debtors to Christ and to the Spirit: there we owe our all, all we have, and all we can do, by a thousand bonds and obligations. Being delivered from so great a death by so great a ransom, we are deeply indebted to our Deliverer. See 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

[2.] Consider the consequences, what will be at the end of the way. Here are life and death, blessing and cursing, set before us.

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; die eternally. It is the pleasing, and serving, and gratifying, of the flesh, that is the ruin of souls; that is the second death. Dying indeed is the soul's dying: the death of the saints is but a sleep.

But on the other hand, *Ye shall live*, live and be happy to eternity; that is the true life; *If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body*, subdue and keep under all fleshly lusts and affections, deny yourselves in the pleasing and humouring of the body; and this *through the Spirit*; we cannot do it without the Spirit working it in us; and the Spirit will not do it without us doing our endeavour. So that in a word we are put upon this dilemma, either to displease the body, or destroy the soul.

II. The *Spirit of adoption* is another privilege belonging to those that are in Christ Jesus, v. 14—16.

All that are Christ's are taken into the relation of *children* to God, v. 14. Observe, 1. Their property; they are *led by the Spirit of God*; as a scholar in his learning is led by his tutor, as a traveller in his journey is led by his guide, as a soldier in his engagements is led by his captain; not driven as beasts, but led as rational creatures; drawn with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that they are led by the Spirit of God: having submitted themselves in believing to his conduct, they do in their obedience follow that conduct, and are sweetly led into all truth and all duty. 2. Their privilege; *They are the sons of God*; received into the number of God's children by adoption; owned and loved by him as his children.

And those that are the sons of God, have the Spirit.

(1.) To work in them the disposition of children; (v. 15.) *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear*. Understand it, [1.] Of that spirit of bondage which the Old Testament church was under, by reason of the darkness and terror of that dispensation. The veil signified bondage, 2 Cor. 3. 15. Compare v. 17. The Spirit of adoption was not then so plentifully poured out as now; for the law opened the wound, but little of the remedy. Now you are not under that dispensation, you have not received that Spirit. [2.] Of that spirit of bondage, which the saints were, many of them themselves, under at their conversion, under the convictions of sin and wrath set home by the Spirit; as they, (Acts 2. 37.) the jailer, (Acts 16. 30.) Paul, Acts 9. 6. Then the Spirit himself was to the saints a spirit of bondage; "But," says the apostle, "with you this is over." "God as a Judge," says Dr. Manton, "by the *spirit of bondage*, sends us to Christ as Mediator, and Christ as Mediator, by the *Spirit of adoption*, sends us back again to God as a Father." Though a child of God may come under fear of bondage again, and may be questioning his sonship, yet the blessed Spirit is not again a spirit of bondage, for then he would witness an untruth.

But you have received the *Spirit of adoption*. Men may give a charter of adoption; but it is God's prerogative, when he adopts, to give a Spirit of adoption; the nature of children. The Spirit of adoption works in the children of God a filial love to God as a Father, a delight in him, and a dependence upon him, as a Father. A sanctified soul bears the image of God, as the child bears the image of the father.

Whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Praying is here called *crying*; which is not only an earnest, but a natural expression of desire; children that cannot speak, vent their desires by crying. Now, the Spirit teaches us in prayer to come to God as a Father, with a holy humble confidence, emboldening the soul in that duty.

Abba, Father. *Abba* is a Syriac word signifying father, or my father; *πάτερ*, a Greek word; and why both, *Abba, Father*? Because Christ said so in prayer, (Mark 14. 36.) *Abba, Father*: and we have received the Spirit of the Son. It denotes an affectionate endearing importunity, and a believing stress laid upon the relation. Little children, begging of their parents, can say little but *Father, Father*, and that is rhetoric enough. It also denotes, that the adoption is common both to Jews and Gentiles; the Jews call him *Abba* in their language; the Greeks may call him *πάτερ* in their language; for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew.

(2.) To witness to the relation of children, v. 16. The former is the work of the Spirit as a Sanctifier, this as a Comforter.

Beareth witness with our spirit. Many a man has the witness of his own spirit to the goodness of

his state, who has not the concurring testimony of the Spirit. Many speak peace to themselves, to whom the God of heaven does not speak peace. But they that are sanctified, have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits; which is to be understood not of any immediate extraordinary revelation, but an ordinary work of the Spirit, in and by the means of comfort speaking peace to the soul. This testimony is always agreeable to the written word, and is therefore always grounded upon sanctification; for the Spirit in the heart cannot contradict the Spirit in the word. The Spirit witnesses to none the privileges of children, who have not the nature and disposition of children.

17. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

In these words, the apostle describes a fourth illustrious branch of the happiness of believers, that is, a title to the future glory. This is fitly annexed to our sonship; for as the adoption of sons entitles us to, so the disposition of sons fits and prepares us for, that glory.

If children, then heirs, v. 17. In earthly inheritances this rule does not hold, only the first-born are heirs; but the church is a church of first-born, for they are all heirs. Heaven is an inheritance that all the saints are heirs to. They do not come to it as purchasers, by any merit or procurement of their own; but as heirs, purely by the act of God; for God makes heirs. The saints are heirs, though in this world they are heirs under age; see Gal. 4. 1, 2. Their present state is a state of education and preparation for the inheritance. How comfortable should this be to all the children of God, how little soever they have in possession, that, being heirs, they have enough in reversion!

But the honour and happiness of an heir lies in the value and worth of that which he is heir to; we read of those that inherit the wind; and therefore we have here an abstract of the premises.

I. *Heirs of God.* The Lord himself is the portion of the saints' inheritance; (Ps. 16. 5.) a goodly heritage, v. 6. The saints are spiritual priests,

that have the Lord for their inheritance, Num. 18. 20. The vision of God and the fruition of God make up the inheritance the saints are heirs to. God himself will be with them, and will be their God, Rev. 21. 3.

II. *Joint-heirs with Christ.* Christ, as Mediator, is said to be the heir of all things, (Heb. 1. 2.) and true believers, by virtue of their union with him, shall inherit all things, Rev. 21. 7. They that now partake of the Spirit of Christ as his brethren, shall as his brethren partake of his glory, (John 17. 24.) shall sit down with him upon his throne, Rev. 3. 21. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him! Now, this future glory is further spoken of, as the reward of present sufferings, and as the accomplishment of present hopes.

1. As the reward of the saints' present sufferings; and it is a rich reward; *If so be that we suffer with him*, (v. 17.) or, *forasmuch as we suffer with him*. The state of the church in this world always is, but was then especially, an afflicted state; to be a christian, was certainly to be a sufferer. Now, to comfort them in reference to those sufferings, he tells them that they suffered with Christ, for his sake, for his honour, and for the testimony of a good conscience; and we shall be glorified with him. Those that suffered with David in his persecuted state, were advanced by him and with him when he came to the crown; see 2 Tim. 2. 12. See the gains of suffering for Christ; though we may be losers for him, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end. This the gospel is filled with the assurances of. Now, that suffering saints may have strong supports and consolations from their hopes of heaven, he holds the balance, (v. 18.) in a comparison between the two, which is observable.

(1.) In one scale he puts the sufferings of this present time. The sufferings of the saints are but sufferings of this present time, strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time; (2 Cor. 4. 17.) *light affliction*, and but for a moment. So that on the sufferings he writes *tekel*, weighed in the balance, and found light.

(2.) In the other scale he puts the glory; and finds that a weight, an exceeding and eternal weight; *glory that shall be revealed*. In our present state we come short, not only in the enjoyment, but in the knowledge, of that glory; (1 Cor. 2. 9. 1 John 3. 2.) it shall be revealed. It surpasses all that we have yet seen or known: present vouchsafements are sweet and precious, very precious, very sweet; but there is something to come, something behind the curtain, that will outshine all. *Shall be revealed in us*; not only revealed to us, to be seen, but revealed in us, to be enjoyed. The kingdom of God is within you, and will be so to eternity.

(3.) He determines the sufferings *not worthy to be compared with the glory*—*οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς τὴν δόξαν*. They cannot merit that glory; and if suffering for Christ will not merit, much less will doing. They should not at all deter and frighten us from the diligent and earnest pursuit of that glory. The sufferings are small and short, and concern the body only; but the glory is rich and great, and concerns the soul, and is eternal.

This he reckons. *I reckon*—*λογίζομαι*. It is not a rash and sudden determination, but the product of a very serious and deliberate consideration. He had reasoned the case within himself, weighed the arguments on both sides, and thus at last resolves the point. O how vastly different are the sentence of the word and the sentiment of the world, concerning the sufferings of this present time!

I reckon, as an arithmetician that is balancing an account; he first sums up what is disbursed for Christ in the sufferings of this present time, and finds they come to very little; he then sums up what

is secured to us by Christ in the glory that shall be revealed, and that he finds an infinite sum, transcending all conception, the disbursement abundantly made up, and the losses infinitely countervailed. And who would be afraid then to suffer for Christ, who, as he is beforehand with us in suffering, so he will not be behindhand with us in recompense?

Now Paul was as competent a judge of this point as ever any mere man was. He could reckon not by art only, but by experience; for he knew both. He knew what the sufferings of this present time were; see 2 Cor. 11. 23—28. He knew what the glory of heaven is; see 2 Cor. 12. 3, 4. And upon the view of both, he gives this judgment here. There is nothing like a believing view of the glory which shall be revealed, to support and bear up the spirit under all the sufferings of this present time. The reproach of Christ appears riches to those who have respect to the recompense of reward, Heb. 11. 26.

2. As the accomplishment of the saints' present hopes and expectations, v. 19, &c. As the saints are suffering for it, so they are waiting for it. Heaven is *therefore* sure; for God by his Spirit, would not raise and encourage those hopes only to defeat and disappoint them; he will establish that word unto his servants, on which he has caused them to hope, (Ps. 119. 49.) and heaven is *therefore* sweet; for if hope deferred makes the heart sick, surely when the desire comes it will be a tree of life, Prov. 13. 12.

Now he observes an expectation of this glory;

(1.) In the creatures, v. 19—22. That must needs be a great transcendent glory, which all the creatures are so earnestly expecting and longing for. This observation in these verses has some difficulty in it, which puzzles interpreters a little: and the more, because it is a remark not made in any other scripture, with which it might be compared.

By the *creature* here we understand, not as some do, the Gentile world, and their expectation of Christ and the gospel; which is an exposition very foreign and forced; but the whole frame of nature, especially that of this lower world; the whole creation, the compages of inanimate and sensible creatures; which, because of their harmony and mutual dependence, and because they all constitute and make up one world, are spoken of in the singular number as *the creature*. The sense of the apostle in these four verses we may take in these observations:

[1.] That there is a present *vanity*, which the creature, by reason of the sin of man, is *made subject to*, v. 20. When man sinned, the ground was cursed for man's sake, and with it all the creatures (especially of this lower world, where our acquaintance lies) became subject to that curse; became mutable and mortal. *Under the bondage of corruption*, v. 21. There is an impurity, deformity, and infirmity, which the creature has contracted by the fall of man: the creation is sullied and stained, much of the beauty of the world gone. There is an enmity of one creature to another; they are all subject to continual alteration and decay of the individuals, liable to the strokes of God's judgments upon man. When the world was drowned, and almost all the creatures in it, surely then it was subject to vanity indeed. The whole species of creatures is designed for, and is hastening to, a total dissolution by fire. And it is not the least part of their vanity and bondage, that they are used, or abused rather, by men as instruments of sin. The creatures are often abused to the dishonour of their Creator, the hurt of his children, or the service of his enemies. When the creatures are made the food and fuel of our lusts, they are subject to vanity, they are captivated by the law of sin.

And this, *not willingly*, not of their own choice; all the creatures desire their own perfection and consummation. When they are made instruments of sin, it is not willingly. Or, They are thus captivated, not for any sin of their own, which they had committed, but for man's sin; *By reason of him who hath subjected the same*. Adam did it meritoriously; the creatures being delivered to him, when he by sin delivered himself, he delivered them likewise into the bondage of corruption. God did it judicially; he passed a sentence upon the creatures for the sin of man, by which they became subject. And this yoke (poor creatures) they bear *in hope* that it will not be so always. *Ἐν ἔλπίδι, ὑποκαί, &c.*—*in hope that the creature itself*; so many Greek copies join the words. We have reason to pity the poor creatures, that for our sin are become subject to vanity.

[2.] That the creatures *groan and travail in pain* together under this *vanity and corruption*, v. 22. It is a figurative expression. Sin is a burthen to the whole creation; the sin of the Jews, in crucifying Christ, set the earth a quaking under them. The idols were *a burthen to the weary beast*, Isa. 46. 1. There is a general outcry of the whole creation against the sin of man: the stone crieth out of the wall, (Hab. 2. 11.) the land cries, Job 31. 38.

[3.] That the creature, that is now thus burthened, shall, at the time of the restitution of all things, be *delivered from this bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God*; (v. 21.) they shall no more be subject to vanity and corruption, and the other fruits of the curse; but, on the contrary, this lower world shall be renewed: when there will be new heavens, there will be a new earth; (2 Pet. 3. 13. Rev. 21. 1.) and there shall be a glory conferred upon all the creatures, which shall be (in the proportion of their natures) as suitable and as great an advancement as the glory of the children of God shall be to them. The fire at the last day shall be a refining, not a destroying, annihilating fire. What comes of the souls of brutes, that go downward, none can tell. But it should seem by the scripture there will be some kind of restoration of them. And if it be objected, What use will they be of to glorified saints? we may suppose them of as much use as they were to Adam in innocency; and if it be only to illustrate the wisdom, power, and goodness, of their Creator, that is enough. Compare with this, Ps. 96. 10—13.—98. 7—9. *Let the heavens rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh.*

[4.] That the creature doth therefore earnestly expect and wait for the *manifestation of the children of God*, v. 19. Observe, At the second coming of Christ there will be a manifestation of the children of God. Now the saints are God's hidden ones, the wheat seems lost in a heap of chaff; but then they shall be manifested. It does not yet appear what we shall be, (1 John 3. 2.) but then the glory shall be revealed. The children of God shall appear in their own colours. And this redemption of the creature is reserved till then; for as it was with man, and for man, that they fell under the curse, so with man, and for man, they shall be delivered. All the curse and filth that now adhere to the creature, shall be done away then when those that have suffered with Christ upon earth, shall reign with him upon the earth. This the whole creation looks and longs for; and it may serve as a reason why now a good man should be merciful to his beast.

(2.) In the saints, who are new creatures, v. 23—25. Observe,

[1.] The grounds of this expectation in the saints. It is our having received the *first-fruits of the Spirit*; which both quickens our desires, and encourages our hopes, and both ways raises our expectations.

The first-fruits did both sanctify and insure the lump. Grace is the first-fruits of glory, it is glory begun. We, having received such clusters in this wilderness, cannot but long for the full vintage in the heavenly Canaan. *Not only they; not only the creatures, who are not capable of such a happiness as the first-fruits of the Spirit; but even we, who have such present rich receivings, cannot but long for something more and greater.* In having the first-fruits of the Spirit, we have that which is very precious; but we have not all we would have.

We *groan within ourselves*; which denotes the strength and secrecy of these desires: not making a loud noise, as the hypocrites howling upon the bed for corn and wine, but with silent groans, which pierce heaven soonest of all. Or, *We groan among ourselves.* It is the unanimous vote, the joint desire of the whole church, all agree in this; *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* The groaning denotes a very earnest and importunate desire, the soul pained with the delay. Present receivings and comforts are consistent with a great many groans; not as the pangs of one dying, but as the throes of a woman in travail; groans that are symptoms of life, not of death.

[2.] The object of this expectation. What is it we are thus desiring and waiting for? What would we have? *The adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* Though the soul be the principal part of the man, yet the Lord has declared himself for the body also, and has provided a great deal of honour and happiness for the body. The resurrection is here called *the redemption of the body.* It shall then be rescued from the power of death and the grave, and the bondage of corruption; and though a vile body, yet it shall be refined and beautified, and made like that glorious body of Christ, Phil. 3. 21. 1 Cor. 15. 42.

This is called *the adoption.* *First,* It is the *adoption manifested* before all the world, angels and men. Now are we the sons of God, but it does not yet appear, the honour is now clouded; but then God will publicly own all his children. The deed of adoption, which is now written, signed, and sealed, will then be recognized, proclaimed, and published. As Christ was, so the saints will be, declared to be the sons of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, ch. 1. 4. It will then be put past dispute. *Secondly,* It is the *adoption perfected* and completed. The children of God have bodies as well as souls; and till those bodies are brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, the adoption is not perfect. But *then* it will be complete, when the Captain of our salvation shall bring the many sons to glory, Heb. 2. 10.

This is that which we expect, which our flesh rests in hope of, Ps. 16. 9, 10. All the days of our appointed time, we are waiting till this change comes, when he shall call, and we shall answer, and he will have a desire to the work of his hands, Job 14. 14, 15.

[3.] The agreeableness of this to our present state, v. 24, 25. Our happiness is not in present possession; *We are saved by hope.* In this, as in other things, God hath made our present state a state of trial and probation—that our reward is out of sight. Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust. It is acknowledged that one of the principal graces of a christian, is *hope*, (1 Cor. 13. 13.) which necessarily implies a good thing to come, which is the object of that hope. Faith respects the promise, hope the thing promised. Faith is the evidence, hope the expectation, of things not seen. Faith is the mother of hope.

We do with patience wait. In hoping for this glory, we have need of patience, to bear the sufferings we meet with in the way to it, and the delays of it. Our

way is rough and long; but he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; and therefore though he seem to tarry, it becomes us to wait for him.

26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to *the will of God.* 28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his purpose.*

The apostle here suggests two privileges more, which true christians are entitled to.

1. The help of the Spirit in prayer. While we are in this world, hoping and waiting for what we see not, we must be praying. Hope supposes desire, and that desire offered up to God is prayer; we groan. Now observe,

1. Our weakness in prayer; *We know not what we should pray for as we ought.* (1.) As to the matter of our requests, we know not what to ask. We are not competent judges of our own condition: *Who knows what is good for a man in this life?* Eccl.

6. 12. We are short-sighted, and very much biassed in favour of the flesh, and apt to separate the end from the way. *Ye know not what ye ask,* Matt. 20.

22. We are like foolish children, that are ready to cry for fruit before it is ripe, and fit for them; see Luke 9. 54, 55. (2.) As to the manner, we know not how to pray as we ought. It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well; seek in a due order: and here we are often at a loss; graces are weak, affections cold, thoughts wandering: and it is not always easy to *find the heart to pray*, 2 Sam. 7. 27. The apostle speaks of this in the first person; *We know not.* He puts himself among the rest. Folly, and weakness, and distraction in prayer, are that which all the saints are complaining of. If so great a saint as Paul knew not what to pray for, what little reason have we to go forth about that duty in our own strength!

2. The assistances which the Spirit gives us in that duty. *He helps our infirmities*; meant especially of our praying infirmities, which most easily beset us in that duty, against which the Spirit helps. The Spirit in the *word* helps; many rules and promises there are in the word for our help; the Spirit in the *heart* helps, dwelling in us, working in us, as a Spirit of grace and supplication; especially with respect to the infirmities we are under when we are in a suffering state, when our faith is most apt to fail; for this end the Holy Ghost was poured out. *Helpeth,* *συμπαρακαλεσθαι*—*heaves with us, over-against us,* helps as we help one that would lift up a burthen, by lifting over-against him at the other end; helps with us, with us doing our endeavour, putting forth the strength we have. We must not sit still, and expect that the Spirit should do all; when the Spirit goes before us, we must bestir ourselves. We cannot without God, and he will not without us.

What help? Why, the *Spirit itself makes intercession for us*, dictates our requests, indites our petitions, draws up our plea for us. Christ intercedes for us in heaven, the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts; so graciously has God provided for the encouragement of the praying remnant. The Spirit, as an enlightening Spirit, teaches us what to pray for; as a sanctifying Spirit, works and excites pray-

ing graces ; as a comforting Spirit, silences our fears, and helps us over all our discouragements. The Holy Spirit is the Spring of all our desires and breathings toward God. Now this intercession which the Spirit makes is,

(1.) *With groanings that cannot be uttered.* The strength and fervency of those desires which the Holy Spirit works, are hereby intimated. There may be praying in the Spirit, where there is not a word spoken ; as Moses prayed, (Exod. 14. 15.) and Hannah, 1 Sam. 1. 13.

It is not the rhetoric and eloquence, but the faith and fervency, of our prayers, that the Spirit works, as an intercessor, in us. *Cannot be uttered* ; they are so confused, the soul is in such a hurry with temptations and troubles, we know not what to say, nor how to express ourselves. Here is the Spirit interceding with groans that cannot be uttered. When we can but cry, *Abba, Father*, and refer ourselves to him with a holy humble boldness, this is the work of the Spirit.

(2.) *According to the will of God, v. 27.* The Spirit in the heart never contradicts the Spirit in the word. Those desires that are contrary to the will of God, do not come from the Spirit. The Spirit interceding in us evermore melts our wills into the will of God. *Not as I will but as thou wilt.*

3. The sure success of these intercessions ; *He that searches the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, v. 27.*

To a hypocrite, all whose religion lies in his tongue, nothing is more dreadful than that God searches the heart and sees through all his disguises. To a sincere christian, who makes heart-work of his duty, nothing is more comfortable than that God searches the heart, for then he will hear and answer those desires which we want words to express. He knows *what we have need of before we ask*, Matt. 6. 8. He knows what is the mind of his own Spirit in us. And as he always hears the Son interceding for us, so he always hears the Spirit interceding in us, because his intercession is according to the will of God.

What could have been done more for the comfort of the Lord's people, in all their addresses to God ? Christ had said, "Whatever you ask the Father according to his will, he will give it you." But how shall we learn to ask according to his will ? Why the Spirit will teach us that. Therefore it is, that the seed of Jacob never seek in vain.

II. The concurrence of all providences for the good of those that are Christ's, v. 28. It might be objected, that, notwithstanding all these privileges, we see believers compassed about with manifold afflictions ; though the Spirit makes intercession for them, yet their troubles are continued. It is very true ; but in *this* the Spirit's intercession is always effectual, that, however it goes with them, all this is working together for their good. Observe here,

1. The character of the saints, who are interested in this privilege ; they are here described by such properties as are common to all that are truly sanctified.

(1.) *They love God.* This includes all the outgoings of the soul's affections toward God as the chiefest good and highest end. It is our love to God that makes every providence sweet, and therefore profitable. Those that love God, make the best of all he does, and take all in good part.

(2.) *They are called according to his purpose ;* effectually called according to the eternal purpose. The call is effectual, not according to any merit or desert of our's, but according to God's own gracious purpose.

2. The privilege of the saints, that *all things work together for good to them*, that is, all the providences of God that concern them. All that God performs

he performs for them, Ps. 57. 2. Their sins are not of his performing, therefore not intended here, though his permitting of sin is made to work for their good, 2 Chron. 32. 31. But all the providences of God are their's ; merciful providences, afflicting providences, personal, public : they are all for good ; perhaps for temporal good, as Joseph's troubles ; however for spiritual and eternal good. That is good for them, that does their souls good. Either directly or indirectly, every providence has a tendency to the spiritual good of those that love God ; breaking them off from sin, bringing them nearer to God, weaning them from the world, fitting them for heaven.

Work together. They work, as physic works upon the body, various ways, according to the intention of the physician ; but all for the patient's good. *They work together*, as several ingredients in a medicine concur to answer the intention. God hath set the one over against the other ; (Eccl. 7. 14.) *συγγρη*, a verb singular, with a noun plural, denoting the harmony of Providence and its uniform designs, all the wheels as one wheel, Ezek. 10. 13.

He worketh all things together for good ; so some read it. It is not from any specific quality in the providences themselves, but from the power and grace of God working in, with, and by, these providences.

All this we know ; know it for a certainty, from the word of God, from our own experience, and from the experience of all the saints.

29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. 30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The apostle, having reckoned up so many ingredients of the happiness of true believers, comes here to represent the ground of them all, which he lays in predestination. These precious privileges are conveyed to us by the charter of the covenant, but they are founded in the counsel of God, which infallibly secures the event. That Jesus Christ, the purchaser, might not labour in vain, nor spend his strength and life for nought and in vain, there is a remnant given him, a seed that he shall see, so that the good pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. For the explication of which, he here sets before us the order of the causes of our salvation, a golden chain, which cannot be broken. There are four links of it.

I. *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* All that God designed for glory and happiness as the end, he decreed to grace and holiness as the way. Not, whom he did foreknow to be holy, them he predestinated to be so. The counsels and decrees of God do not truckle to the frail and fickle will of men ; no, God's foreknowledge of the saints is the same with that everlasting love wherewith he is said to have loved them, Jer. 31. 3. God's knowing his people is the same with his owning of them, Ps. 1. 6. John 10. 14. 2 Tim. 2. 19. See ch. 11. 2. Words of knowledge often in scripture denote affection : so here : *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God*, 1 Pet. 1. 2. And the same word is rendered *fore-ordained*, 1 Pet. 1. 20. *Whom he did foreknow*, that is, whom he designed for his friends and favourites. *I know thee by name*, said God to Moses, Exod. 33. 12. Now those whom God thus foreknew, he did predestinate to be conformed to Christ.

1. Holiness consists in our conformity to the image of Christ. That takes in the whole of sanctification,

of which Christ is the great pattern and samplar. To be spirited as Christ was, to walk and live as Christ did, to bear our sufferings patiently as Christ did. Christ is the express image of his Father, and the saints are conformed to the image of Christ. Thus it is by the mediation and interposal of Christ, that we have God's love restored to us, and God's likeness renewed upon us, in which two things consists the happiness of man.

2. All that God hath from eternity foreknown with favour, he hath predestinated to this conformity. It is not we that can conform ourselves to Christ; our giving of ourselves to Christ takes rise in God's giving of us to him: and in giving us to him, he predestinated us to be conformable to his image. It is a mere cavil therefore to call the doctrine of election, a licentious doctrine; and to argue, that it gives encouragement to sin, as if the end were separated from the way, and happiness from holiness. None can know their election but by their conformity to the image of Christ; for all that are chosen are chosen to sanctification; (2 Thess. 2. 13.) and surely it cannot be a temptation to any to be conformed to the world, to believe that they were predestinated to be conformed to Christ.

3. That which is herein chiefly designed, is, the honour of Jesus Christ, that he might be the *First-born among many brethren*; that Christ might have the honour of being the great pattern, as well as the great prince; and in this, as in other things, might have pre-eminence. It was in the first-born that all the children were dedicated to God under the law; the first-born was the head of the family, on whom all the rest did depend: now in the family of the saints, Christ must have the honour of being the first-born. And blessed be God that there are *many brethren*; though they seem but a few in one place, at one time, yet, when they come all together, they will be a great many.

There is therefore a certain number *predestinated*, that the end of Christ's undertaking might be infallibly secured. Had the event been left at uncertainties in the divine counsels, to depend upon the contingent turn of man's will, Christ might have been the first-born among but few or no brethren; a captain without soldiers, and a prince without subjects: to prevent which, and to secure to him *many brethren*, the decree is absolute, the thing ascertained, that he might be sure to *see his seed*; there is a remnant predestinated to be conformed to his image; which decree will certainly have its accomplishment in the holiness and happiness of that chosen race; and so, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness, Christ will be the first-born among many, very many brethren.

II. *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.* Not only with the external call, (*so many are called, that were not chosen*, Matt. 20. 16.—22. 14.) but with the internal and effectual call. The former comes to the ear only, but this to the heart. All that God did from eternity predestinate to grace and glory, he does, in the fulness of time, effectually call. The call is *then* effectual, when we come at the call; and we *then* come at the call, when the Spirit draws us, convinces the conscience of guilt and wrath, enlightens the understanding, bows the will, persuades and enables us to embrace Christ in the promises, makes us willing in the day of his power. It is an effectual call from self and earth, to God and Christ and heaven, as our end; from sin and vanity, to grace and holiness and seriousness as our way. This is the gospel call.

Them he called, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand; we are called to that to which we were chosen. So that the only way to make our election sure, is, to make sure our calling, 2 Pet. 1. 10.

III. *Whom he called, them he also justified.* All that are effectually called, are justified; absolved from guilt, and accepted as righteous through Jesus Christ. They are *recti in curia—right in court*; no sin that ever they have been guilty of, shall come against them, to condemn them. The book is crossed, the bond cancelled, the judgment vacated, the at tainder reversed; and they are no longer dealt with as criminals, but owned and loved as friends and favourites. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is thus forgiven. None are thus justified but those that are effectually called. Those that stand it out against the gospel call, abide under guilt and wrath.

IV. *Whom he justified, them he also glorified.* The power of corruption being broken in effectual calling, and the guilt of sin removed in justification, all that which hinders is taken out of the way, and nothing can come between that soul and glory. Observe, It is spoken of as a thing done, *he glorified*, because of the certainty of it; he *hath* saved us, and called us with a holy calling.

In the eternal glorification of *all* the elect, God's design of love has its full accomplishment. This was what he aimed at all along—to bring them to heaven. Nothing less than that glory would make up the fulness of his covenant-relation to them as God; and therefore, in all he does for them, and in them, he has this in his eye. Are they chosen? It is to salvation. Called? It is to his kingdom and glory. Begotten again? It is to an inheritance incorruptible. Afflicted? It is to work for them this exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Observe, The author of all these is the same. It is God himself that predestinated, calleth, justifieth, glorifieth; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him. Created wills are so very fickle, and created powers so very feeble, that if any of these did depend upon the creature, the whole would shake. But God himself hath undertaken the doing of it from first to last, that we might abide in a constant dependence upon him and subjection to him, and ascribe all the praise to him; that every crown may be cast before the throne. This is a mighty encouragement to our faith and hope; for, as for God, his way, his work, is perfect; he that hath laid the foundation, will build upon it; and the top-stone will at length be brought forth with shoutings, and it will be our eternal work to cry, Grace, grace to it.

31. What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. 34. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor

things present, nor things to come, 39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The apostle closes this excellent discourse upon the privileges of believers with a holy triumph, in the name of all the saints.

Having largely set forth the mystery of God's love to us in Christ, and the exceeding great and precious privileges we enjoy by him, he concludes like an orator; *What shall we then say to these things?* What use shall we make of all that has been said? He speaks as one amazed and swallowed up with the contemplation and admiration of it, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. The more we know of other things, the less we wonder at them; but the further we are led into an acquaintance with gospel-mysteries, the more we are affected with the admiration of them. If Paul were at a loss what to say to these things, no marvel if we be.

And what does he say; Why, if ever Paul rode in a triumphant chariot on this side heaven, here it was: with such a holy height and bravery of spirit, with such a fluency and copiousness of expression, does he here comfort himself and all the people of God, upon the consideration of these privileges.

In general, he here makes a challenge, throws down the gauntlet, as it were, dares all the enemies of the saints to do their worst: *If God be for us, who can be against us?* The ground of the challenge is God's being for us; in that he sums up all our privileges. That includes all, that *God is for us*; not only reconciled to us, and so not against us, but in covenant with us, and so engaged for us; all his attributes for us, his promises for us; all that he is, and has, and does, is for his people. He performs all things for them. He is for them, even when he seems to act against them.

And if so, *who can be against us*, so as to prevail against us, so as to hinder our happiness? Be they ever so great and strong, ever so many, ever so mighty, ever so malicious, what can they do? While God is for us, and we keep in his love, we may with a holy boldness defy all the powers of darkness. Let Satan do his worst, he is chained; let the world do its worst, it is conquered: principalities and powers are spoiled and disarmed, and triumphed over, in the cross of Christ. Who then dares fight against us, while God himself is fighting for us? And this we say to these things, this is the inference we draw from these premises. More particularly,

I. We have supplies ready in all our wants; (v. 32.) *He that spared, &c.* Who can be against us, to strip us, to deprive us of our comforts? Who can cut off our streams, while we have a fountain to go to?

1. Observe what God has done for us, on which our hopes are built; *He spared not his own Son.* When he was to undertake our salvation, the Father was willing to part with him, did not think him too precious a gift to bestow for the salvation of poor souls; now we may know that he loves us, in that he hath not withheld his Son, *his own Son*, his only Son, from us, as he said of Abraham, Gen. 22. 12. If nothing less will save man, rather than man shall perish, let him go, though it were out of his bosom. Thus did he deliver him up for us all, for all the elect, for us all; not only for our good, but in our stead, as a sacrifice of atonement to be a propitiation for sin. When he had undertaken it, he did not spare him. Though he were his own Son, yet, being made sin for us, it pleased the Lord to bruise him. *Ὁυκ ἐπέσβεσεν*—he did not abate him a farthing of that great debt, but charged it home. *Awake, O sword.*

He did not spare his own Son that served him, that he might spare us, though we have done him so much disservice.

2. What we may therefore expect he will do. He will with him freely give us all things. (1.) It is implied, that he will give us Christ, for other things are bestowed with him: not only with him given for us, but with him given to us. He that put himself to so much charge to make the purchase for us, surely will not hesitate at making the application to us. (2.) He will with him freely give us all things, all things that he sees to be needful and necessary for us; all good things, and more we would not desire, Ps. 34. 10. And Infinite Wisdom shall be the judge, whether it be good for us, and needful for us, or no. *Freely give*; freely, without reluctance; he is ready to give, meets us with his favours; and freely, without recompense, without money, and without price.

How shall he not? Can it be imagined that he should do the greater, and not do the lesser? That he should give so great a gift for us when we were enemies, and should deny us any good thing, now that through him we are friends and children? Thus may we by faith argue against our fears of want. He that hath prepared a crown and kingdom for us, will be sure to give us enough to bear our charges in the way to it. He that hath designed us for the inheritance of sons when we come to age, will not let us want necessities in the mean time.

II. We have an answer ready to all accusations, and a security against all condemnations; (v. 33, 34.) *Who shall lay any thing?* Doth the law accuse them? Do their own consciences accuse them? Is the devil, the accuser of the brethren, accusing them before our God day and night? This is enough to answer all those accusations, *It is God that justifieth.* Men may justify themselves, as the Pharisees did, and yet the accusations may be in full force against them; but if God justifies, that answers all. He is the judge, the king, the party offended, and his judgment is according to truth, and sooner or later all the world will be brought to be of his mind; so that we may challenge all our accusers to come and put in their charge. This overthrows them all; it is God, the righteous faithful God, that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? Though they cannot make good the charge, yet they will be ready to condemn; but we have a plea ready to move in arrest of judgment, a plea which cannot be overruled.

It is Christ that died, &c. It is by virtue of our interest in Christ, our relation to him, and our union with him, that we are thus secured.

1. His death; it is *Christ that died*. By the merit of his death he paid our debt; and the surety's payment is a good plea to an action of debt. It is Christ, an able all-sufficient Saviour.

2. His resurrection; *yea rather that is risen again*. This is a much greater encouragement, for it is a convincing evidence that divine justice was satisfied by the merit of his death. His resurrection was his acquittance, it was a legal discharge. Therefore the apostle mentions it with a *yea rather*. If he had died, and not risen again, we had been where we were.

3. His sitting at the right hand of God; He is *even at the right hand of God*. A further evidence, that he had done his work, and a mighty encouragement to us in reference to all accusations, that we have a friend, such a friend, in court. *At the right hand of God*; which denotes, that he is ready there, always at hand; and that he is ruling there; all power is given to him. Our friend is himself the judge.

4. The intercession which he makes there. He is there, not unconcerned about us, not forgetful of us, but *making intercession*. He is agent for us there; an advocate for us, to answer all accusations, to put

in our plea, and to prosecute it with effect, to appear for us, and to present our petitions.

And is not this abundant matter for comfort? What shall we say to these things? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? What room is left for doubting and disquietment? Why art thou cast down, O my soul?

Some understand the accusation and condemnation here spoken of, of that which the suffering saints met with from men. The primitive christians had many black crimes laid to their charge—heresy, sedition, rebellion, and what not? For these the ruling powers condemned them; “But no matter for that;” (says the apostle;) “while we stand right at God’s bar, it is of no great moment how we stand at men’s. To all the hard censures, the malicious calumnies, and the unjust and unrighteous sentences of men, we may with comfort oppose our justification before God through Christ Jesus, as that which doth abundantly countervail,” 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4.

III. We have good assurance of our preservation and continuance in this blessed state, v. 35, to the end. The fears of the saints, lest they should lose their hold of Christ, are often very discouraging and disquieting, and create them a great deal of disturbance: but here is that which may silence their fears, and still such storms, that nothing can separate them.

We have here from the apostle,

1. A daring challenge to all the enemies of the saints, to separate them, if they could, from the love of Christ. *Who shall?* None shall, v. 35—37. God having manifested his love in giving his own Son for us, and not hesitating at that, can we imagine that any thing else should divert or dissolve that love? Observe here,

(1.) The present calamities of Christ’s beloved ones, supposed; that they meet with *tribulation* on all hands, are in *distress*, know not which way to look for any succour and relief in this world, are followed with *persecution* from an angry malicious world that always hated those whom Christ loved; pinched with *famine*, and starved with *nakedness*, when stripped of all *creature-comforts*; exposed to the greatest *perils*; the *sword* of the magistrate drawn against them, ready to be sheathed in their bowels, bathed in their blood. Can a case be supposed more black and dismal? It is illustrated (v. 36,) by a passage quoted from Ps. 44. 22. *For thy sake we are killed all the day long*: which intimates, that we are not to think strange, no not concerning the fiery bloody trial. We see the Old Testament saints had the same lot; so persecuted they the prophets that were before us. *Killed all the day long*, continually exposed to, and expecting, the fatal stroke. There is still every day, and all the day long, one or other of the people of God bleeding and dying under the rage of persecuting enemies. *Accounted as sheep for the slaughter*; they make no more of killing a christian than of butchering a sheep. Sheep are killed, not because they are hurtful while they live, but because they are useful when they are dead. They kill the christians, to please themselves, to be food to their malice. *They eat up my people as they eat bread*, Ps. 14. 4.

(2.) The inability of all these things to separate us from the love of Christ. Shall they, can they, do it? No, by no means. All this will not cut the bond of love and friendship that is between Christ and true believers.

[1.] Christ doth not, will not, love us the less for all this. All these troubles are very consistent with the strong and constant love of the Lord Jesus. They are neither a *cause* nor an *evidence* of the abatement of his love. When Paul was whipped, and beaten, and imprisoned, and stoned, did Christ love him

ever the less? Were his favours intermitted? His smiles any whit suspended? His visits more shy? By no means, but the contrary. These things separate us from the love of other friends. When Paul was brought before Nero, all men forsook him, but then the Lord stood by him, 2 Tim. 4. 16, 17. Whatever persecuting enemies may rob us of, they cannot rob us of the love of Christ; they cannot intercept his love-tokens, they cannot interrupt or exclude his visits: and therefore let them do their worst, they cannot make a true believer miserable.

[2.] We do not, will not, love him the less for this; and that for this reason, because we do not think that he loves us the less. Charity thinks no evil, entertains no misgiving thoughts, makes no hard conclusions, no unkind constructions, takes all in good part, that comes from love. A true christian loves Christ never the less, though he suffer for him; thinks never the worse of Christ, though he lose all for him.

(3.) The triumph of believers in this; (v. 37.) *Now, in all these things we are more than conquerors.*

[1.] We are *conquerors*: though killed all the day long, yet conquerors. A strange way of conquering, but it was Christ’s way; thus he triumphed over principalities and powers in his cross. It is a surer and a nobler way of conquest by faith and patience, than by fire and sword. The enemies have sometimes confessed themselves baffled and overcome by the invincible courage and constancy of the martyrs, who thus overcame the most victorious princes by not loving their lives to the death, Rev. 12. 11.

[2.] We are *more than conquerors*. In our patient bearing of these trials we are not only conquerors, but *more than conquerors*, that is, triumphers. Those are more than conquerors, that conquer,

First, With little loss. Many conquests are dear bought; but what do the suffering saints lose? Why, they lose that which the gold loses in the furnace, nothing but the dross. It is no great loss to lose things which are not; a body that is of the earth, earthly.

Secondly, With great gain. The spoils are exceeding rich; glory, honour, and peace, a crown of righteousness that fades not away. In this the suffering saints have triumphed; not only have not been separated from the love of Christ, but have been taken into the most sensible endearments and embraces of it. *As afflictions abound, consolations much more abound*, 2 Cor. 1. 5. There is one more than a conqueror, when pressed above measure. He that embraced the stake, and said, “Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life;” He that dated his letter from the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison: He that said, “In these flames I feel no more pain than if I were upon a bed of down:” She who, a little before her martyrdom, being asked how she did, said, “Well and merry, and going to heaven:” Those that have gone smiling to the stake, and stood singing in the flames; these were more than conquerors.

[3.] It is only *through Christ that loved us*; the merit of his death taking the sting out of all these troubles; the Spirit of his grace strengthening us, and enabling us to bear them with holy courage and constancy, and coming in with special comforts and supports. Thus we are conquerors, not in our own strength, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We are conquerors by virtue of our interest in Christ’s victory. He hath overcome the world for us, (John 16. 33.) both the good things and the evil things of it; so that we have nothing else to do but to pursue the victory, and to divide the spoil, and so are more than conquerors.

2. A direct and positive conclusion of the whole matter; *For I am persuaded*, v. 38, 39. It denotes

a full, and strong, and affectionate persuasion, arising from the experience of the strength and sweetness of the divine love. And here he enumerates all those things which might be supposed likely to separate between Christ and believers, and concludes that it could not be done.

(1.) *Neither death nor life*; neither the terrors of death on the one hand, nor the comforts and pleasures of life on the other; neither the fear of death, nor the hope of life. Or, We shall not be separated from that love, either in death or in life.

(2.) *Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers*. Both the good angels and the bad are called *principalities and powers*: the good, Eph. 1. 21. Col. 1. 16. the bad, Eph. 6. 12. Col. 2. 15. And neither shall do it. The good angels *will not*, the bad *shall not*; and neither can. The good angels are engaged friends, the bad are restrained enemies.

(3.) *Nor things present, nor things to come*: neither the sense of troubles present, nor the fear of troubles to come. Time shall not separate us, eternity shall not. Things present separate us from things to come, and things to come separate and cut us off from things present; but neither from the love of Christ, whose favour is twisted in with both present things and things to come.

(4.) *Nor height, nor depth*: neither the height of prosperity and preferment, nor the depth of adversity and disgrace; nothing from heaven above, no storms, no tempests; nothing on earth below, no rocks, no seas, no dungeons.

(5.) *Nor any other creature*: any thing that can be named or thought of; it will not, it cannot, separate us from the *love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. It cannot cut off or impair our love to God, or God's to us; nothing does it, can do it, but sin. Observe, The love that is between God and true believers, is through Christ. He is the Mediator of our love; it is in and through him that God can love us, and that we dare love God. That is the ground of the steadfastness of the love; *therefore* God rests in his love, (Zeph. 3. 17.) because Jesus Christ, in whom he loves us, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Mr. Hugh Kennedy, an eminent christian of Avr, in Scotland, when he was dying, called for a Bible; but finding his sight gone, he said, Turn me to the eighth of the Romans, and set my finger at those words, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life, &c.* "Now," said he, "is my finger upon them?" And when they told him it was, without speaking any more, he said, "Now, God be with you, my children; I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night;" and so departed.

CHAP. IX.

The apostle, having plainly asserted, and largely proved, that justification and salvation are to be had by faith only, and not by the works of the law; by Christ, and not by Moses; comes, in this and the following chapters, to anticipate an objection which might be made against this. If this be so, then what becomes of the Jews, of them all as a complex body; especially those of them that do embrace Christ, nor believe the gospel? By this rule they must needs come short of happiness; and then, what becomes of the promise made to the fathers, which entailed salvation upon the Jews? Is not that promise nullified and made of none effect? Which is not a thing to be imagined concerning any word of God. That doctrine therefore, might they say, is not to be embraced, from which flows such a consequence as this. That the consequence of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, follows from Paul's doctrine, he grants, but endeavours to soften and mollify, v. 1. 5. But that from thence it follows, that the word of God takes no effect, he denies, (v. 6.) and proves the denial in the rest of the chapter. Which serves likewise to illustrate the great doctrine of predestination, which he had spoken of (ch. 8. 28.) as the first wheel, which in the business of salvation sets all the other wheels a-going.

I SAY the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4. Who are Israelites; to whom *pertain* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 5. Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

We have here the apostle's solemn profession of a great concern for the nation and people of the Jews: that he was heartily troubled, that so many of them were enemies to the gospel, and out of the way of salvation. For this he *had great heaviness and continual sorrow*. Such a profession as this was requisite to take off the odium, which otherwise he might have contracted by asserting and proving their rejection. It is wisdom as much as may be to mollify those truths which sound harsh, and seem unpleasant: dip the nail in oil, it will drive the better. The Jews had a particular pique at Paul above any of the apostles, as appears by the story of the Acts: and therefore were the more apt to take things amiss of him: to prevent which, he introduces his discourse with this tender and affectionate profession; that they might not think he triumphed or insulted over the rejected Jews, or was pleased with the calamities that were coming upon them. Thus Jeremiah appeals to God concerning the Jews of his day, whose ruin was hastening on; (Jer. 17. 16.) *Neither have I desired the woe of the day, thou knowest*. Nay, Paul was so far from desiring it, that he most pathetically deprecates it. And lest this should be thought only a copy of his countenance, to flatter and please them,

1. He asserts it with a solemn protestation; (v. 1.) *I say the truth in Christ*, "I speak it as a christian, one of God's people, children that will not lie: as one that knows not how to give flattering titles." Or, "I appeal to Christ, who searches the heart, concerning it." He appeals likewise to his own conscience, which was instead of a thousand witnesses. That which he was going to assert, was not only a great and weighty thing, (such solemn protestations are not to be thrown away upon trifles,) but it was likewise a secret; it was concerning a sorrow in his heart, to which none was a capable competent witness, but God and his own conscience. *That I have great heaviness*, v. 2. He does not say for what; the very mention of it was unpleasant and invidious; but it is plain that he means for the rejection of the Jews.

II. He backs it with a very serious imprecation, which he was ready to make, out of love to the Jews. *I could wish*; he does not say, *I do wish*, for it was no proper means appointed for such an end; but if it were, *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren*—a very high pang of zeal and affection for his countrymen. He would be willing to undergo the greatest misery, to do them good. Love is apt to be thus bold and venturesome, and self-denying. Because the glory of God's grace in the salvation of many, is to be preferred before the welfare and happiness of a single person, Paul, if they were put in competition, would be content to forego all his own happiness, to purchase theirs.

1. He would be content to be cut off from the land of the living, in the most shameful and ignominious

manner, as an anathema, or a devoted person. They thirsted for his blood, persecuted him as the most obnoxious person in the world, the curse and plague of his generation, 1 Cor. 4. 13. Acts 22. 22. "Now," says Paul, "I am willing to bear all this, and a great deal more, for your good. Abuse me as much as you will, count and call me at your pleasure; your unbelief and rejection create in my heart a heaviness so much greater than all these troubles can, that I could look upon them not only as tolerable, but as desirable, rather than this rejection."

2. He would be content to be excommunicated from the society of the faithful, to be separated from the church, and from the communion of saints, as a heathen man and a publican, if that would do them any good. He could wish himself no more remembered among the saints, his name blotted out of the church-records; though he had been so great a planter of churches, and the spiritual father of so many thousands, yet he would be content to be disowned by the church, cut off from all communion with it, and have his name buried in oblivion or reproach, for the good of the Jews. It may be, some of the Jews had a prejudice against christianity for Paul's sake; such a spleen they had at him, that they hated the religion that he was of; "If that stumble you," says Paul, "I could wish I might be cast out, not embraced as a christian, so you might but be taken in." Thus Moses, (Exod. 32. 32.) in a like holy passion of concern, *Blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written.*

3. Nay, some think that the expression goes further, and that he could be content to be cut off from all his share of happiness in Christ, if that might be a means of their salvation. It is a common charity, that begins at home; this is something higher, and more noble and generous.

III. He gives us the reason of this affection and concern.

1. Because of their relation to him; *My brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.* Though they were very bitter against him upon all occasions, and gave him the most unnatural and barbarous usage, yet thus respectfully does he speak of them. It shews him to be a man of a forgiving spirit; *not that I had ought to accuse my nation of,* Acts 28. 19. *My kinsmen.* Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. We ought to be in a special manner concerned for the spiritual good of our relations, our *brethren and kinsmen.* To them we lie under special engagements; and we have more opportunity of doing good to them; and concerning them, and our usefulness to them, we must in a special manner give account.

2. Especially because of their relation to God; (7. 4, 5.) *Who are Israelites,* the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen; taken into the covenant of peculiarity, dignified and distinguished by visible church-privileges; many of which are here mentioned; *The adoption:* not that which is saving, and which entitles to eternal happiness, but that which was external and typical, and entitled them to the land of Canaan. *Israel is my son,* Exod. 4. 22.

And *the glory;* the ark and the mercy-seat, over which God dwelt between the cherubims; that was the glory of Israel, 1 Sam. 4. 21. The many symbols and tokens of the divine presence and guidance, the cloud, the Shechinah, the distinguishing favours conferred upon them, these were *the glory.*

And *the covenant;* the covenant made with Abraham, and often renewed with his seed upon divers occasions. There was a covenant at Sinai, (Exod. 24.) in the plains of Moab, (Deut. 29.) at Shechem, (Josh. 24.) and often afterward; and still these pertained to Israel. Or, the covenant of peculiarity, and in that, as in the type, the covenant of grace.

And *the giving of the law.* It was to them that

the ceremonial and judicial law were given, and the moral law in writing pertained to them. It is a great privilege to have the law of God among us, and it is to be accounted so, Ps. 147. 19, 20. This was the grandeur of Israel, Deut. 4. 7, 8.

And *the service of God.* They had the ordinances of God's worship among them; the temple, the altars, the priests, the sacrifices, the feasts, and the institutions relating to them. They were in this respect greatly honoured, that, while other nations were worshipping and serving stocks, and stones, and devils, and they knew not what other idols of their own invention, the Israelites were serving the true God in the way of his own appointment.

And *the promises;* particular promises added to the general covenant; promises relating to the Messiah and the gospel-state. Observe, *The promises accompany the giving of the law, and the service of God;* for the comfort of the promises is to be had in obedience to that law, and attendance upon that service.

V. 5. *Whose are the fathers;* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those men of renown, that stood so high in the favour of God. The Jews stand in relation to them, are their children, and proud enough they were of it; *We have Abraham to our father.* It was for the fathers' sake, that they were taken into covenant, ch. 11. 28. But the greatest honour of all, was, that *of them as concerning the flesh,* that is, as to his human nature, *Christ came;* for he took on him the seed of Abraham, Heb. 2. 16. As to his divine nature, he is the Lord from heaven; but as to his human nature, he is of the seed of Abraham. This was the great privilege of the Jews, that Christ was of kin to them.

Mentioning Christ, he interposes a very great word concerning him, that he is *over all, God blessed for ever.* Lest the Jews should think meanly of him, because he was of their alliance, he here speaks thus honourably concerning him: and it is a very full proof of the Godhead of Christ; he is not only *over all*, as Mediator, but he is *God blessed for ever.* Therefore, how much sorer punishment were they worthy of, that rejected him? It was likewise the honour of the Jews, and one reason why Paul had a kindness for them, that, seeing God blessed for ever would be a man, he would be a Jew; and considering the posture and character of that people, at that time, it may well be looked upon as a part of his humiliation.

6. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7. Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11. (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth :) 12. It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

The apostle, having made his way to that which he had to say, concerning the rejection of the body of his countrymen, with a protestation of his own affection for them, and a concession of their undoubted privileges, comes in these verses, and the following part of the chapter, to prove, that the rejection of the Jews, by the establishment of the gospel-dispensation, did not at all invalidate the word of God's promise to the patriarchs; *Not as though the word of God hath taken no effect*, v. 6. Which, considering that present state of the Jews, which created to Paul so much *heaviness and continual sorrow*, (v. 2.) might be suspected. We are not to ascribe inefficacy to any word of God: nothing that he has spoken, does or can fall to the ground; see Isa. 55. 10, 11. The promises and threatenings shall have their accomplishment; and one way or other he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. This is to be understood, especially of the promise of God, which by subsequent providences may be to a wavering faith very doubtful; but it is not, it cannot be, made of no effect; at the end it will speak, and not lie.

Now the difficulty is to reconcile the rejection of the unbelieving Jews with the word of God's promise, and the external tokens of the divine favour, which had been conferred upon them.

This he does four ways.

1. By explaining the true meaning and intention of the promise, v. 6—13.

2. By asserting and proving the absolute sovereignty of God, in disposing of the children of men, v. 14—24.

3. By shewing how this rejection of the Jews, and the taking in of the Gentiles, were foretold in the Old Testament, v. 25—29.

4. By fixing the true reason of the Jews' rejection, v. 30, to the end.

In this paragraph the apostle explains the true meaning and intention of the promise. When we mistake the word, and misunderstand the promise, no marvel, if we are ready to quarrel with God about the accomplishment; and therefore the sense of that must first be duly stated. Now he here makes it out, that, when God said, he would be a *God to Abraham, and to his seed*, (which was the famous promise made unto the fathers,) he did not mean it of all his seed according to the flesh, as if it were a necessary concomitant of the blood of Abraham; but that he intended it with a limitation only to such and such. And as from the beginning it was appropriated to Isaac, and not to Ishmael; to Jacob, and not to Esau; and yet for all that, the word of God was not made of no effect; so now the same promise is appropriated to believing Jews that embrace Christ and christianity, and, though it throw off multitudes that refuse Christ, yet the promise is not therefore defeated and invalidated, any more than it was by the typical rejection of Ishmael and Esau.

1. He lays down this proposition—that *they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*, (v. 6.) *neither because they are*, &c. v. 7. Many that descended from the loins of Abraham and Jacob, and were of that people which were surnamed by the name of Israel, yet were very far from being Israelites indeed, interested in the saving benefits of the new covenant. They are not all really Israel, that are so in name and profession. It does not follow, that, because they are the seed of Abraham, therefore they must needs be the children of God; though they themselves fancied so, boasted much of, and built much upon, their relation to Abraham, Matt. 3. 9. John 8. 38—39. But it does not follow. Grace does not run in a blood; nor are saving benefits inseparably annexed to external church privileges: though it is common for people thus to stretch the meaning of God's promise, to bolster themselves up in a vain hope.

II. He proves this by instances; and there shews, not only that some of Abraham's seed were chosen, and others not, but that God therein wrought according to the counsel of his own will; and not with regard to that law of commandments, which the present unbelieving Jews were so strangely wedded to.

1. He specifies the case of Isaac and Ishmael, both of them the seed of Abraham; and yet Isaac only taken into covenant with God, and Ishmael rejected and cast out. For this he quotes Gen. 21. 12. *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*: which comes in there as a reason why Abraham must be willing to cast out the bond-woman and her son, because the covenant was to be established with Isaac, ch. 17. 19. And yet the word which God had spoken, that he would be a God to Abraham and to his seed, did not *therefore* fall to the ground; for the blessings wrapt up in that great word, being communicated by God as a benefactor, he was free to determine on what head they should rest, and accordingly entailed them upon Isaac, and rejected Ishmael.

This he explains further, (v. 8, 9.) and shews what God intended to teach us by this dispensation.

(1.) That the children of the flesh, as such, by virtue of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, are not *therefore* the children of God, for then Ishmael had put in a good claim. This remark comes home to the unbelieving Jews, who boasted of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, and looked for justification in a fleshly way, by those carnal ordinances which Christ had abolished. They had confidence in the flesh, Phil. 3. 3.

Ishmael was a *child of the flesh*, conceived by Hagar, that was young, and fresh, and likely enough to have children; there was nothing extraordinary or supernatural in his conception, as there was in Isaac's; he was *born after the flesh*, (Gal. 4. 29.) representing those that expect justification and salvation by their own strength and righteousness.

(2.) That the *children of the promise are counted for the seed*. Those that have the honour and happiness of being counted for the seed, have it not for the sake of any merit or desert of their own, but purely by virtue of the *promise*, in which God hath obliged himself of his own good pleasure to grant the promised favour. Isaac was a child of promise; that he proves, v. 9. quoted from Gen. 18. 10. He was a child promised; (so were many others;) but he was conceived and born by *force and virtue* of the promise, and so a proper type and figure of those who are now counted for the seed, even true believers, who are born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; of the incorruptible seed, even the word of promise; by virtue of the special promise of a *new heart*: see Gal. 4. 20. It was *through faith* that Isaac was conceived, Heb. 11. 11. Thus were the great mysteries of salvation taught under the Old Testament, not in express words, but by significant types and dispensations of providence, which to them then were not so clear as they are to us now, when the veil is taken away, and the types are expounded by the antitypes.

2. In the case of Jacob and Esau, (v. 10—13.) which is much stronger, to shew that the carnal seed of Abraham were not, as such, interested in the promise, but only such of them as God in sovereignty had appointed. There was a previous difference between Ishmael and Isaac, before Ishmael was cast out: Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, born long before Isaac, was of a fierce and rugged disposition, and had mocked, or persecuted Isaac; to all which it might be supposed God had regard, when he appointed Abraham to cast him out. But in the case of Jacob and Esau, it was neither so nor so, they were both the sons of Isaac by

one mother: they were conceived, *ἐξ ἑνὸς*—by one conception; *ἐξ ἑνὸς κοίτης*, so some copies read it. The difference was made between them by the divine counsel, before they were born, or had done any good or evil. Both lay struggling alike in their mother's womb, when it was said, *The elder shall serve the younger*; without respect to good or bad works done or foreseen; that the purpose of God according to election might stand; that this great truth may be established, that God chooses some and refuses others, as a free agent; by his own absolute and sovereign will, dispensing his favours, or withholding them as he pleases.

This difference, that was put between Jacob and Esau, he further illustrates by a quotation from Mal. 1. 2, 3. where it is said, not of Jacob and Esau the persons, but the Edomites and Israelites their posterity; *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*. The people of Israel were taken into the covenant of peculiarity, had the land of Canaan given them, were blessed with the more signal appearances of God for them in special protections, supplies, and deliverances, while the Edomites were rejected, had no temple, altar, priests, or prophets; no such particular care taken of them, or kindness shewed to them. Such a difference did God put between those two nations, that both descended from the loins of Abraham and Isaac; as at first there was a difference put between Jacob and Esau, the distinguishing heads of those two nations.

So that all this choosing and refusing was typical, and intended to shadow forth some other election and rejection.

(1.) Some understand it of the election and rejection of conditions or qualifications. As God chose Isaac and Jacob, and rejected Ishmael and Esau, so he might and did choose faith to be the condition of salvation, and reject the works of the law. Thus Arminius understands it, *De rejectis et assumptis talibus, certa qualitate notatis*—Concerning such as are rejected and such as are chosen, being distinguished by appropriate qualities; so John Goodwin. But this very much strains the scripture; for the apostle speaks all along of persons, he has mercy on whom, he does not say on what kind of people, he will have mercy. Beside that against this sense, those two objections, (v. 14, 19.) do not at all arise; and his answer to them concerning God's absolute sovereignty over the children of men, is not at all pertinent, if no more he meant than his appointing the conditions of salvation.

(2.) Others understand it of the election and rejection of particular persons; some loved, and others hated, from eternity. But the apostle speaks of Jacob and Esau, not in their own persons, but as ancestors; Jacob the people, and Esau the people; nor does God condemn any, or decree so to do, merely because he will do it, without any reason taken from their own deserts.

(3.) Others therefore understand it of the election and rejection of people considered complexly. His design is to justify God, and his mercy and truth, in calling the Gentiles, and taking them into the church, and into covenant with himself, while he suffered the obstinate part of the Jews to persist in unbelief, and so to unchurch themselves: thus hiding from their eyes the things that belonged to their peace.

The apostle's reasoning for the explication and proof of this, is, however, very applicable to, and, no doubt, (as is usual, in scripture,) was intended for, the clearing, of the methods of God's grace toward particular persons; for the communication of saving benefits bears some analogy to the communication of church-privileges.

The choosing of Jacob the younger, and preferring him before Esau the elder, (so crossing hands,) were to intimate, that the Jews, though the natural seed

of Abraham, and the first-born of the church, should be laid aside; and the Gentiles, who were as the younger brother, should be taken in in their stead, and have the birthright and blessing.

The Jews, considered as a body politic, a nation and people knit together by the bond and cement of the ceremonial law, the temple and priesthood, the centre of their unity, had for many ages been the darlings and favourites of heaven, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, dignified and distinguished by God's miraculous appearances among them and for them. Now that the gospel was preached, and christian churches planted, this national body was thereby abandoned, their church-polity dissolved, and christian churches (and in process of time, christian nations) embodied in like manner, become their successors in the divine favour, and those special privileges and protections which were the products of that favour. To clear up the justice of God in this great dispensation, is the scope of the apostle here.

14. What shah we say then? *Is there unrighteousness with God?* God forbid.

15. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 17. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. 19. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20. Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22. What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

The apostle, having asserted the true meaning of the promise, comes here to maintain and prove the absolute sovereignty of God, in disposing of the children of men, with reference to their eternal state. And herein God is to be considered, not as rector and governor, distributing rewards and punishments according to his revealed laws and covenants, but as an owner and benefactor, giving to the children of men such grace and favour as he has determined in and by his secret and eternal will and counsel: both the favour of visible church-membership and privileges, which is given to some people and denied to others, and the favour of effectual grace, which

is given to some particular persons and denied to others.

Now this part of his discourse is in answer to two objections.

I. It might be objected, *Is there unrighteousness with God?* If God, in dealing with the children of men, do thus, in an arbitrary manner, choose some and refuse others, may it not be suspected, that there is unrighteousness with him? This the apostle startles at the thought of; *God forbid!* Far be it from us to think such a thing; shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Gen. 18. 25. *ch.* 3. 5, 6.

He denies the consequences, and proves the denial.

1. In respect of those to whom he shews mercy, *v.* 15, 16. He quotes that scripture, to shew God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours, (Exod. 33. 19.) *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.* All God's reasons of mercy are taken from within himself. All the children of men being plunged alike into a state of sin and misery, equally under guilt and wrath, God, in a way of sovereignty, picks out some from this fallen apostatized race, to be vessels of grace and glory. He dispenses his gifts to whom he will, without giving us any reason: according to his own good pleasure he pitches upon some to be monuments of mercy and grace, preventing grace, effectual grace, while he passes by others. The expression is very emphatical, and the repetition makes it more so; *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.* It imports a perfect absoluteness in God's will; he will do what he will, and giveth not account of any of his matters, nor is it fit he should. As these great words, *I am that I am*, (Exod. 3. 14.) do abundantly express the absolute independency of his being; so these words, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*, do as fully express the absolute prerogative and sovereignty of his will.

To vindicate the righteousness of God, in shewing mercy to whom he will, the apostle appeals to that which God himself had spoken, wherein he claims this sovereign power and liberty. God is a competent judge, even in his own case. Whatsoever God does, or is resolved to do, is both by the one and the other proved to be just.

ΕΛΕΟΣ ΟΥ ΑΙΣΙΟΝ—*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.* When I begin, I will make an end. Therefore God's mercy endures for ever, because the reason of it is fetched from within himself; therefore his gifts and callings are without repentance.

Hence he infers, (*v.* 16.) *It is not of him that willeth.* Whatever good comes from God to man, the glory of it is not to be ascribed to the most generous desire, or to the most industrious endeavour, of man, but only and purely to the free grace and mercy of God. In Jacob's case, it was *not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth*; it was not the earnest will and desire of Rebecca, that Jacob might have the blessing; it was not Jacob's haste to get it, (for he was fain to run for it,) that procured him the blessing, but only the mercy and grace of God. Wherein the holy happy people of God differ from other people, it is God and his grace that makes them differ.

Applying this general rule to the particular case that Paul has before him; the reason why the unworthy, undeserving, ill-deserving Gentiles are called, and grafted into the church, while the greatest part of the Jews are left to perish in unbelief, is not because those Gentiles were better deserving, or better disposed for such a favour, but because of God's free grace that made that difference. The Gentiles did neither *will* it, nor *run* for it, for they *sat in darkness*, Matt. 4. 16. In darkness, they were not willing what they knew not; *sitting in darkness*,

a contented posture, therefore not running to meet it, but *prevented* with these invaluable blessings of goodness. Such is the method of God's grace towards all that partake of it, for he is found of them that sought him not; (Isa. 65. 1.) in this preventing, effectual, distinguishing grace, he acts as a benefactor, whose grace is his own. Our eye therefore must not be evil, because his is good; but of all the grace that we or others have, he must have the glory: *Not unto us*, Ps. 115. 1.

2. In respect of those who perish, *v.* 17. God's sovereignty, manifested in the ruin of sinners, is here discovered in the instance of Pharaoh; it is quoted from Exod. 9. 16. Observe,

(1.) What God did with Pharaoh; he *raised him up*, brought him into the world, made him famous, gave him the kingdom and power; set him up as a beacon upon a hill, as the mark of all his plagues; (compare Exod. 9. 14.) hardened his heart, as he had said he would; (Exod. 4. 21.) *I will harden his heart*, that is, with raw softening grace, leave him to himself, let Satan loose against him, and lay hardening providences before him. Or, by raising him up, may be meant the intermission of the plagues which gave Pharaoh respite, and the reprieve of Pharaoh in those plagues. In the Hebrew, *I have made thee stand*, continued thee yet in the land of the living.

Thus doth God *raise up* sinners, make them for himself, even for the day of evil, (Prov. 16. 4.) raise them up in outward prosperity, external privileges, (Matt. 11. 23.) sparing mercies.

(2.) What he designed in it; *That I might shew my power in thee.* God would, by all this, serve the honour of his name, and manifest his power in baffling the pride and insolence of that great and daring tyrant, who bid defiance to heaven itself, and trampled upon all that was just and sacred. If Pharaoh had not been so high and mighty, so bold and hardy, the power of God had not been so illustrious in the ruining of him; but the taking off of the spirit of such a prince, who hectorated at that rate, did indeed proclaim God glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, Exod. 15. 11. This is Pharaoh, and all his multitude.

(3.) His conclusion concerning both these we have, *v.* 18. *He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* The various dealings of God, by which he makes some to differ from others, must be resolved into his absolute sovereignty. He is debtor to no man, his grace is his own, and he may give it or withhold it as it pleaseth him; we have none of us deserved it, nay, we have all justly forfeited it a thousand times; so that *herein* the work of our salvation is admirably well ordered, that those who are saved, must thank God only, and those who perish must thank themselves only, Hos. 13. 9.

We are bound, as God hath bound us, to do our utmost for the salvation of all we have to do with; but God is bound no further than he has been pleased to bind himself by his own covenant and promise, which is his revealed will; and that is, that he will receive, and not cast out, those that came to Christ; but the drawing of souls in order to that coming, is a preventing, distinguishing favour to whom he will. Had he mercy on the Gentiles? It was because he would have mercy on them. Were the Jews hardened? It was because it was his own pleasure to deny them softening grace, and to give them up to their chosen, affected unbelief. *Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.* That scripture excellently explains this, Luke 10. 21. and, as this, shews the sovereign will of God, in giving or withholding both the means of grace, and the effectual blessing upon those means.

II. It might be objected, *Why doth he yet find*

fault? For who hath resisted his will? v. 19. Had the apostle been arguing only for God's sovereignty, in appointing and ordering the terms and conditions of acceptance and salvation, there had not been the least colour for this objection; for he might well find fault, if people refuse to come up to the terms on which such a salvation is offered; the salvation being so great, the terms could not be hard. But there might be colour for the objection, against his arguing for the sovereignty of God in giving and withholding differencing and preventing grace: and the objection is commonly and readily advanced against the doctrine of distinguishing grace. If God, while he gives effectual grace to some, denies it to others, why doth he find fault with those to whom he denies it? If he hath rejected the Jews, and hid from their eyes the things that belong to their peace, why doth he find fault with them for their blindness? If it be his pleasure to discard them as not a people, and not obtaining mercy, their knocking off themselves was no resistance of his will.

This objection he answers at large,

1. By reproving the objector; (v. 20.) *Nay but, O man.* This is not an objection fit to be made by the creature against his Creator, by man against God. The truth, as it is in Jesus, is that which abases man as nothing, less than nothing, and advances God as sovereign Lord of all. Observe how contemptibly he speaks of man, when he comes to argue with God his Maker; "*Who art thou, thou that art so foolish, so feeble, so short-sighted, so incompetent a judge of the divine counsels; art thou able to fathom such a depth, dispute such a case, to trace that way of God which is in the sea, his path in the great waters?*"

That replest against God? It becomes us to submit to him, not to reply against him; to lie down under his hand, not to fly in his face, or to charge him with folly.

Ο ἀνταρξενίῳ—*That answerest again.* God is our master, and we are his servants; and it does not become servants to *answer again*, Tit. 2. 9.

2. By resolving all into the divine sovereignty. We are the thing formed, and he is the former; and it does not become us to challenge or arraign his wisdom in ordering and disposing of us into this or that shape or figure. The rude and unformed mass of matter hath no right to this or that form, but is shaped at the pleasure of him that formeth it.

God's sovereignty over us is fitly illustrated by the power that the potter hath over the clay; compare Jer. 18. 6. where, by a like comparison, God asserts his dominion over the nation of the Jews, when he was about to magnify his justice in their destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

(1.) He gives us the comparison, v. 21. The potter, out of the same lump, may make either a fashionable vessel, and a vessel fit for creditable and honourable uses, or a contemptible vessel, and a vessel in which is no pleasure; and herein he acts arbitrarily, as he might have chosen whether he would have made any vessel of it at all, but have left it in the hole of the pit, out of which it was digged.

(2.) The application of the comparison, v. 22—24. Two sorts of vessels God forms out of the great lump of fallen mankind.

[1.] *Vessels of wrath*; vessels filled with wrath, as a vessel of wine is a vessel filled with wine; *full of the fury of the Lord*, Isa. 51. 20. In these God is willing to shew his wrath, that is, his punishing justice, and his enmity to sin. This must be shewed to all the world, God will make it appear that he hates sin. He will likewise make his power known, τὸ δύνασθαι αὐτοῦ. It is a power of strength and energy, an inflicting power, which works and effects the destruction of those that perish; it is a destruc-

tion that proceeds from the *glory of his power*, 2 Thess. 1. 9. The eternal damnation of sinners will be an abundant demonstration of the power of God; for he will act in it himself immediately, his wrath preying as it were upon guilty consciences, and his arm stretched out totally to destroy their well-being, and yet at the same instant wonderfully to preserve the being of the creature.

In order to this, God *endured them with much long-suffering*; exercised a great deal of patience toward them, let them alone, to fill up the measure of sin, to grow till they were ripe for ruin, and so they became *fitted for destruction*, fitted by their own sin, and self-hardening. The reigning corruptions and wickedness of the soul are its preparedness and disposedness for hell: a soul is hereby made combustible matter, fit for the flames of hell.

When Christ said to the Jews, (Matt. 23. 32.) *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers*, that upon you may come all the righteous blood, (v. 35.) he did, as it were, endure them with much long-suffering, that they might, by their own obstinacy and wilfulness in sin, fit themselves for destruction.

[2.] *Vessels of mercy*; filled with mercy. The happiness bestowed upon the saved remnant, is the fruit, not of their merit, but of God's mercy. The spring of all their joy and glory of heaven, is, that mercy of God which endures for ever. *Vessels of honour* must to eternity own themselves *vessels of mercy*. Observe,

First, What he designs in them; *to make known the riches of his glory*, that is, of his goodness; for God's goodness is his greatest glory, especially when it is communicated with the greatest sovereignty. *I beseech thee shew me thy glory*, said Moses, Exod. 33. 18. *I will make all my goodness to pass before thee*, said God, (v. 19.) and that given out freely; *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious*.

God makes known his glory, this goodness of his, in the preservation and supply of all the creatures; the earth is full of his goodness, and the year crowned with it; but when he would demonstrate the *riches of his goodness*, unsearchable riches, he does it in the salvation of the saints, that will be to eternity glorious monuments of divine grace.

Secondly, What he does for them; he does *before prepare them to glory*. Sanctification is the preparation of the soul for glory, making it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. This is God's work; we can destroy ourselves fast enough, but we cannot save ourselves; sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God that prepares saints for heaven: and all these that God designs for heaven hereafter, he prepares and fits for heaven now: He works them to the self-same thing, 2 Cor. 5. 5.

And would you know who these *vessels of mercy* are? Those whom *he hath called*; (v. 24.) for whom he did predestinate, them he also called with an effectual call: and these not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles; for the partition-wall being taken down, the world was laid in common; and not, as it had been, God's favour appropriated to the Jews, and they put a degree nearer his acceptance than the rest of the world; they now stood upon the same level with the Gentiles; and the question is not now, whether of the seed of Abraham or no, that is neither here nor there, but whether or no called according to his purpose.

25. As he saith also in Ossee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, who was not beloved. 26. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my people*; there shall they be called

the children of the living God. 27. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 28. For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 29. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah.

Having explained the promise, and proved the divine sovereignty, the apostle here shews how the rejection of the Jews, and the taking in of the Gentiles, were foretold in the Old Testament, and therefore must needs be very well consistent with the promise made to the fathers under the Old Testament. It tends very much to the clearing of a truth, to observe how the scripture is fulfilled in it. The Jews would, no doubt, willingly refer it to the Old Testament, the scriptures of which were committed to them: now he shews how this, which was so uneasy to them, was there spoken of.

I. By the prophet Hosea, who speaks of the taking in of a great many of the Gentiles, Hos. 2. 23. and Hos. 1. 10. The Gentiles had not been the people of God; not owning him, or owned by him in that relation: "But," says he, "*I will call them my people*, make them such, and own them as such, notwithstanding all their unworthiness." A blessed change! Former badness is no bar to God's present grace and mercy. *And her beloved, which was not beloved.* Those that God calls *his people*, he calls *beloved*: he loves those that are his own.

And lest it might be supposed that they should become God's people only by being proselyted to the Jewish religion, and made members of that nation, he adds, from Hos. 1. 10. *In the place where it was said, &c. there shall they be called.* They need not be embodied with the Jews, nor go up to Jerusalem to worship; but wherever they are scattered over the face of the earth, there will God own them.

Observe the great dignity and honour of the saints, that they are called the *children of the living God*; and his calling them so makes them so. Behold, what manner of love! This honour have all his saints.

II. By the prophet Isaiah, who speaks of the casting off of many of the Jews, in two places.

1. One is Isa. 10. 22, 23. which speaks of the saving of a remnant, that is, but a remnant; which, though in the prophecy it seems to refer to the preservation of a remnant from the destruction and desolation that were coming upon them by Sennacherib and his army, yet is to be understood as looking further; and sufficiently proves that it is no strange thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham, and yet maintain his word of promise to Abraham in full force and virtue. This is intimated in the supposition, that the number of the *children of Israel was as the sand of the sea*, which was part of the promise made to Abraham, Gen. 22. 17. And yet only a remnant shall be saved: for many are called, but few are chosen.

In this salvation of the remnant we are told, (v. 28.) from the prophet, (1.) That he will complete the work; *He will finish the work.* When God begins, he will make an end, whether in ways of judgment or of mercy. The rejection of the unbelieving Jews, God would finish in their utter ruin by the Romans, who soon after this quite took away their place and nation. The assuming of christian churches into the divine favour, and the spreading of

the gospel in other nations, was a work which God would likewise finish, and be known by his name *JEHOVAH*. As for God, his work is perfect. Margin, *He will finish the account.* God, in his eternal counsels, has taken an account of the children of men, allotted them to such or such a condition, to such a share of privileges; and as they come into being, his dealings with them are pursuant to these counsels: and he will finish the account, complete the mystical body, call in as many as belong to the election of grace; and then the account will be finished. (2.) That he will *contract* it; not only finish it, but finish it quickly. Under the Old Testament he seemed to tarry, and to make a longer and more tedious work of it; the wheels moved but slowly toward the extent of the church; but now he will *cut it short*, and make a *short work upon the earth*. Gentile converts were now flying as a cloud. But he will cut it short in *righteousness*, both in wisdom and in justice. Men, when they cut short, do amiss; they do indeed dispatch causes; but when God cuts short, it is always in righteousness. So the fathers generally apply it. Some understand it of the evangelical law and covenant, which Christ has introduced and established in the world: he has in that *finished* the work, put an end to the types and ceremonies of the Old Testament. Christ said, *It is finished*, and then the veil was rent, echoing as it were to the word that Christ said upon the cross. And he will *cut it short*. *The work* (it is *ἔργον*—the word, the law) was under the Old Testament very long; a long train of institutions, ceremonies, conditions: but now it is cut short; our duty is now, under the gospel, summed up in much less room than it was under the law; the covenant was abridged and contracted; religion is brought into a less compass. And it is in *righteousness*, in favour to us, in justice to his own design and counsel. With us contractions darken things;

—————Brevis esse laboro,

Obscurus fio—————

I strive to be concise, but prove obscure—

but it is not so in this case. Though it be cut short, it is clear and plain; and because short, the more easy.

2. Another is quoted from Isa. 1. 9. where the prophet is shewing how in a time of general calamity and destruction God would preserve a seed. This is to the same purport with the former: and the scope of it is to shew that it was no strange thing for God to leave the greatest part of the people of the Jews to ruin, and to reserve to himself only a small remnant: so he had done formerly, as appears by their own prophets; and they must not wonder if he did so now.

Observe, (1.) What God is. He is the *Lord of sabaoth*, the Lord of hosts; a Hebrew word retained in the Greek, as James 5. 4. All the host of heaven and earth are at his beck and disposal. When God secures a seed to himself out of a degenerate, apostate world, he acts as Lord of sabaoth. It is an act of almighty power and infinite sovereignty.

(2.) What his people are; they are a *seed*, a small number. The corn reserved for next year's seedlings, is but little, compared with that which is spent and eaten. But they are a useful number; the seed, the substance, of the next generation, Isa. 6. 13.

It is so far from being an impeachment of the justice and righteousness of God, that so many perish and are destroyed, that it is a wonder of divine power and mercy that all are not destroyed, that there are any saved: for even those that are left to be a seed, if God had dealt with them according to their sins, had perished with the rest. This is the great truth which this scripture teacheth us.

30. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which follow not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32. Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; 33. As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The apostle comes here at last to fix the true reason of the rejection of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews. There was a difference in the way of their seeking, and therefore there was that different success; though still it was the free grace of God that made them differ. He concludes like an orator, *What shall we say then?* What is the conclusion of the whole dispute?

I. Concerning the Gentiles, observe,

1. How they had been alienated *from righteousness*; they followed not after it; they knew not their guilt and misery, and therefore were not at all solicitous to procure a remedy. In their conversion, preventing grace was greatly magnified; God was *found of them that sought him not*, Isa. 65. 1. There was nothing in them to dispose them for such a favour, more than what free grace wrought in them. Thus doth God delight to dispense grace in a way of sovereignty and absolute dominion.

2. How they *attained to righteousness*, notwithstanding; *by faith*; not by being proselyted to the Jewish religion, and submitting to the ceremonial law, but by embracing Christ, and believing in Christ, and submitting to the gospel. They attained to that by the short cut of believing sincerely in Christ, which the Jews had been long in vain beating about the bush for.

II. Concerning the Jews, observe,

1. How they missed their end; they *followed after the law of righteousness*; (v. 31.) they talked much of justification and holiness, seemed very ambitious of being the people of God, and the favourites of heaven, but they did not *attain to it*, that is, the greatest part of them did not; as many as stuck to their old Jewish principles and ceremonies, and pursued a happiness in those observances, embracing the shadows now that the substance was come, these fell short of acceptance with God, were not owned as his people, nor went to their house justified.

2. How they mistook their way, which was the cause of their missing the end, v. 32, 33. They sought, but not in the right way, not in the humble way, not in the instituted appointed way.

Not by faith, not by embracing the christian religion, and depending upon the merit of Christ, and submitting to the terms of the gospel, which were the very life and end of the law.

But they sought by the *works of the law*; as if they were to expect justification by their observance of the precepts and ceremonies of the law of Moses.

This was the *stumbling-stone at which they stumbled*. They could not get over this corrupt principle which they had espoused. That the law was given them for no end but that merely by their observance of it, and obedience to it, they might be justified before God: and so they could by no means be reconciled to the doctrine of Christ, which brought them off from that, to expect justification through his merit and satisfaction of another. Christ him-

self is to some a stone of stumbling, for which he quotes Isa. 8. 14.—28. 16. It is said that Christ should be *set* for the fall of any, and yet it is so; (Luke 2. 34.) that ever poison should be sucked out of the Balm of Gilead, that the foundation-stone should be to any a stone of stumbling, and the rock of salvation a rock of offence; so he is to multitudes; so he was to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected him, because he put an end to the ceremonial law. But still there is a remnant that do believe on him; and they *shall not be ashamed*, their hopes and expectations of justification by him shall not be disappointed, as their's are, who expect it by the law.

So that, upon the whole, the unbelieving Jews have no reason to quarrel with God for rejecting them; they had a fair offer of righteousness, and life, and salvation, made them upon gospel-terms, which they did not like, and would not come up to; and therefore if they perish, they may thank themselves; their blood is upon their own heads.

CHAP. X.

The dissolving of the peculiar church-state of the Jews, and the rejection of that polity by the repealing of their ceremonial law; the vacating of all the institutions of it, the abolishing of their priesthood, the burning of their temple, and the taking away of their place and nation, and in their room the substituting and erecting of a catholic church-state among the Gentile nations; though to us now, when these things are long since done and completed, they may seem no great matter; yet to them who lived when they were doing, who knew how high the Jews had stood in God's favour, and how deplorable the condition of the Gentile world had been for many ages, it appeared very great and marvellous, and a mystery hard to be understood. The apostle, in this chapter, as in the foregoing and that which follows, is explaining and proving it; but with several very useful digressions, which a little interrupt the thread of his discourse. To two great truths I would reduce this chapter: I. That there is a great difference between the righteousness of the law, which the unbelieving Jews were wedded to, and the righteousness of faith offered in the gospel, v. 1. II. That there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles; but in point of justification and acceptance with God, the gospel sets them both upon the same level, v. 12, to the end.

1. **B**RETHREN, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, is, that they might be saved. 2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. 5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. 6. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) 7. Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The scope of the apostle in this part of the chapter is to shew the vast difference between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith, and the great pre-eminence of the righteousness of faith above that of the law; that he might induce and persuade the Jews to believe in Christ, aggravate the folly and sin of those that refused, and justify God in the rejection of such refusers.

I. Paul here professes his good affection to the Jews, with the reason of it; (v. 1, 2.) where he gives them a good wish, and a good witness.

1. A good wish; (v. 1.) a wish that they might be saved; saved from the temporal ruin and destruction that were coming upon them; saved from the wrath to come, eternal wrath, which was hanging over their heads. It is implied in this wish, that they might be convinced and converted; he could not pray in faith, that they might be saved in their unbelief.

Though Paul preached against them, yet he prayed for them: herein he was merciful, as God is, who is *not willing that any should perish*, (2 Pet. 3. 9.) desires not the death of sinners. It is our duty truly and earnestly to desire the salvation of the souls of others, next to the salvation of our own. This, he says, was *his heart's desire and prayer*: which intimates,

(1.) The strength and sincerity of his desire; it was *his heart's desire*; it was not a formal compliment, as good wishes are with many from the teeth outward, but a real desire. This it was, before it was his prayer. The soul of prayer is the heart's desire. Cold desires do but beg denials: we must even breathe out our souls in every prayer.

(2.) The offering up of this desire to God. It was not only his heart's desire, but it was his *prayer*. There may be desires in the heart, and yet no prayer, unless those desires be presented to God. Wishing and woulding, if that be all, are not praying.

2. A good witness, as a reason of his good wish; (v. 2.) *I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God*. The unbelieving Jews were the most bitter enemies Paul had in the world, and yet Paul gives them as good a character as the truth would bear. We should say the best we can even of our worst enemies; this is blessing them that curse us. Charity teaches us to have the best opinion of persons, and to put the best construction upon words and actions, that they will bear. We should take notice of that which is commendable even in bad people. *They have a zeal of God*. Their opposition to the gospel is from a principle of respect to the law, which they knew to have come from God. There is such a thing as a blind misguided zeal: such was that of the Jews, who, when they hated Christ's people and ministers, and cast them out, said, *Let the Lord be glorified*; (Isa. 66. 5.) nay, they killed them, and thought they did *God good service*, John 16. 2.

II. He here shews the fatal mistake that the unbelieving Jews were guilty of; which was their ruin. Their zeal was *not according to knowledge*. It is true, God gave them that law which they were so zealous for; but they might have known that, by the appearance of the promised Messiah, an end was put to it. He introduced a new religion and way of worship, to which the former must give place: he proved himself the Son of God, gave the most convincing evidence that could be of his being the Messiah; and yet they did not know, and would

not own him, but shut their eyes against the clear light, so that their zeal for the law was blind. TI is he shews further, v. 3. where we may observe,

1. The nature of their unbelief; *they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God*, they have not yielded to gospel-terms, nor accepted of the tender of justification by faith in Christ, which is made in the gospel. Unbelief is a non-submission to the righteousness of God, standing it out against the gospel-proclamation of indemnity. *Have not submitted*. In true faith, there is need of a great deal of submission; therefore the first lesson Christ teaches, is, to deny ourselves. It is a great piece of condescension for a proud heart to be content to be beheld to free grace; we are loath to sue *sub forma pauperis*—as *paupers*.

2. The causes of their unbelief, and those are two.

(1.) Ignorance of God's *righteousness*. They did not understand, and believe, and consider, the strict justice of God, in hating and punishing sin, and demanding satisfaction; did not consider what need we have of a righteousness, wherein to appear before him: if they had, they would never have stood out against the gospel-offer, nor expected justification by their own works, as if they could satisfy God's justice. Or, being ignorant of God's way of justification, which he has now appointed, and revealed by Jesus Christ. They did not know it, because they *would not*; they shut their eyes against the discoveries of it, and loved darkness rather.

(2.) A proud conceit of their own righteousness; *going about to establish their own*, a righteousness of their own devising, and of their own working out, by the merit of their works, and by their observance of the ceremonial law. They thought they needed not to be beheld to the merit of Christ, and therefore depended upon their own performances as sufficient to make up a righteousness wherein to appear before God. They could not with Paul disclaim a dependence upon this, (Phil. 3. 9.) *Not having mine own righteousness*. See an instance of this pride in the Pharisee, Luke 18. 10, 11. Compare v. 14.

III. He here shews the folly of that mistake, and what an unreasonable thing it was for them to be seeking justification by the works of the law, now that Christ was come, and had brought in an everlasting righteousness; considering,

1. The subserviency of the law to the gospel; (v. 4.) *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness*. The design of the law was to lead people to Christ. The moral law was but for the searching of the wound; the ceremonial law for the shadowing forth of the remedy; but Christ is the end of both; see 2 Cor. 3. 7. and compare Gal. 3. 23, 24. The use of the law was to direct people for righteousness to Christ.

Christ is the end of the *ceremonial* law; he is the period of it, because he is the perfection of it. When the substance comes, the shadow is gone. The sacrifices and offerings and purifications appointed under the Old Testament, prefigured Christ, and pointed at him; and their inability to take away sin discovered the necessity of a Sacrifice, that should, by being once offered, take away sin.

Christ is the end of the *moral* law, in that he did that which the law could not do, (ch. 8. 3.) and secured the great end of it.

The end of the law was to bring men to perfect obedience, and so to obtain justification; this is now become impossible, by reason of the power of sin, and the corruption of nature; but Christ is *the end of the law*; the law is not destroyed, nor the intention of the lawgiver frustrated; but full satisfaction being made by the death of Christ for our breach of the law, the end is attained, and we put in another way of justification. Christ is *thus the end of the law for righteousness*, for justification

but it is only to *every one that believeth*; upon our believing, our humble consent to the terms of the gospel, we become interested in Christ's satisfaction, and so are justified through the redemption that is in Jesus.

2. The excellency of the gospel above the law. This he proves, by shewing the different constitution of these two.

(1.) What is the righteousness which is of the law? This he shews, v. 5. The tenor of it is, *Do, and live*. Though it direct us to a better and more effectual righteousness in Christ, yet in itself, considered as a law, abstracted from its respect to Christ and the gospel, (for so the unbelieving Jews embraced and retained it,) it owneth nothing as a righteousness sufficient to justify a man, but that of perfect obedience. For this he quotes that scripture, (Lev. 18. 5.) *Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them*. To this he refers likewise, Gal. 3. 12. *The man that doth them, shall live in them*.

Live, that is, be happy, not only in the land of Canaan, but in heaven, of which Canaan was a type and figure. The *doing* supposed, must be perfect and sinless, without the least breach or violation. The law which was given upon mount Sinai, though it was not a pure covenant of works, (for who then could be saved under that dispensation?) yet, that it might be the more effectual to drive people to Christ, and to make the covenant of grace welcome, it had a very great mixture of the strictness and terror of the covenant of works.

Now, was it not extreme folly in the Jews, to adhere so closely to this way of justification and salvation, which was in itself so hard, and by the corruption of nature now become impossible, when there was a new and a living way opened?

(2.) What is that *righteousness* which is of *faith*, v. 6, &c. This he describes in the words of Moses, in Deuteronomy, in the *second law*, (so Deuteronomy signifies,) where there was a much clearer revelation of Christ and the gospel than there was in the first giving of the law: he quotes it from Deut. 30. 11—14. and shews,

[1.] That it is not at all hard or difficult. The way of justification and salvation has in it no such depths or knots as may discourage us, no insuperable difficulties attending it; but, as was foretold, it is a high-way, Isa. 35. 8. We are not put to climb for it, it is not in heaven; we are not put to dive for it, it is not in the deep.

First, We need not go to heaven, to search the records there, or to inquire into the secrets of the divine counsel. It is true, Christ is in heaven; but we may be justified and saved without going thither, to fetch him thence, or sending a special messenger to him.

Secondly, We need not go to the deep, to fetch Christ out of the grave, or from the state of the dead; *Into the deep, to bring up Christ from the dead*. This plainly shews that Christ's descent into the deep, or into *adæ*, was no more than his going into the state of the dead, in allusion to Jonah. It is true, Christ was in the grave, and it is as true, that he is now in heaven: but we need not perplex and puzzle ourselves with fancied difficulties, nor must we create to ourselves such gross and carnal ideas of these things, as if the method of salvation was impracticable, and the design of the revelation was only to amuse us. No, salvation is not put at so vast a distance from us.

[2.] But it is very plain and easy; *The word is nigh thee*. When we speak of looking upon Christ, and receiving Christ, and feeding upon Christ, it is not Christ in heaven, nor Christ in the deep, that we mean: but Christ in the promise, Christ exhibited to us, and offered, in the word. Christ is

nigh thee, for the word is nigh thee: nigh thee indeed: it is in *thy mouth*, and in *thy heart*; there is no difficulty in understanding, believing, and owning of it. The work thou hast to do, lies within thee: *the kingdom of God is within you*, Luke 17. 21. Thence thou must fetch thy evidences, not out of the records of heaven. *It is*, that is, it is promised that it shall be, in *thy mouth*, (Isa. 59. 21.) and in *thy heart*, Jer. 31. 33. All that which is to be done for us, is already done to our hands. Christ is come down from heaven, we need not go to fetch him. He is come up from the deep, we need not perplex ourselves how to bring him up. There is nothing now to be done, but a work in us; that must be our care, to look to our heart and mouth.

Those that were under the law, were to do all themselves, *Do this, and live*; but the gospel discovers the greatest of the work done already, and what remains cut short in righteousness; salvation offered upon very plain and easy terms, brought to our door, as it were, in the word which is *nigh us*. It is in our mouth, we are reading it daily; it is in our heart, we are, or should be, thinking of it daily.

Even *the word of faith*; the gospel and the promise of it; called *the word of faith*. *First*, Because it is the object of faith about which it is conversant, the word which we believe. *Secondly*, Because it is the precept of faith, commanding it, and making it the great condition of justification. *Thirdly*, Because it is the ordinary means by which faith is wrought and conveyed.

Now what is this *word of faith*? We have the tenor of it, v. 9, 10. the sum of the gospel, which is plain and easy enough. Observe,

1. What is promised to us; *Thou shalt be saved*. It is salvation that the gospel exhibits and tenders. Saved from guilt and wrath, with the salvation of the soul, an eternal salvation, which Christ is the author of, a Saviour to the uttermost.

2. Upon what terms. Two things are required as conditions of salvation.

(1.) *Confessing the Lord Jesus*: openly professing relation to him and dependence on him, as our Prince and Saviour; owning christianity in the face of all the allurements and affrightments of this world, standing by him in all weathers. Our Lord Jesus lays a great stress upon this confessing of him before men; see Matt. 10. 32, 33. It is the product of many graces, evidences a great deal of self-denial, love to Christ, contempt of the world, a mighty courage and resolution. It was a very great thing, especially, when the profession of Christ and christianity hazarded estate, honour, preferment, liberty, life, and all that is dear in this world; which was the case in the primitive times.

(2.) *Believing in the heart, that God raised him from the dead*. The profession of faith with the mouth, if there be not the power of it in the heart, is but a mockery; the root of it must be laid in an unfeigned assent to the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ, especially concerning his resurrection, which is the fundamental article of the christian faith; for thereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and full evidence was given, that God accepted his satisfaction.

This is further illustrated, (v. 10.) and the order inverted, because there must first be faith in the heart, before there can be an acceptable confession with the mouth.

[1.] Concerning faith; it is *with the heart that man believeth*; which implies more than an assent of the understanding, and takes in the consent of the will, an inward, hearty, sincere and strong consent. It is not believing, (not to be reckoned so,) if it be not with the heart. This is unto *righteousness*. There is the righteousness of justification, and the righteousness of sanctification. Faith is to both; it

is the condition of our justification, (*ch. 5. 1.*) and it is the root and spring of our sanctification; in it, it is begun; by it, it is carried on, Acts 15. 9.

[3.] Concerning profession; it is with the *mouth that confession is made*; confession to God in prayer and praise; (*ch. 15. 6.*) confession to men, owning the ways of God before others, especially when we are called to it in a day of persecution. It is fit that God should be honoured with the mouth, for he made man's mouth, (*Exod. 4. 11.*) and at such a time has promised to give his faithful people a *mouth and wisdom*, Luke 21. 15. It is part of the honour of Christ, that every tongue shall confess, Phil. 2. 11. And this is said to be *unto salvation*; because it is the performance of the condition of that promise, Matt. 10. 32. Justification by faith lays the foundation of our title to salvation; but by confession we build upon that foundation, and come at last to the full possession of that to which we were entitled.

So that we have here a brief summary of the terms of salvation; and they are very reasonable; in short this, that we must devote, dedicate, and give up, to God, our souls and our bodies; our souls in believing with the heart, and our bodies in confessing with the mouth. This do, and thou shalt live. For this, (*v. 11.*) he quotes Isa. 28. 16. *Who-soever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*; ὁ κατανιστῆσθαι. That is,

First, He will not be ashamed to own that Christ in whom he trusts; he that believes in the heart, will not be ashamed to confess with the mouth. It is sinful shame that makes people *deny* Christ, Mark 8. 38. He that believeth, will not make haste; (so the prophet has it;) will not make haste to run away from the sufferings he meets with in the way of his duty; will not be ashamed of a despised religion.

Secondly, He shall not be ashamed of his hope in Christ; he shall not be disappointed of his end. It is our duty that we must not, it is our privilege that we shall not, be ashamed of our faith in Christ. He shall never have cause to repent his confidence in reposing such a trust in the Lord Jesus.

12. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15. And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. 19. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. 20. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not: I

was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. 21. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

The first words express the design of the apostle through these verses, that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, but they stand upon the same level in point of acceptance with God. In Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, Col. 3. 11. God doth not save any, or reject any, because they are Jews, or because they are Greeks, but doth equally accept both upon gospel-terms. *There is no difference.*

For the proof of this, he urges two arguments.

I. That God is the same to all; *The same Lord over all is rich unto all.* There is not one God to the Jews, that is *more* kind, and another to the Gentiles, that is *less* kind; but he is the same to all, a common father to all mankind. When he proclaimed his name, *The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful*, he thereby signified not only what he was to the Jews, but what he is, and will be, to all his creatures that seek unto him: not only *good*, but *rich*, plenteous in goodness; he hath wherewith to supply them all, and he is free and ready to give out to them; he is both able and willing: not only *rich*, but *rich unto us*, liberal and bountiful in dispensing his favours, *To all that call upon him.* Something must be done by us, that we may reap of this bounty; and it is as little as can be, we must call upon him. He will for this be inquired of; (*Ezek. 36. 37.*) and surely that which is not worth the asking, is not worth the having. We have nothing to do but to draw out by prayer, as there is occasion.

II. That the promise is the same to all; (*v. 13.*) *Whoever shall call*; one as well as another, without exception. This extent, this undifferencing extent, of the promise both to Jews and Gentiles he thinks, should not be surprising, for it was foretold by the prophet, Joel 2. 32. Calling upon the name of the Lord is here put for all practical religion. What is the life of a christian but a life of prayer? It implies a sense of our dependence on him, and entire dedication of ourselves to him, a believing expectation of our all from him. He that exemplifies these things shall be saved. It is but ask and have; what would we have more?

For the further illustration of this, he observes,

1. How necessary it was that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, *v. 14. 15.* This was it that the Jews were so angry with *Paul* for, that he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and preached the gospel to them. Now, he shews how needful it was to bring them within the reach of the forementioned promise, an interest in which they should not envy to any of their fellow-creatures.

(1.) *They cannot call on him in whom they have not believed.* Except they believe that he is God, they will not call upon him by prayer; to what purpose should they? The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the duty of prayer; we cannot pray aright, nor pray to acceptance, without it. He that comes to God by prayer, must believe, Heb. 11. 6. Till they believed the true God, they were calling upon idols, *O Baal*, hear us.

(2.) *They cannot believe in him of whom they have not heard.* Some way or other the divine revelation must be made known to us, before we can receive it and assent to it; it is not born with us. In hearing is included reading, which is tantamount, and by which many are brought to believe; (*John 20. 31.*) *These things are written, that you may believe.* But hearing only is mentioned, as the more ordinary and natural way of receiving information.

(3.) *They cannot hear without a preacher*; how should they? Somebody must tell them what they are to believe. Preachers and hearers are correlated; it is a blessed thing when they mutually rejoice in each other—the hearers in the skill and faithfulness of the preacher, and the preacher in the willingness and obedience of the hearers.

(4.) *They cannot preach except they be sent*, except they be both commissioned, and in some measure qualified, for their preaching work. How shall a man act as an ambassador, unless he have both his credentials and his instructions from the prince that sends him? This proves, that to the regular ministry there must be a regular mission and ordination. It is God's prerogative to send ministers; he is the Lord of the harvest, and therefore to him we must pray that he would send forth labourers, Matt. 9. 38. He only can qualify men for, and incline them to, the work of the ministry. But the competency of that qualification, and the sincerity of that inclination, must not be left to the judgment of every man for himself: the nature of the thing will by no means admit that; but for the preservation of due order in the church, this must needs be referred and submitted to the judgment of a competent number of those that are themselves in that office, and of approved wisdom and experience in it; who, as in all other callings, are presumed the most able judges; and who are empowered to set apart such as they find so qualified and inclined, to this work of the ministry; that by this preservation of the succession, the name of Christ may endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. And they that are thus set apart, not only *may*, but *must* preach, as those that are sent.

2. How welcome the gospel ought to be to those to whom it was preached; because it shewed the way to salvation, v. 15. For this he quotes Isa. 52. 7. The like passage we have, Nahum 1. 15. which, if it point at the glad tidings of the deliverance of Israel out of Babylon in the type, yet it looks further to the gospel, the good news of our salvation by Jesus Christ. Observe,

(1.) What the gospel is: it is the *gospel of peace*; it is the word of reconciliation between God and man. *On earth peace*, Luke 2. 14. Or, peace is put in general for all good; so it is explained here; it is *glad tidings of good things*; the things of the gospel are good things indeed, the best things; tidings concerning them are the most joyful tidings, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth.

(2.) What the work of ministers is; to *preach* this gospel, to *bring these glad tidings*; to *evangelize peace*, (so the origin it is,) to evangelize good things. Every preacher is in this sense an evangelist: they are not only messengers to carry the news, but ambassadors to treat: and the first gospel-preachers were angels, Luke 2. 13, &c.

(3.) How acceptable they should therefore be to the children of men for their work's sake; *How beautiful are the feet*, how welcome are they! Mary Magdalene expressed her love to Christ by kissing his feet, and afterward by holding him by the feet, Matt. 28. 9. And when Christ was sending forth his disciples, he washed their feet. Those that preach the gospel of peace, should see to it that their feet, their life and conversation, be beautiful: the holiness of ministers' lives is the beauty of their feet. *How beautiful*, in the eyes of them that hear them. Those that welcome the message, cannot but love the messengers. See 1 Thess. 5. 12, 13.

3. He answers an objection against all this, which might be taken from the small success which the gospel had in many places; (v. 16.) *But they have not all obeyed the gospel*. All the Jews have not, all the Gentiles have not; far the greater part of both remain in unbelief and disobedience. Observe. The

gospel is given us not only to be *known* and *believed*, but to be *obeyed*. It is not a system of notions, but a rule of practice. This little success of the word was likewise foretold by the prophet; (Isa. 53. 1.) *Who hath believed our report?* Very few have; few to what one would think should have believed it; considering how faithful a report it is, and how well worthy of all acceptance; very few to the many that persist in unbelief. It is no strange thing, but it is a very sad and uncomfortable thing, for the ministers of Christ to bring the report of the gospel, and not to be believed in it. Under such a melancholy consideration it is good for us to go to God and make our complaint to him. *Lord, who hath, &c.*

In answer to this,

(1.) He shews that the word preached is the ordinary means of working faith; (v. 17.) *So then, &c. —however*; though many that hear, do not believe, yet those that believe, have first heard. *Faith cometh by hearing*. It is the summary of what he had said before, v. 14. The beginning, progress and strength of faith, is by hearing. The word of God is therefore called *the word of faith*: it begets and nourishes it. God gives faith, but it is by the word as the instrument. *Hearing*, that hearing which works faith, is *by the word of God*. It is not hearing the enticing words of man's wisdom, but hearing the word of God, that will befriend faith, and hearing it as the word of God. See 1 Thess. 2. 13.

(2.) That those who would not believe the report of the gospel, yet, having heard it, they were thereby left inexcusable, and may thank themselves for their own ruin, v. 18, to the end.

[1.] The Gentiles have heard it; (v. 18.) *Have they not heard?* Yes, more or less, they have; either heard the gospel, or however heard of it. *Their sound went into all the earth*; not only a confused sound, but their words, more distinct and intelligible notices of these things, are *gone unto the ends of the world*. The commission which the apostles received, runs thus; *Go ye into all the world, preach to every creature, disciple all nations*; and they did with indefatigable industry and wonderful success pursue that commission. See the extent of Paul's province, ch. 15. 19. To this remote island of Britain, one of the utmost corners of the world, not only the sound, but the words, of the gospel came within a few years after Christ's ascension. It was in order to this, that the gift of tongues was at the very first poured so plentifully upon the apostles, Acts 2. In the expression here he plainly alludes to Ps. 19. 4. which speaks of the notices which the visible works of God in the creation give to all the world of the power and Godhead of the Creator. As under the Old Testament God provided for the publishing of the work of creation, by the sun, moon, and stars; so now for the publishing of the work of redemption to all the world, by the preaching of gospel-ministers, who are therefore called *stars*.

[2.] The Jews have heard it too, v. 19—21. For this he appeals to two passages of the Old Testament, to shew how inexcusable they are too. *Did not Israel know* that the Gentiles were to be called in? They might have known it from Moses and Isaiah.

First, One is taken from Deut. 32. 21. *I will provoke you to jealousy*. The Jews not only had the offer, but saw the Gentiles accepting of it, and advantaged by that acceptance, by the same token that they were vexed at it. They had the refusal; *To you first*, Acts 3. 26. In all places where the apostles came, still the Jews had the first offer, and the Gentiles had but their leavings. If one would not, another would. Now this provoked them to jealousy. They, as the elder brother in the parable, (Luke 15.) envied the reception and entertainment of the prodigal Gentiles upon their repentance. The Gentiles are here

called *no people, and a foolish nation*, not the professing people of God. How much soever there be of the wit and wisdom of the world, those that are not the people of God, are, and in the end will be found to be, a foolish people. Such was the state of the Gentile world, who yet were made the people of God, and Christ to them the Wisdom of God. What a provocation it was to the Jews to see the Gentiles taken into favour, we may see, Acts 13. 45. —17. 5, 13, and especially Acts 22. 22. It was an instance of the great wickedness of the Jews, that they were thus enraged; and this in Deuteronomy is the matter of a threatening. God often makes people's sin their punishment. A man needs no greater plague than to be left to the impetuous rage of his own lusts.

Secondly, Another is taken from Isa. 65. 1, 2, which is very full, and in it Esaias is *very bold*; and indeed, to speak so plainly of the rejection of his own countrymen. Those that will be found faithful have need to be very bold. Those that are resolved to please God, must not be afraid to displease any man.

Now Esaias speaks boldly and plainly,

1. Of the preventing grace and favour of God in the reception and entertainment of the Gentiles; (v. 20.) *I was found of them that sought me not*. The prescribed method is *Seek and find*; that is a rule for us, not a rule for God, who is often found of those that do not seek. His grace is his own, differing grace his own, and he dispenses it in a way of sovereignty, gives or withholds it at pleasure; prevents us with the blessings, the richest, choicest blessings, of his goodness. Thus he manifested himself to the Gentiles, by sending the light of the gospel among them, when they were so far from seeking him and asking after him, that they were following after lying vanities, and serving dumb idols. Was not this our own particular case? Did not God begin in love, and manifest himself to us when we did not ask after him? And was not that a time of love indeed, to be often remembered with a great deal of thankfulness?

2. Of the obstinacy and perverseness of Israel, notwithstanding the fair offers and affectionate invitations they had, v. 21. Observe,

(1.) God's great goodness to them; *All day long I have stretched forth my hands*. [1.] His offers; *I have stretched forth my hands*; offering them life and salvation with the greatest sincerity and seriousness that can be, with all possible expressions of earnestness and importunity; shewing them the happiness tendered, setting it before them with the greatest evidence, reasoning the case with them. Stretching forth the hands, is the gesture of those that require audience, (Acts 26. 1.) or desire acceptance, Prov. 1. 24. Christ was crucified with his hands stretched out. *Stretched forth my hands* as offering reconciliation; come let us shake hands and be friends; and our duty is to give the hand to him. 2 Chron. 30. 8. [2.] His patience in making these offers: *All day long*. The patience of God toward provoking sinners is admirable. He waits to be gracious. The time of God's patience is here called a *day*, lightsome as a day, and fit for work and business; but limited as a day, and a night at the end of it. He hears long, but he will not bear always.

(2.) Their great badness to him. They were a *disobedient gainsaying people*. One word in the Hebrew, in Esaias, is here well explained by two; not only *disobedient* to the call, not yielding to it, but *gainsaying* and quarrelling with it, which is much worse. Many that will not accept of a good proposal, yet will acknowledge that they have nothing to say against it: but the Jews who believed not, rested not there, but contradicted and blasphemed. God's patience with them was a very great aggravation of their disobedience, and rendered that the more ex-

ceeding sinful; as their disobedience advanced the honour of God's patience, and rendered that the more exceeding gracious. It is a wonder of mercy in God, that his goodness is not overcome by man's badness; and it is a wonder of wickedness in man, that his badness is not overcome by God's goodness.

CHAP. XI.

The apostle, having reconciled that great truth of the rejection of the Jews with the promise made unto the fathers, is, in this chapter, further labouring to mollify the harshness of it, and to reconcile it to the divine goodness in general. It might be said, Hath God then cast away his people? The apostle therefore sets himself, in this chapter, to make a return to this objection; and that two ways: 1. He shews at large what the mercy is, that is mixed with this wrath, v. 1. . . 32. 11. He infers from thence the infinite wisdom and sovereignty of God; with the adoration of which he concludes this chapter and subject, v. 33. . . 36.

1. **I** SAY then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? How he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, 3. Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the *image* of Baal. 5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6. And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. 7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded, 8. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. 9. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them: 10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. 11. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. 12. Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness! 13. For I speak to you Gentiles, in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: 14. If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are* my flesh, and might save some of them. 15. For if the casting away of them *be* the

reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving of *them be*, but life from the dead? 16. For if the first-fruit *be* holy, the lump is also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches. 17. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; 18. Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: 21. For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee. 22. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off. 23. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. 24. For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive-tree? 25. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28. As concerning the gospel, *they* are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they* are beloved for the fathers' sakes. 29. For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance. 30. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31. Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

The apostle proposes here a plausible objection, which might be urged against the divine conduct in casting off the Jewish nation; (v. 1.) "*Hath God cast away his people?*" Is the rejection total and final? Are they all abandoned to wrath and ruin, and that eternal? Is the extent of the sentence so large as to be without reserve, or the continuance of it so long as to be without repeal? Will he have no more a peculiar people to himself?"

In opposition to this, he shews that there was a

great deal of goodness and mercy expressed along with this seeming severity; particularly, he insists upon three things. I. That though some of the Jews were cast off, yet they were not all so. II. That though the body of the Jews were cast off, yet the Gentiles were taken in. And, III. That though the Jews were cast off at present, yet in God's due time they should be taken into his church again.

I. The Jews, it is true, were many of them cast off, but not all. The supposition of this he introduces with a *God forbid*. He will by no means endure such a suggestion. God had made a distinction between some and others of them.

1. There was a chosen remnant of believing Jews, that obtained righteousness and life by faith in Jesus Christ, v. 1—7. These are said to be such as he *foreknew*, (v. 2.) that is, had thoughts of love to, before the world was; for whom he thus foreknew he did predestinate. There lies the ground of the difference. They are called the *election*, (v. 7.) the elect, God's chosen ones: whom he calls the election, because that which first distinguished them from, and dignified them above, others, was, God's electing love. Believers are the *election*, all those, and those only, whom God hath chosen. Now,

(1.) He shews that he himself was one of them; *for I also am an Israelite*; as if he had said, "Should I say that all the Jews are rejected, I should cut off my own claims, and see myself abandoned." Paul was a chosen vessel, (Acts 9. 15.) and yet he was of the *seed of Abraham*; and particularly of the tribe of Benjamin, the least and youngest of all the tribes of Israel.

(2.) He suggests, that, as in Elias's time, so now, this chosen remnant was really more and greater than one would think it was: which intimates likewise, that it is no new or unusual thing for God's grace and favour to Israel to be limited and confined to a remnant of that people; for so it was in Elijah's time. The scripture saith it of Elias, *ἡλία—*in the story of Elias, the great reformer of the Old Testament. Observe,

[1.] His mistake concerning Israel; as if their apostacy in the days of Ahab was so general, that he himself was the only faithful servant God had in the world. He refers to 1 Kings 19. 14. where (it is here said) *he maketh intercession to God against Israel*. A strange kind of intercession: *ἰντευχάμεν τῷ Θεῷ κατὰ τὸ Ἰσραὴλ—*He deals with God against Israel; so it may be read; so *ἰντευχάμεν* is translated, Acts 25. 24. The Jews *ἰντευχον μὲν—*have dealt with me. In prayer we deal with God, commune with him, discourse with him: it is said of Elijah, (Jam. 5. 17.) that he *prayed in praying*. We are then likely to pray in praying, to make a business of that duty, when we pray as those that are dealing with God in the duty. Now Elijah in this prayer spake as if there were none left faithful in Israel but himself only. See to what a low ebb the profession of religion may sometimes be brought, and how much the face of it may be eclipsed, that the most wise and observing men may give it up for gone. So it was in Elijah's time. That which makes the show of a nation, is, the powers and the multitude. The powers of Israel were then persecuting powers; They have *killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars*, and they *seek my life*. The multitude of Israel were then idolatrous: *I am left alone*. Thus those few that were faithful to God, were not only lost in the crowd of idolaters, but crushed and driven into corners by the rage of persecutors. *When the wicked rise, a man is hidden*, Prov. 28. 12.

Digged down thine altars; not only neglected them, and let them go out of repair, but digged them down. When altars were set up for Baal, it is no wonder if God's altars were pulled down; they

could not endure that standing testimony against their idolatry.

This was his intercession *against Israel*; as if he had said, "Lord, is not this a people ripe for ruin, worthy to be cast off? What else canst thou do for thy great name?" It is a very sad thing for any person or people to have the prayers of God's people *against* them; especially of God's prophets: for God espouses, and sooner or later will visibly own, the cause of his praying people.

[2.] The rectifying this mistake by the answer of God; (*v. 4.*) *I have reserved.* Note, *First*, Things are often much better with the church of God than wise and good men think they are. They are ready to conclude hardly, and to give up all for gone, when it is not so. *Secondly*, In times of general apostacy, there is usually a remnant that keep their integrity; some, though but a few; all do not go one way. *Thirdly*, That when there is a remnant who keep their integrity in times of general apostacy, it is God that reserves to himself that remnant. If he had left them to themselves, they had gone down the stream with the rest. It is his free and almighty grace that makes the difference between them and others.

Seven thousand: a competent number to bear their testimony against the idolatry of Israel; and yet, compared with the many thousands of Israel, a very small number; one of a city, and two of a tribe, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage. Christ's flock is but a little flock: and yet, when they come all together at last, they will be a great and innumerable multitude, *Rev. 7. 9.*

Now the description of this remnant, is, *that they have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.* That was then the reigning sin of Israel. In court, city, and country, Baal had the ascendant; and the generality of people, more or less, paid their respect to Baal. The best evidence of integrity is a freedom from the present prevailing corruptions of the times and places that we live in; to swim against the stream when it is strong. Those God will own for his faithful witnesses, that are bold in bearing their testimony to the *present* truth, *2 Pet. 1. 12.* This is thank-worthy; not to bow to Baal when every body bows. Sober singularity is commonly the badge of true sincerity.

[3.] The application of this instance to the case in hand; (*v. 5—7.*) *Even so at this present time.* God's methods of dispensation toward his church are as they used to be. As it has been, so it is. In Elijah's time there was a remnant, and so there is now. If then there was a remnant left under the Old Testament, when the displays of grace were less clear, and the pourings out of the Spirit less plentiful; much more now under the gospel, when the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, appears more illustrious.

A remnant, a few of many; a remnant of believing Jews, when the rest were obstinate in their unbelief.

This is called *a remnant according to the election of grace*; they are such as were chosen from eternity in the counsels of divine love, to be vessels of grace and glory. Whom he did predestinate them he called. If the difference between them and others be made purely by the grace of God, as certainly it is, (*I have reserved them*, saith he, *to myself*;) then it must needs be according to the election; for we are sure that whatever God does, he does it according to the counsel of his own will.

Now concerning this remnant, we may observe,

First, Whence it takes its rise; from the free grace of God, (*v. 6.*) that grace which excludes works. The eternal election, in which the difference between some and others is first founded, is purely of grace, free grace; not for the sake of

works done, or foreseen; if so, it would not be *grace*. *Gratia non est ullo modo gratia, si non sit omni modo gratuita*—It is not *grace*, properly so called, if it be not perfectly free. Election is purely according to the good pleasure of his will, *Eph. 1. 5.* Paul's heart was so full of the freeness of God's grace, that in the midst of his discourse he turns aside, as it were, to make the remark, *If of grace, then not of works.* And some observe, that faith itself, which in the matter of justification is opposed to works, is here included in them; for faith has a peculiar receptivity to receive the free grace of God for our justification, but not to receive that grace for our election.

Secondly, What it obtains: that which Israel, that is, the body of that people, in vain sought for; (*v. 7.*) *Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for*; justification, and acceptance with God; (see *ch. 9. 31.*) but the *election has obtained it*. In them the promise of God has its accomplishment, and God's ancient kindness for that people is remembered. He calls the remnant of believers, not the *elect*, but the *election*, to shew that the sole foundation of all their hopes and happiness is laid in election. They were the persons whom God had in his eye, in the counsels of his love; they are the election, they are God's choice.

Such was the favour of God to the chosen remnant. But,

2. *The rest were blinded*, *v. 7.* Some are chosen and called; and the call is made effectual. But others are left to perish in their unbelief; nay, they were made worse by that which should have made them better. The gospel, which to them that believed was the savour of life unto life, to the unbelieving was the savour of death unto death. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. Good old Simeon foresaw that the child Jesus was set for the fall, as well as for the rising again, of many in Israel, *Luke 2. 34.*

Were blinded; *ἠαγένησαν*—they were hardened; so some. They were seared, and made brawny and insensible. They could neither see the light, nor feel the touch, of gospel-grace. Blindness and hardness are expressive of the same senselessness and stupidity of spirit. They shut their eyes, and would not see; that was their sin; and then God, in a way of righteous judgment, blinded their eyes, that they could not see; there was their punishment.

This seemed harsh doctrine: to qualify it therefore he vouches two witnesses out of the Old Testament, which speak of such a thing.

(1.) *Isaiah*, who spake of such a judgment in his day, *ch. 29. 10.—6. 9.* *The spirit of slumber*, that is, an indisposition to mind either their duty or interest. They are under the power of a prevailing unconcernedness, like people that are slumbering and sleeping; not affected with any thing that is said or done. They were resolved to continue as they were, and would not stir. The following words explain what is meant by the spirit of *slumber*; *eyes, that they should not see, and ears, that they should not hear.* They had the faculties, but in the things that belonged to their peace they had not the use of those faculties; they were quite infatuated, they saw Christ, but they did not believe in him; they heard his word, but they did not receive it; and so both their hearing and their seeing were in vain. It was all one as if they had neither seen nor heard. Of all judgments spiritual judgments are the sorest, and most to be dreaded, though they make the least noise.

Unto this day. Ever since *Isaiah* prophesied, this hardening work hath been in the doing; some among them have been blind and senseless. (Or rather, ever since the first preaching of the gospel

though they have had the most convincing evidences, that could be of the truth of it, the most powerful preaching, the fairest offers, the clearest calls from Christ himself, and from his apostles; yet to this day they are blinded. It is still true concerning multitudes of them, even to this day in which we live; they are hardened and blinded; the obstinacy and unbelief go by succession, from generation to generation, according to their own fearful imprecation, which entailed the curse; *His blood be upon us, and upon our children.*

(2.) David, (v. 9, 10.) quoted from Ps. 69. 22, 23. where David having in the Spirit foretold the sufferings of Christ from his own people the Jews, particularly that of their giving him *vinegar to drink*, (v. 21. which was literally fulfilled, Matt. 27. 48.) an expression of the greatest contempt and malice that could be; in the next words, under the form of an imprecation, he foretells the dreadful judgments of God upon them for it; *Let their table become a snare*: which the apostle here applies to the present blindness of the Jews, and the offence they took at the gospel, which increased their hardness.

This teaches us how to understand other prayers of David against his enemies; they are to be looked upon as prophetic of the judgments of God upon the public and obstinate enemies of Christ and his kingdom. His prayer that it might be so, was a prophecy that it should be so, and not the private expressions of his own angry resentments. It was likewise intended to justify God, and to clear his righteousness in such judgments. He speaks here,

[1.] Of the ruin of their comforts; *Let their table be made a snare*, that is, as the psalmist explains it, Let that which should be for their welfare, be a trap to them. The curse of God will turn meat into poison. It is a threatening like that, (Mal. 2. 2.) *I will curse your blessings*. Their table a snare, that is, an occasion of sin, and an occasion of misery. Their very food, that should nourish them, shall choke them.

[2.] Of the ruin of their powers and faculties, (v. 10.) their eyes darkened, their backs bowed down; that they can neither find the right way, nor, if they could, are they able to walk in it. The Jews, after their national rejection of Christ and his gospel, became infatuated in their politics, so that their very counsels turned against them, and hastened their ruin by the Romans. They looked like a people designed for slavery and contempt, their backs bowed down, to be ridden and trampled upon by all the nations about them.

Or, it may be understood spiritually; their backs are bowed down in carnality and worldly-mindedness. *Curse in terris anime—They mind earthly things*. This is an exact description of the state and temper of the present remainder of that people, than whom, if the accounts we have of them be true, there is not a more worldly, wilful, blind, selfish, ill-natured, people in the world. They are manifestly to this day under the power of this curse. Divine curses will work long. It is a sign we have our eyes darkened, if we are bowed down in worldly-mindedness.

II. Another thing which qualified this doctrine of the rejection of the Jews, was, that though they were cast off and unchurched, yet the Gentiles were taken in, (v. 11—14.) which he applies by way of caution to the Gentiles, v. 17—22.

1. The rejection of the Jews made room for the reception of the Gentiles. The Jews' leavings were a feast for the poor Gentiles; (v. 11.) *"Have they stumbled, that they should fall?"* Had God no other end in the forsaking and rejecting of them than their destruction?" He startles at that, rejecting the thought with abhorrence, as usually he does when any thing is suggested which seems to reflect upon

the wisdom or righteousness, or goodness of God; *God forbid*; no, through *their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles*. Not but that salvation might have come to the Gentiles if they had stood; but by the divine appointment it was so ordered, that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, upon the Jews' refusal of it. Thus in the parable; (Matt. 22. 8, 9.) *They that were first bidden were not worthy, Go ye therefore into the highways*, Luke 14. 21. And so it was in the history; (Acts 13. 46.) *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*; so, Acts 18. 6. God will have a church in the world, will have the wedding furnished with guests; and if one will not come, another will, or why was the offer made? The Jews had the refusal, and so the tender came to the Gentiles. See how infinite Wisdom brings light out of darkness, good out of evil, meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong.

To the same purport he says, (v. 12.) *The fall of them was the riches of the world*, it hastened the gospel so much the sooner into the Gentile world. The gospel is the greatest riches of the place where it is; it is better than thousands of gold and silver. Or, The riches of the Gentiles was the multitude of converts among them. True believers are God's jewels.

To the same purport, (v. 15.) *The casting away of them is the reconciling of the world*. God's displeasure toward them made way for his favour toward the Gentiles. God was in Christ *reconciling the world*, 2 Cor. 5. 19. And therefore he took occasion from the unbelief of the Jews, openly to disavow and disown them, though they have been his peculiar favourites; to shew that in dispensing his favours he would now no longer act in such a way of peculiarity and restriction, but that in every nation he that feared God, and wrought righteousness, should be accepted of him, Acts 10. 34, 35.

2. The use that the apostle makes of this doctrine concerning the substitution of the Gentiles in the room of the Jews.

(1.) As a kinsman to the Jews, here is a word of excitement and exhortation to them; to stir them up to receive and embrace the gospel-offer. This, God intended in his favour to the Gentiles, to provoke the Jews to jealousy; (v. 11.) and Paul endeavours to enforce it accordingly; (v. 14.) *If by any means I might provoke to emulation them who are my flesh*. "Shall the despised Gentiles run away with all the comforts and privileges of the gospel, and shall not we repent our refusal, and now at last put in for a share? Shall not we believe and obey, and be pardoned and saved, as well as the Gentiles?" See an instance of such an emulation in Esau, Gen. 28. 6—9. There is a commendable emulation in the affairs of our souls: why should not we be as holy and happy as any of our neighbours? In this emulation there needs no suspicion, undermining or countermining; for the church hath room enough, and the new covenant grace and comfort enough, for us all. The blessings are not lessened by the multitudes of the sharers. *And might save some of them*. See what was Paul's business, to save souls; and yet the utmost he promises himself is but to save *some*. Though he were such a powerful preacher, spoke and wrote with such evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, yet of the many he dealt with he could but save *some*. Ministers must think their pains well bestowed, if they can but be instrumental to save *some*.

(2.) As an apostle to the Gentiles, here is a word of caution for them. *"I speak to you Gentiles*. You believing Romans, you hear what riches of salvation are come to you by the fall of the Jews, but take heed lest you do any thing to forfeit it." Paul takes

this, as other occasions, to apply his discourse to the Gentiles, because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, appointed for the service of their faith, to plant and water churches in the Gentile nations. This was the purport of his extraordinary mission, Acts 22. 21. *I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles*; compare Acts 9. 15. It was likewise the intention of his ordination, Gal. 2. 9. Compare Acts 13. 2.

It ought to be our great and special care to do good to those that are under our charge: we must particularly mind that which is our own work. It was an instance of God's great love to the poor Gentiles, that he appointed Paul, who in gifts and graces excelled all the apostles, to be the apostle of the Gentiles.

The Gentile world was a wider province: and the work to be done in it required a very able, skilful, zealous, courageous workman; such a one was Paul. God calls those to special work, that he either sees or makes fit for it.

I magnify mine office. There were those that vilified it, and him because of it. It was because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, that the Jews were so outrageous against him; (Acts 22. 21, 22.) and yet he thought never the worse of it, though it set him up as the butt of all the Jewish rage and malice. It is a sign of true love to Jesus Christ, to reckon that service and work for him truly honourable, which the world looks upon with scorn, as mean and contemptible. The office of the ministry is an office to be *magnified*. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, and for their work's sake are to be esteemed highly in love.

Mine office; τὴν διακονίαν μου—my ministry, my service, not my lordship and dominion. It was not the dignity and power, but the duty and work, of an apostle, that Paul was so much in love with.

Now two things he exhorts the Gentiles to, with reference to the rejected Jews.

[1.] To have a respect for the Jews, notwithstanding, and to desire their conversion. This is intimated in the prospect he gives them of the advantage that would accrue to the church by their conversion, v. 12, 15. It would be as life from the dead; and therefore they must not insult and triumph over those poor Jews, but rather pity them, and desire their welfare, and long for the receiving of them in again.

[2.] To take heed to themselves, lest they should stumble and fall, as the Jews had done, v. 17—22. Where observe,

First, The privilege which the Gentiles had by being taken into the church. They were *grafted in*, (v. 17.) as a branch of a wild olive into a good olive; which is contrary to the way and custom of the husbandman, who grafts the good olive into the bad; but those that God grafts into the church, he finds wild and barren, and good for nothing. Men graft, to mend the tree; but God grafts, to mend the branch.

1. The church of God is an olive-tree; flourishing and fruitful as an olive; (Ps. 52. 8. Hos. 14. 6.) the fruit useful for the honour both of God and man, Judg. 9. 9.

2. Those that are out of the church, are as *wild olive-trees*; not only useless, but what they do produce is sour and unsavoury. *Wild by nature*, v. 24. This was the state of the poor Gentiles, that wanted church privileges, and in respect of real sanctification; and it is the natural state of every one of us, to be *wild by nature*.

3. Conversion is the grafting in of wild branches into the good olive. We must be cut off from the old stock, and be brought into union with a new root.

4. Those that are grafted into the good olive-tree, partake of the root and fatness of the olive. It is applicable to a saving union with Christ; all that are

by a lively faith grafted into Christ, partake of him as the branches from the root; receive from his fullness. But it is here spoken of a visible church-membership, from which the Jews were as branches broken off; and so the Gentiles were grafted in, ἐν αὐτοῖς—among them that continued, or in the room of them that were broken off.

The Gentiles, being grafted into the church, partake of the same privileges that the Jews did, *the root and fatness*. The olive-tree is the visible church, (called so Jer. 11. 16.) the root of this tree was Abraham; not the root of communication, so Christ only is the root; but the root of administration, he being the first with whom the covenant was so solemnly made. Now the believing Gentiles partake of this root; *he also is a son of Abraham*, (Luke 19. 9.) *the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles*, (Gal. 3. 14.) the same fatness of the olive-tree, the same for substance, special protection, lively oracles, means of salvation, a standing ministry, instituted ordinances; and among the rest, the visible church-membership of their infant seed, which was part of the fatness of the olive-tree that the Jews had, and cannot be imagined to be denied to the Gentiles.

Secondly, A caution not to abuse these privileges.

1. "Be not proud; (v. 18.) *Boast not against the branches*. Do not therefore trample upon the Jews as a reprobate people, nor insult over them that are broken off, much less over those that do continue." Grace is given, not to make us proud, but to make us thankful. The law of faith excludes all boasting, either of ourselves or against others. "Do not say, (v. 19.) *They were broken off, that I might be grafted in*; do not think that thou didst merit more at the hand of God than they, or didst stand higher in his favour."

"But remember, *thou bearest not the root, but the root thee*; though thou art grafted in, thou art still but a branch borne by the root; nay, and an engrafted branch, brought into the good olive *contrary to nature*, (v. 24.) not free-born, but by an act of grace enfranchised and naturalised. Abraham, the root of the Jewish church, is not beholden to thee; but thou art greatly obliged to him, as the trustee of the covenant, and the father of many nations. Therefore, *if thou boast*, know, (that word must be supplied to clear the sense,) *thou bearest not the root but the root thee*."

2. "Be not secure; (v. 20.) *Be not high-minded, but fear*. Be not too confident of your own strength and standing." A holy fear is an excellent preservative against high-mindedness: happy is the man that thus feareth always. We need not fear but God will be true to our's; all the danger is lest we be false to our's. *Let us therefore fear*, Heb. 4. 1. The church of Rome now boasts of a patent of perpetual preservation; but the apostle here, in his epistle to that church when she was in her infancy and integrity, enters an express caveat against that boast, and all claims of that kind.

Fear what? "Why fear lest thou commit a forfeiture as they have done; lest thou lose the privileges thou now enjoyest, as they have lost their's." The evils that befall others, should be our warnings. *Go* (saith God to Jerusalem, Jer. 7. 12.) and see *what I did to Shiloh*; so now, let all the churches of God go see what he did to Jerusalem, and what is become of the day of their visitation: that we may hear and fear, and take heed of Jerusalem's sin. The patent which churches have of their privileges, is not for a certain term, or entailed upon them and their heirs; but it runs as long as they carry themselves well, and no longer.

Consider, (1.) "How they were broken off. It was not undeservedly, by an act of absolute sovereignty and prerogative, but *because of unbelief*."

It seems then, it is possible for churches that have long stood by faith, to fall into such a state of infidelity as may be their ruin. Their unbelief did not only provoke God to cut them off, but they did by that cut themselves off: it was not only the meritorious, but the formal cause of their separation. "Now, thou art liable to the same infirmity and corruption that they fell by." Further observe, they were *natural branches*; (v. 21.) not only interested in Abraham's covenant, but descending from Abraham's loins; and so born upon the promises, and thence had a kind of tenant-right: yet when they sunk into unbelief, God did *not spare them*. Prescription, long usage, the faithfulness of their ancestors, would not secure them. It was in vain to plead, though they insisted much upon it, that they were Abraham's seed, Matt. 3. 9. John 8. 33. It is true, they were the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was first let out; but when they forfeited it, it was justly taken from them, Matt. 21. 41, 43.

This is called here *severity*, v. 22. God laid righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet, and dealt with them according to their sins. Severity is a word that sounds harsh; and I do not remember that it is any where else in scripture ascribed to God; and it is here applied to the unchurching of the Jews. God is most severe toward those that have been in profession nearest to him, if they rebel against him, Amos 3. 2. Patience and privileges abused, turn to the greatest wrath. Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest; for of those he is here speaking, v. 8.

(2.) "How thou standest; thou that art engrafted in." He speaks to the Gentile churches in general; though perhaps tacitly reflecting on some particular person, who might have expressed some such pride and triumph in the Jews' rejection. "Consider then,"

[1.] "By what means thou standest; *by faith*, which is a depending grace, and fetches in strength from heaven. Thou dost not stand in any strength of thy own, of which thou mightest be confident: thou art no more than the free grace of God makes thee, and his grace is his own, which he gives or withholds at pleasure. That which ruined them was unbelief, and by faith thou standest: therefore thou hast no faster hold than they had, thou standest on no firmer foundation than they did."

[2.] "On what terms; (v. 22.) *toward thee goodness*, if thou continue in his goodness, continue in a dependence upon, and compliance with, the free grace of God, the want of which it was that ruined the Jews; if thou be careful to keep up thine interest in the divine favour, by being continually careful to please God, and fearful of offending him." The sum of our duty, the condition of our happiness, is, to keep ourselves in the love of God. *Fear the Lord and his goodness*, Hos. 3. 5.

III. Another thing that qualified this doctrine of the Jews' rejection, is, that though for the present they are cast off, yet the rejection is not final; but when the fulness of time is come, they will be taken in again. They are not cast off for ever, but mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath. Let us observe,

1. How this conversion of the Jews is here described.

(1.) It is said to be *their fulness*, (v. 12.) that is, the addition of them to the church, the filling up again of that place which became vacant by their rejection. This would be the enriching of the world, that is, the church in the world, with a great deal of light and strength and beauty.

(2.) It is called the *receiving of them*. The conversion of a soul is the receiving of that soul, so the conversion of a nation. They shall be received into favour, into the church, into the love of Christ,

whose arms are stretched out for the receiving of all those that will come to him.

And this will be as *life from the dead*; so strange and surprising, and yet withal so welcome and acceptable. The conversion of the Jews will bring great joy to the church. See Luke 15. 32. *He was dead, and is alive*; and therefore it was meet we should make merry and be glad.

(3.) It is called the *grafting of them in again*, (v. 23.) into the church, from which they had been broken off. That which is grafted in, receives sap and virtue from the root; so does a soul that is truly grafted into the church, receive life and strength and grace from Christ the quickening root.

They shall be *grafted into their own olive-tree*; (v. 24.) that is, into the church, which formerly they had been the most eminent and conspicuous members of; to retrieve these privileges of visible church-membership, which they had so long enjoyed, but have now sinned away and forfeited by their unbelief.

(4.) It is called, the *saving of all Israel*, v. 26. True conversion may well be called *salvation*; it is salvation begun. See Acts 2. 47. The adding of them to the church is the saving of them: *οὗτοι σωθήσονται*, in the present tense, *are saved*. When conversion-work goes on, salvation-work goes on.

2. What it is grounded upon, and what reason we have to look for it.

(1.) Because of the holiness of the *first-fruits* and the *root*, v. 16. Some by the *first-fruits* understand those of the Jews, that were already converted to the faith of Christ, and received into the church; which were, as the first-fruits, dedicated to God, as earnest of a more plentiful and sanctified harvest. A good beginning promises a good ending. Why may we not suppose that others may be savingly wrought upon as well as those who are already brought in? Others, by the first-fruits, understand the same with the root, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from whom the Jews descended, and with whom, as the prime trustees, the covenant was deposited: and so they were the root of the Jews, not only as a people, but as a church. Now, if they were *holy*, which is not meant so much of inherent as of federal holiness; if they were in the church and in the covenant, then we have reason to conclude, that God hath a kindness for the *lump*, the body of that people; and for the *branches*, the particular members of it. The Jews are in a sense a holy nation, (Exod. 19. 6.) being descended from holy parents. Now it cannot be imagined, that such a holy nation should be totally and finally cast off.

This proves that the seed of believers, as such, are within the pale of the visible church, and within the verge of the covenant, till they do, by their unbelief, throw themselves out; for *if the root be holy, so are the branches*. Though real qualifications are not propagated, yet relative privileges are. Though a wise man does not beget a wise man, yet a free man begets a free man. Though grace does not run in the blood, yet external privileges do, (till they are forfeited,) even to a thousand generations. Look how they will answer it another day, that cut off the entail, by turning the seed of the faithful out of the church, and so not allowing the blessing of Abraham to come upon the Gentiles. The Jewish branches are reckoned *holy*, because the root was so.

This is expressed more plainly; (v. 28.) *They are beloved for the fathers' sakes*. In this love to the fathers, the first foundation of their church-state was laid; (Deut. 4. 37.) *Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them*. And the same love would revive their privileges, for still the ancient loving-kindness is remembered; they are *beloved for the fathers' sakes*. It is God's usual method of grace. Kindness to the children for the fa-

ther's sake, is therefore called the *kindness of God*, 2 Sam. 9. 3, 7.

Though, as concerning the gospel, that is, in the present dispensation of it, they are enemies to it *for your sakes*, for the sake of the Gentiles, against whom they have such an antipathy; yet when God's time is come, that will wear off, and God's love to their fathers will be remembered. See a promise that points at this, Lev. 26. 42. The iniquity of the fathers is visited but to the third and fourth generation; but there is mercy kept for thousands. Many fare the better for the sake of their godly ancestors.

It is upon this account that the church is called their own *olive-tree*. Long it had been their own peculiar; which is some encouragement to us to hope that there may be room for them in it again, for old acquaintance-sake. That which hath been may be again.

Though particular persons and generations wear off in unbelief, yet there having been a national church-membership, though for the present suspended, we may expect that it will be revived again.

(2.) Because of the power of God; (v. 23.) *God is able to graft them in again*. The conversion of souls is a work of almighty power; and when they seem most hardened, and blinded, and obstinate, our comfort is, that God is able to work a change, able to graft those in, that have been long cast out and withered. When the house is kept by the strong man armed, with all his force, yet God is stronger than he, and is able to dispossess him.

The condition of their restoration is faith; *If they abide not still in unbelief*. So that nothing is to be done but to remove that unbelief, that is the great obstacle; and God is able to take that away, though nothing less than an almighty power will do it; the same power that raised up Christ from the dead, Eph. 1. 19, 20. Otherwise, can these dry bones live?

(3.) Because of the grace of God manifested to the Gentiles. Those that have themselves experienced the grace of God, preventing, distinguishing grace, may from thence take encouragement to hope well concerning others. This is his argument, (v. 24.) "If thou wert grafted into a good olive, that wast wild by nature, much more shall these that were the natural branches, and may therefore be presumed somewhat nearer to the divine acceptance."

This is a suggestion very proper to check the insolence of those Gentile christians, that looked with disdain and triumph upon the condition of the rejected Jews, and trampled upon them; as if he had said, "Their condition, bad as it is, is not so bad as your's was before your conversion; and therefore why may it not be made as good as your's is?" This is his argument, (v. 30, 31.) *As ye in time past have not*, &c. It is good for those that have found mercy with God, to be often thinking what they were in time past, and how they obtained that mercy. This would help to soften our censures of, and quicken our prayers for, those that still continue in unbelief.

He argues further from the occasion of the Gentiles' call, that is, the *unbelief* of the Jews; thence it took rise; "You have obtained mercy through their unbelief; much more shall they obtain mercy through your mercy. If the putting out of their candle was the lighting of your's, by that power of God, who brings good out of evil; much more shall the continued light of your candle, when God's time is come, be a means of lighting their's again."

"That through your mercy, they might obtain mercy, that they may be beholden to you, as you have been to them." He takes it for granted, that the believing Gentiles would do their utmost endeavour to work upon the Jews; that when God had

persuaded Japhet, he would be labouring to persuade Shem. True grace hates monopolies. Those that have found mercy themselves, should endeavour that through their mercy others also may obtain mercy.

(4.) Because of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, which point at this. He quotes a very remarkable one, v. 26. from Isa. 59. 20, 21. Where we may observe,

[1.] The coming of Christ promised; *There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer*. Jesus Christ is the great Deliverer, which supposes mankind in a state of misery and danger. In Isaiah it is, *the Redeemer shall come to Zion*. There he is called the *Redeemer*; here, the *Deliverer*; he delivers in a way of redemption, by a price. There he is said to come *to Zion*, because when the prophet prophesied, he was yet to come into the world, and Zion was his first head-quarters; thither he came, there he took up his residence: but when the apostle wrote this, he *was* come, he had been in Zion; and he is speaking of the fruits of his appearing, which shall come *out of Zion*; from thence, as from the spring, issued forth those streams of living water, which in the everlasting gospel watered the nations. *Out of Zion went forth the law*, Isa. 2. 3. Compare Luke 24. 47.

[2.] The end and purpose of this coming; *He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*. Christ's errand into the world was to turn away ungodliness, to turn away the guilt by the purchase of pardoning mercy, and to turn away the power by the pouring out of renewing grace; to save his people from *their sins*, (Matt. 1. 21.) to part betwixt us and our sins; that iniquity might not be our ruin, and that it might not be our ruler.

Especially to turn it away *from Jacob*; which is that for the sake of which he quotes the text, as a proof of the great kindness God intended for the seed of Jacob. What greater kindness could he do them than to turn away ungodliness from them, to take away that which comes between them and all happiness: take away sin, and then make way for all good? This is the blessing that Christ was sent to bestow upon the world, and to tender it to the Jews in the first place, (Acts 3. 26.) to *turn people from their iniquities*.

In Isaiah, it is, *The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob*; which shews who in Zion were to have a share in, and to reap benefit by, the deliverance promised, those, and those only, that leave their sins, and turn to God; to them Christ comes as a Redeemer, but as an Avenger to them that persist in impenitence. See Deut. 30. 2, 3. Those that turn from sin, will be owned as the true citizens of Zion, (Eph. 2. 19.) the right Jacob, Ps. 24. 4, 6. Putting both these readings together, we learn that none have an interest in Christ but those that turn from their sins, nor can any turn from their sins but by the strength of the grace of Christ.

For this is my covenant with them; this, that the Deliverer shall come to them; this, that *my Spirit shall not depart from them*, as it follows, Isa. 59. 21. God's gracious intentions concerning Israel were made the matter of a covenant, which the God that cannot lie could not but be true and faithful to. They were the *children of the covenant*, Acts 3. 25. The apostle adds, *when I shall take away their sins*; which some think refers to Isa. 27. 9. or only to the foregoing words, to *turn away ungodliness*. Pardon of sin is laid as the foundation of all the blessings of the new covenant; (Heb. 8. 12.) *For I will be merciful*. Now from all this he infers, that certainly God had great mercy in store for that people, something answerable to the extent of these rich promises: and he proves his inference (v. 29.) by this truth, *For the gifts and callings of God are without*

repentance. Repentance is sometimes taken for a change of mind, and so God never repents, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Sometimes for a change of way, and that is here understood; intimating the constancy and unchangeableness of that love of God, which is founded in election. Those gifts and callings are immutable; whom he so loves, he loves to the end. We find God repenting that he had given man a being, (Gen. 6. 6. *It repented the Lord that he had made man*;) and repenting that he had given a man honour and power; (1 Sam. 15. 11. *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king*;) but we never find God repenting that he had given man grace, or effectually called him; those gifts and callings are *without repentance*.

3. The time and extent of this conversion, when and where it is to be expected. It is called a *mystery*, (v. 25.) that which was not obvious, and which one would not expect upon the view of the present state of that people; who appeared generally so obstinate against Christ and christianity, that it was a riddle to talk of their unanimous conversion. The conversion of the Gentiles is called a *mystery*, Eph. 3. 3, 6, 9. The case of the rejected Jews seemed as bad now as that of the Gentiles had been. The work of conversion was carried on in a mystery. Now he would have them know so much of this mystery as to keep them humble, lest *you be wise in your own conceit*, lest you be so much puffed up with your church-membership, and trample upon the Jews. Ignorance is the cause of our self-conceit-edness. *I would not have you ignorant, lest you be wise in your own conceits.* Observe,

(1.) Their present state; *Blindness, in part, is hathened to Israel*, v. 25. Here is something to qualify it, that it is but *in part*; there is a remnant that see the things that belong to their peace; though part, the far greater part, are in blindness, v. 7, 8.

To the same purport, (v. 32.) *God has concluded them all in unbelief*; shut them up as in a prison; given them over to their own hearts' lusts. Shutting up is sometimes put for conviction, as Gal. 3. 22. They all stand before God convicted of unbelief. They would not believe. "Why then" (saith God) "you shall not." They peremptorily refused to submit to Christ and his government; which refusal of their's was, as it were, entered upon record in the court of Heaven, and was conclusive against them.

(2.) When this blessed change should be; when the *fulness of the Gentiles shall come in*, when the gospel has had its intended success, and made its progress in the Gentile world; compare, v. 12. The Jews shall continue in blindness, till God hath performed his whole work among the Gentiles, and then their turn will come next to be remembered. This was the purpose and ordination of God, for wise and holy ends; things should not be ripe for the Jews' conversion, till the church was replenished with the Gentiles; that it might appear that God's taking them again, was not because he had need of them, but of his own free grace.

(3.) The extent of it; *all Israel shall be saved*, v. 26. He will have mercy upon all, v. 32. Not every individual person, but the body of the people. Not that ever they should be restored to their covenant or peculiarity again, to have their priesthood and temple, and ceremonies again; (an end is put to all those things;) but they should be brought to believe in Christ the true Messiah whom they crucified, and be incorporated in the Christian church, and become one sheep-fold with the Gentiles under Christ the great Shepherd.

But the question is, concerning the accomplishment of all this.

[1.] Some think it is done already; when before,

and in, and after, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, multitudes of the Jews were convinced of their infidelity, and turned Christians; so many, that, considering how many millions of them were cut off in the destruction, we may reasonably conclude, that of those which survived, the greater part were Christian, and embodied in the Christian church; and it was a very inconsiderable number that persisted obstinate. For many ages Judea had, as other Christian provinces, their ministers and churches, and a face of religion. And most of this work, they suppose, was done toward the close of the ministry of the apostles, when the Gentiles were generally come in.

[2.] Others think, that it is yet to have its accomplishment toward the end of the world; that those Jews which yet wonderfully remain distinct from the rest of the nations by their names, customs, and religion, and are very numerous, especially in the Levant parts, shall, by the working of the Spirit with the word, be convinced of their sin, and brought generally to embrace the Christian faith, and to join in with the Christian churches; which will contribute much to their strength and beauty. Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?

33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? 35. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

The apostle having insisted so largely, through the greatest part of this chapter, upon reconciling the rejection of the Jews with the divine goodness, he concludes here with the acknowledgment and admiration of the divine wisdom and sovereignty in all this. Here the apostle does, with great affection and awe, adore,

1. The secrecy of the divine counsels; *O the depth!* in these proceedings toward the Jews and Gentiles; or, in general, the whole mystery of the gospel, which we cannot fully comprehend. *The riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God*, the abundant instances of his wisdom and knowledge, in the contriving and carrying on the work of our redemption by Christ; a depth which the angels pry into, 1 Pet. 1. 12. Much more may it puzzle any human understanding to give an account of the methods, and reasons, and designs, and reaches of it. Paul was as well acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of God as ever any mere man was; and yet he confesses himself at a loss in the contemplation; and despairing to find the bottom, he humbly sits down at the brink, and adores the depth. Those that know most in this state of imperfection, cannot but be most sensible of their own weakness and short-sightedness; and that after all their searches, and all their attainments in those searches, while they are here, they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness. Praise is *silent* to thee, Ps. 65. 1.

The depth of the riches. Men's riches of all kinds are shallow; you may soon see the bottom: but God's riches are deep; (Ps. 36. 6.) *Thy judgments are a great deep*. There is not only *depth* in the divine counsels, but *riches* too; which denotes an abundance of that which is precious and valuable; so complete are the dimensions of the divine counsels, they have not only depth and height, but

breadth and length, (Eph. 3. 18.) and that passing knowledge, v. 19.

Riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. His seeing of all things by one clear, and certain, and infallible view; all things that are, or ever were, or ever shall be; that all is naked and open before him: there is his *knowledge*. His ruling and ordering of all things, directing and disposing of them to his own glory, and the bringing about of his own purposes and counsels in all; that is his *wisdom*. And the vast reach of both these is such a depth as is past our fathoming, and we may soon lose ourselves in the contemplation of them. Such *knowledge is too wonderful for me*, Ps. 139. 6. Compare v. 17, 18.

How unsearchable are his judgments! that is, his counsels and purposes: and his *ways*, that is, the execution of these counsels and purposes. We know not what he designs; when the wheels are set in motion, and Providence has begun to work, we know not what he has in view; it is past *finding out*. This does not only overturn all our positive conclusions about the divine counsels, but it also checks all our curious inquiries.

Secret things belong not to us, Deut. 29. 29. God's way is in the sea, Ps. 77. 19. Compare Job 23. 8, 9. Ps. 97. 2. What he does, we know not now, John 13. 7. We cannot give a reason of God's proceedings, nor by searching find out God. See Job 5. 9.—9. 10. The judgments of his mouth, and the way of our duty, blessed be God, are plain and easy, it is a high-way; but the judgments of his hands, and the ways of his providence, are dark and mysterious, which therefore we must not pry into, but silently adore and acquiesce in.

The apostle speaks this here, especially with reference to that strange turn, the casting off of the Jews, and the entertainment of the Gentiles, with a purpose to take in the Jews again in due time; these were strange proceedings, the choosing of some, the refusing of others, and neither according to the probabilities of human conjecture. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes. These are methods unaccountable, concerning which we must say, *O the depth!*

Past finding out, ἀνεξετάστου—cannot be traced. God leaves no prints or footsteps behind him, does not make a path to shine after him; but his paths of providence are new every morning; he does not go the same way so often as to make a track of it.

How little a portion is heard of him! Job 26. 14. It follows, (v. 34.) *For who hath known the mind of the Lord?* Is there any creature made of his cabinet-council, or laid, as Christ was in the bosom of the Father? Is there any to whom he has imparted his counsels, or that is able, upon the view of his providences, to know the way that he takes? There is that vast distance and disproportion between God and man, between the Creator and the creature, as for ever excludes the thought of such an intimacy and familiarity.

The apostle makes the same challenge; (1 Cor. 2. 16.) *For who hath known the mind of the Lord?* And yet there he adds, *But we have the mind of Christ:* which intimates, that through Christ true believers, who have his Spirit, know so much of the mind of God as is necessary to their happiness. He that did know the mind of the Lord, he has declared him, John 1. 18. And so, though we know not the mind of the Lord, yet, if we have the mind of Christ, we have enough. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, Ps. 25. 14. *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?* See John 15. 15.

Or who has been his counsellor? He needs no counsellor, for he is infinitely wise; nor is any creature capable of being his counsellor; that would be like lighting a candle to the sun. This seems to

refer to that scripture, (Isa. 40. 13, 14.) *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, has taught him? With whom took he counsel?* &c. It is the substance of God's challenge to Job concerning the work of creation, (Job 38.) and is applicable to all the methods of his providence. It is nonsense for any man to prescribe to God, or to teach him how to govern the world.

II. The sovereignty of the divine counsels. In all these things God acts as a free agent, does what he will, because he will, and gives not account of any of his matters; (Job 23. 13.—33. 13.) and yet there is no unrighteousness with him. To clear which,

1. He challenges any to prove God a debtor to him; (v. 35.) *Who hath first given to him?* Who is there of all the creatures, that can prove God is beholden to him? Whatever we do for him, or devote to him, it must be with that acknowledgment, which is for ever an estoppel (a bar) to such demands; (1 Chron. 29. 14.) *Of thine own we have given thee.* All the duties we can perform, are not requitals, but restitutions rather.

If any can prove that God is their debtor, the apostle here stands bound for the payment, and proclaims, in God's name, that payment is ready, *It shall be recompensed to him again.* It is certain, God will let nobody lose by him; but never any one yet durst make a demand of this kind, or attempt to prove it.

This is here suggested, to silence the clamours of the Jews. When God took away their visible church-privileges from them, he did but take his own: and may he not do what he will with his own? Give or withhold his grace where and when he pleases? To silence likewise the insultings of the Gentiles. When God sent the gospel among them, and gave so many of them grace and wisdom to accept of it, it was not because he owed them so much favour, or that they could challenge it as a debt, but of his own good pleasure.

2. He resolves all into the sovereignty of God; (v. 36.) *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:* God is all in all. All things in heaven and earth, especially those things which relate to our salvation, the things that belong to our peace, they are *all of him* by way of creation, *through him* by way of providential influence, that they may be *to him* in their final tendency and result. *Of God*, as the spring and fountain of all; *through Christ*, God-man as the conveyance; *to God* as the ultimate end. These three include, in general, all God's casual relations to his creatures; *of him*, as the first efficient; *through him*, as the supreme dirigent; *to him*, as the ultimate final cause; for the Lord hath made all for himself, Rev. 4. 11.

If all be *of him*, and *through him*, there is all the reason in the world, that all should be *to him*, and *for him*. It is a necessary circulation; if the rivers receive their waters from the sea, they return them to the sea again, Eccl. 1. 7. To do all to the glory of God, is to make a virtue of necessity; for all shall in the end be *to him*, whether we will or no.

And so he concludes with a short doxology; *To whom be glory for ever, Amen.* God's universal agency as the first cause, the sovereign ruler, and the last end, ought to be the matter of our adoration. Thus all his works do praise him objectively; but his saints do bless him actively; they hand that praise to him, which all the creatures do minister matter for, Ps. 145. 10.

He had been discoursing at large of the counsels of God concerning man, sitting the point with a great deal of accuracy; but, after all, he concludes with the acknowledgment of the divine sovereignty, as that into which all these things must be ultimately resolved, and in which alone the mind can safely and sweetly rest. This is, if not the scholastical way,

yet the christian way, of disputation. Whatever are the premises, let God's glory be the conclusion; especially when we come to talk of the divine counsels and actings, it is best for us to turn our arguments into awful and serious adorations. The glorified saints, that see furthest into these mysteries, never dispute, but praise to eternity.

CHAP. XII.

The apostle, having at large cleared and confirmed the prime fundamental doctrines of christianity, comes in the next place to press the principal duties. We mistake our religion, if we look upon it only as a system of notions, and a guide to speculation. No, it is a practical religion, that tends to the right ordering of the conversation. It is designed not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives. From the method of the apostle's writing in this, as in some other of the epistles, (as from the managery of the principal ministers of state in Christ's kingdom,) the stewards of the mysteries of God may take direction how to divide the word of truth: not to press duty abstracted from privilege, nor privilege abstracted from duty; but let both go together, with a complicated design, they will greatly promote and befriend each other. The duties are drawn from the privileges, by way of inference. The foundation of christian practice must be laid in christian knowledge and faith. We must first understand how we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and then we shall know the better how to walk in him.

There is a great deal of duty prescribed in this chapter; the exhortations are short and pithy, briefly summing up what is good, and what the Lord our God in Christ requires of us. It is an abridgment of the christian directory, an excellent heap of rules for the right ordering of the conversation, as becomes the gospel.

It is joined to the foregoing discourse by the word, therefore. It is the practical application of doctrinal truths, that is the life of preaching. He had been discoursing at large of justification by faith, and of the riches of free grace, and the pledges and assurances we have of the glory that is to be revealed. From hence carnal libertines would be apt to infer, "Therefore we may live as we list, and walk in the way of our hearts and the sight of our eyes." No, that does not follow; the faith that justifies, is a faith that works by love. And there is no other way to heaven, but the way of holiness and obedience. Therefore what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

The particular exhortations of this chapter are reducible to the three principal heads of christian duty; our duty to God, to ourselves, and to our brother. The grace of God teaches us, in general, to live godly, soberly, and righteously, and to deny all that which is contrary hereunto. Now this chapter will give us to understand what godliness, sobriety, and righteousness, are, though somewhat intermixed.

I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. 2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. 3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5. So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith; 7. Or minis-

try, *let us wait* on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8. Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. 9. *Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10. *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. 14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16. *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

We may observe here, according to the scheme mentioned in the contents, the apostle's exhortations.

I. Concerning our duty to God. We see what is godliness.

1. It is to surrender ourselves to God, and so to lay a good foundation. We must first give *our own selves* unto the Lord, 2 Cor. 8. 5. This is here pressed as the spring of all duty and obedience, v. 1, 2. Man consists of body and soul, Gen. 2. 7. Eccl. 12. 7.

(1.) The body must be presented to him, v. 1. *The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body*, 1 Cor. 6. 13, 14. The exhortation is here introduced very pathetically; *I beseech you, brethren*. Though he was a great apostle, yet he calls the meanest christians *brethren*; a term of affection and concern. He uses entreaty; that is the gospel-way; *as though God did beseech you by us*, 2 Cor. 5. 20. Though he might with authority command, yet for love's sake he rather beseeches, Philem. v. 8, 9. *The poor useth entreaty*, Prov. 18. 23. This is to insinuate the exhortation, that it might come with the more pleasing power. Many are soonest wrought upon, if they be accosted kindly; are more easily led than driven. Now observe,

[1.] The duty pressed. To present our *bodies* a *living sacrifice*; alluding to the sacrifices under the law, which were presented or set before God at the altar, ready to be offered to him. *Your bodies*, your whole selves; so expressed, because under the law the *bodies* of beasts were offered in sacrifice, 1 Cor. 6. 20. Our *bodies* and *spirits* are designed. The offering was *sacrificed* by the priest; but *presented*

by the offerer, who transferred to God all his right, title, and interest in it, by laying his hand on the head of it. *Sacrifice* is here taken for whatsoever is by God's own appointment dedicated to himself; see 1 Pet. 2. 5. We are both temple, priest, and sacrifice; as Christ was in his peculiar sacrificing. There were sacrifices of atonement, and sacrifices of acknowledgment. Christ is the only sacrifice of atonement, who was once offered to bear the sins of many; but our persons and performances, tendered to God through Christ our priest, are as sacrifices of acknowledgment to the honour of God.

Presenting of them denotes a voluntary act, done by virtue of that absolute despotic power, which the will has over the *body* and all the members of it. It must be a free-will offering. *Your bodies*; not your beasts. Those legal offerings, as they had their power *from* Christ, so they had their period *in* Christ.

The presenting of the body to God, implies not only the avoiding of the sins that are committed with or against the body, but the using of the body as a servant of the soul in the service of God. It is to *glorify God with our bodies*, (1 Cor. 6. 20.) to engage our bodies in the duties of immediate worship, and in a diligent attendance to our particular callings, and to be willing to suffer for God with our bodies, when we are called to it. It is to yield the members of our bodies, as *instruments of righteousness*, ch. 6. 13. Though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet in its place it is a proof and product of the dedication of our souls to God.

First, Present them a *living sacrifice*; not killed as the sacrifices under the law. A Christian makes his body a sacrifice to God, though he do not give it to be burned. A body sincerely devoted to God is a living sacrifice.

A *living sacrifice*; by way of *allusion*; (that which was dead of itself, might not be eaten, much less sacrificed, Deut. 14. 21.) and by way of *opposition*; "The sacrifice was to be slain, but you may be sacrificed, and yet live on;" an unbloody sacrifice. The barbarous heathen sacrificed their children to their idol-gods, not living, but slain sacrifices: but God will have mercy, and not such sacrifice, though life is forfeited to him.

A *living sacrifice*, inspired with the spiritual life of the soul. It is Christ living in the soul by faith, that makes the body a living sacrifice, Gal. 2. 20. Holy love kindles the sacrifices, puts life into the duties; see ch. 6. 13. *Alive*, that is, to God, v. 11.

Secondly, They must be *holy*. There is a relative holiness in every sacrifice, as dedicated to God. But beside that, there must be that real holiness, which stands in an entire rectitude of heart and life, by which we are conformed in both to the nature and will of God: even our bodies must not be made the instruments of sin and uncleanness, but set apart for God, and put to holy uses, as the vessels of the tabernacle were holy, being devoted to God's service.

It is the soul that is the proper subject of holiness: but a sanctified soul communicates a holiness to the body it acts and animates. That is holy, which is according to the will of God; when the bodily actions are so, the body is holy. They are the *temples of the Holy Ghost*, 1 Cor. 6. 19. *Possess the body in sanctification*, 1 Thess. 4. 4, 5.

[2.] The arguments to enforce this; which are three.

First, Consider the mercies of God; *I beseech you by the mercies of God*. An affectionate obtestation, and which should melt us into a compliance; *διὰ τῶν ἐλεημεριῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ*. This is an argument most sweetly cogent. There is the mercy that is *in* God, and the mercy that is *from* God; mercy in the spring, and mercy in the streams: both are included here; but especially gospel-mercies, (mentioned, ch. 11.) the

transferring of what the Jews forfeited and lost by their unbelief unto us Gentiles, (Eph. 3. 4—6.) the sure mercies of David, Isa. 55. 3. God is a *merciful* God, therefore let us present our bodies to him; he will be sure to use them kindly, and knows how to consider the frames of them, for he is of infinite compassion. We receive from him every day the fruits of his mercy; particularly, mercy to our bodies; he made them, he maintains them, he bought them, he has put a great dignity upon them. It is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed; that our souls are held in life: and the greatest mercy of all is, that Christ hath made not his body only, but his soul, an offering for sin; that he gave himself for us, and gives himself to us. Now, surely we cannot but be studying what we shall render to the Lord for all this. And what shall we render? Let us render ourselves as an acknowledgment of all these favours; all we are, all we have, all we can do; and after all, it is but very poor returns for very rich receivings: and yet, because it is what we have,

Secondly, It is *acceptable to God*. The great end we should all labour after, is, to be *accepted of the Lord*, (2 Cor. 5. 9.) to have him well-pleased with our persons and performances. Now these living sacrifices are *acceptable to God*; while the sacrifices of the wicked, though fat and costly, are an abomination to the Lord. It is God's great condescension, that he will vouchsafe to accept of any thing in us; and we can desire no more to make us happy; and if the presenting ourselves will but please him, we may easily conclude that we cannot bestow ourselves better.

Thirdly, It is our *reasonable service*. There is an act of reason in it; for it is the soul that presents the body. Blind devotion, that has ignorance for the mother and nurse of it, is fit to be paid only to those dung-hill gods, that have eyes, and see not. Our God must be served in the spirit and with the understanding. There is all the reason in the world for it, and no good reason can possibly be produced against it. Come now, and *let us reason together*, Isa. 1. 18. God does not impose upon us any thing hard or unreasonable, but that which is altogether agreeable to the principles of right reason.

Τὴν λατρίαν κατέχει τὸ σῶμα—your service according to the word; so it may be read. The word of God does not leave out the body in holy worship. That service only is acceptable to God, which is according to the written word. It must be gospel-worship, spiritual worship.

That is a *reasonable service*, which we are able and ready to give a reason for; in which we understand ourselves. God deals with us as with rational creatures, and will have us so to deal with him. Thus must the body be presented to God.

(2.) The mind must be renewed for him. This is pressed, (v. 2.) "*be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*; see to it that there be a saving change wrought in you, and that it be carried on." Conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind; a change not of the substance, but of the qualities, of the soul. It is the same with making a *new heart* and a *new spirit*; new dispositions and inclinations; new sympathies and antipathies; the understanding enlightened, the conscience softened, the thoughts rectified, the will bowed to the will of God, and the affections made spiritual and heavenly: so that the man is not what he was; old things are passed away, all things are become new; he acts from new principles, by new rules, with new designs. The mind is the acting, ruling part of us; so that the renewing of that is the renewing of the whole man; for out of it are the *issues of life*, Prov. 4. 23. The progress of sanctification, dying to sin more and more, and living to righteousness more and more, is

the carrying on of this renewing work, till it be perfected in glory.

This is called the *transforming* of us; it is like putting on a new shape and figure. *Μεταμορφώσθε—Be ye metamorphosed.* The transfiguration of Christ is expressed by this word, (Matt. 17. 2.) when he put on a heavenly glory, which made his face to shine like the sun; and the same word is used, (2. Cor. 3. 18.) where we are said to be *changed into the same image from glory to glory.*

This transformation is here pressed as a duty; not that we can work such a change ourselves; we could as soon make a new world as make a new heart by any power of our own; it is God's work, Ezek. 11. 19.—36. 26, 27. *But be ye transformed*, that is, "use the means which God hath appointed and ordained for it." It is God that turns us, and then we are turned; but we must *frame our doings to turn*, Hos. 5. 4. "Lay your souls under the changing transforming influences of the blessed Spirit; seek unto God for grace in the use of all the means of grace." Though the new man be *created of God*, yet we must *put it on*, (Eph. 4. 24.) and be pressing forward toward perfection.

Now in this verse we may further observe,

[1.] What is the great enemy to this renewing, which we must avoid; and that is, conformity to this world; *Be not conformed to this world.* All the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus must be nonconformists to this world. *Μη συσχηματίζεσθε—Do not fashion yourselves* according to the world. We must not conform to the things of the world; they are mutable, and the fashion of them is passing away; do not conform either to the lusts of the flesh, or the lusts of the eye. We must not conform to the men of the world, of that world which lies in wickedness; not walk according to the *course of this world*, (Eph. 2. 2.) that is, we must not follow a multitude to do evil, Exod. 23. 2. If sinners entice us, we must not consent to them, but in our places witness against them. Nay even in things indifferent, and which are not in themselves sinful, we must so far not conform to the custom and way of the world, as not to act by the world's dictates as our chief rule, nor to aim at the world's favours as our highest end. True christianity consists much in a sober singularity. Yet we must take heed of the extreme of affected rudeness and moroseness, which some run into. In civil things, the light of nature and the custom of nations take place for our conduct; and the rule of the gospel in those cases is a rule of direction, not a rule of contraries.

[2.] What is the great effect of this renewing, which we must labour after; *That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* By the will of God here we are to understand his revealed will concerning our duty, what the Lord our God requires of us. This is the will of God in general, even our sanctification: that will which we pray may be done by us as it is done by the angels; especially his will, as it is revealed in the New Testament, where he hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.

First, The will of God is *good, and acceptable, and perfect*; three excellent properties of a law. It is *good*, (Mic. 6. 8.) it is exactly consonant to the eternal reason of good and evil. It is good in itself, it is good for us. Some think the evangelical law is here called *good*, in distinction from the ceremonial law, which consisted of *statutes that were not good*, Ezek. 20. 25. It is *acceptable*, it is pleasing to God; that and that only, is so, which is prescribed by him. The only way to attain his favour as the end, is to conform to his will as the rule. It is *perfect*, to which nothing can be added. The revealed will of God is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, containing all things which tend to the perfection of the

man of God, to furnish us thoroughly to every good work, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

Secondly, That it concerns christians to *prove* what is that will of God, which is good, and acceptable, and perfect; to know it with judgment and approbation; to know it experimentally; to know the excellency of the will of God by the experience of a conformity to it. It is to approve *things that are excellent*, (Phil. 1. 10.) it is *δοκιμάζω*, (the same word that is used here,) to try things that differ; in doubtful cases readily to apprehend what the will of God is, and to close in with it. It is to be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, Isa. 11. 3.

Thirdly, That those are best able to prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God, who are *transformed by the renewing of their mind*. A living principle of grace is in the soul, as far as it prevails, an unbiassed, unprejudiced, judgment concerning the things of God. It disposes the soul to receive and entertain the revelations of the divine will. The promise is, (John 7. 17.) *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.* A good will can dispute and distinguish about the *will of God*; while an honest, humble heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, and is delivered into the mould of the word, loves it, and practises it, and has the relish and savour of it. Thus to be *godly*, is to surrender ourselves to God.

2. When this is done, to serve him in all manner of gospel-obedience. Some hints of this we have here, (v. 11, 12.) *Serving the Lord.* Wherefore do we present ourselves to him, but that we may serve him? Acts 27. 23. *Whose I am*; and then it follows, *whom I serve.* To be religious, is to *serve God*. How?

(1.) We must make a business of it, and not be slothful in that business. *Not slothful in business.* There is the business of the world, that of our particular calling, in which we must not be slothful, 1 Thess. 4. 11. But this seems to be meant of the business of *serving the Lord*; our *Father's business*, Luke 2. 49.

Those that would approve themselves christians indeed, must make religion their business, must choose it, and learn it, and give themselves to it; they must love it, and employ themselves in it, and abide by it, as their great and main business.

And having made it our business, we must not be *slothful* in it: not desire our own ease, and consult that, when it comes in competition with our duty. We must not drive on slowly in religion. Slothful servants will be reckoned with as wicked servants.

(2.) We must be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* God must be served with the spirit, (ch. 1. 9. John 4. 24.) under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Whatever we do in religion, it is pleasing to God no further than it is done with our spirits wrought upon by the Spirit of God. And there must be *fervency* in the Spirit; a holy zeal, and warmth, and ardency of affection in all we do: as those that love God not only with the heart and soul, but with all our hearts, and with all our souls. This is the holy fire that kindles the sacrifice, and carries it up to heaven, an offering of a sweet-smelling savour.

Serving the Lord. *Τὸ καὶ εὐχαρίστησις*; so some copies read it, *serving the time*, improving your opportunities, and making the best of them; complying with the present seasons of grace.

(3.) *Rejoicing in hope.* God is worshipped and honoured by our hope and trust in him, especially when we rejoice in that hope, take a complacency in that confidence; which argues a great assurance of the reality, and a great esteem of the excellency, of the good hoped for.

(4.) *Patient in tribulation.* Thus also God is served, not only by working for him when he calls

us to work, but by sitting still quietly when he calls us to suffer. *Patience* for God's sake, and with an eye to his will and glory, is true *fiety*. Observe, 'Those that rejoice in hope, are likely to be patient in tribulation. It is a believing prospect of the joy set before us, that bears up the spirit under all outward pressure.

(5.) *Continuing instant in prayer*. Prayer is a friend to hope and patience, and we do in it serve the Lord. *Προσκαιρηντες*. It signifies both fervency and perseverance in prayer. We should not be cold in the duty, nor soon weary of it, Luke 18. 1. 1 Thess. 5. 17. Eph. 6. 18. Col. 4. 2. This is our duty, which immediately respects God.

II. Concerning our duty which respects ourselves; this is sobriety.

1. A sober opinion of ourselves, v. 3. It is ushered in with a solemn preface; *I say, through the grace given unto me*: the grace of wisdom, by which he understood the necessity and excellency of this duty; the grace of apostleship, by which he had authority to press and enjoin it. "*I say it, who am commissioned to say it, in God's name. I say it, and it is not for you to gainsay it.*"

It is said to every one of us, one as well as another. Pride is a sin that is bred in the bone with all of us, and we have therefore each of us need to be cautioned and armed against it. *Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.* We must take heed of having too great an opinion of ourselves, or putting too high a valuation upon our own judgments, abilities, persons, performances. We must not be *self-conceited*, not esteem too much our own wisdom and other attainments; *not think ourselves to be something*, Gal. 6. 3. There is a high thought of ourselves, which we may and must have, to think ourselves too good to be the slaves of sin and drudges to this world. But, on the other hand, we should *think soberly*, we must have a low and modest opinion of ourselves and our own abilities, our gifts and graces, according to what we have received from God, and not otherwise: not to be confident and hot in matters of doubtful disputation; not stretch ourselves beyond our line; not judge and censure those that differ from us; not desire to make a fair shew in the flesh. These and the like are the fruits of a sober opinion of ourselves.

The words will bear yet another sense agreeable enough. *Of himself*, is not in the original; therefore it may be read, *That no man be wise above what he ought to be wise, but be wise unto sobriety.* We must not exercise ourselves in *things too high* for us, (Ps. 131. 1, 2.) not intrude into those things which we have not seen, (Col. 2. 18.) those secret things which *belong not to us*, (Deut. 29. 29.) not covet to be wise above what is written. There is a knowledge that puffs up, which reaches after forbidden fruit. We must take heed of that, and labour after that knowledge which tends to sobriety, to the rectifying of the heart, and the reforming of the life.

Some understand it of the *sobriety* which keeps us in our own place and station, from intruding into the gifts and offices of others. See an instance of this sober, modest care in the exercise of the greatest spiritual gifts, 2 Cor. 10. 13—15.

To this head refers also that exhortation, (v. 16.) *Be not wise in your own conceits.* It is good to be wise, but it is bad to think ourselves so; for there is more hope of a fool, than of him that is wise in his own eyes. It was an excellent thing for Moses to have his face shine, and not know it.

Now the reasons why we must have such a sober opinion of ourselves, and our own abilities and attainments, are these:

(1.) Because whatever we have that is good, *God hath dealt it to us*; every good and perfect gift comes from above, James 1. 17.

What have we that we have not received? And if we have received it, why then do we boast? 1 Cor. 4. 7. The best and most useful man in the world is no more, no better, than what the free grace of God makes him every day. When we are thinking of ourselves, we must remember to think not how we have attained, as though our might and the power of our hand had gotten us these gifts; but think how kind God hath been to us, for it is he that gives us power to do any thing that is good, and in him is all our sufficiency.

(2.) Because God deals out his gifts in a certain measure; according to *the measure of faith*. Observe, the measure of spiritual gifts he calls *the measure of faith*; for that is the radical grace. What we have and do, that is good, is so far right and acceptable as it is founded in faith, and flows from faith, and no further. Now, faith and other spiritual gifts with it are dealt by *measure*, according as Infinite Wisdom sees meet for us. Christ had the Spirit given him *without measure*, John 3. 34. But the saints have it by *measure*; see Eph. 4. 7. Christ, who had gifts without measure, was meek and lowly; and shall we, that are stinted, be proud and self-conceited?

(3.) Because God has dealt out gifts to others, as well as to us: *Dealt to every man*. Had we the monopoly of the Spirit, or a patent to be sole proprietors of spiritual gifts, there might be some pretence for this conceitedness of ourselves; but others have their share as well as we. God is a common Father, and Christ a common Root, to all the saints, who all derive virtue from him; and therefore it ill becomes us to lift up ourselves, and to despise others, as if we only were the people in favour with Heaven, and wisdom should die with us.

This reasoning he illustrates by a comparison taken from the members of the natural body; (as 1 Cor. 12. 12. Eph. 4. 16.) *As we have many members in one body*, &c. v. 4, 5. Here observe,

[1.] All the saints make up *one body in Christ*, who is the Head of the body, and the common Centre of their unity. Believers lie not in the world as a confused disorderly heap, but are organized and knit together, as they are united to one common Head, and acted and animated by one common Spirit.

[2.] Particular believers are *members* of this body, constituent parts, which speak them less than the whole; and in relation to the whole, deriving life and spirits from the head. Some members in the body are bigger and more useful than others, and each receives spirits from the head according to its proportion. If the little finger should receive as much nourishment as the leg, how unseemly and prejudicial would it be! We must remember, that we are not the whole; we think above what is meet, if we think so; we are but parts and members.

[3.] All the members have not the same office, (v. 4.) but each hath its respective place and work assigned it. The office of the eye is to see, the office of the hand is to work, &c. So in the mystical body, some are qualified for, and called to, one sort of work; others are, in like manner, fitted for, and called to, another sort of work. Magistrates, ministers, and people, in a christian commonwealth, have their several offices, and must not intrude one upon another, or clash in the discharge of their several offices.

[4.] Each member hath its place and office, for the good and benefit of the whole, and of every other member. We are not only members of Christ, but we are *members one of another*, v. 5. We stand in relation one to another; we are engaged to do all the good we can one to another, and to act in conjunction for the common benefit. See this illustrated at large, 1 Cor. 12. 14, &c. Therefore we must

not be puffed up with a conceit of our own attainments, because, whatever we have, as we received it, so we received it not for ourselves, but for the good of others.

2. A sober use of the gifts that God hath given us. As we must not on the one hand be proud of our talents, so on the other hand we must not bury them. Take heed lest, under a pretence of humility and self-denial, we be slothful in laying out ourselves for the good of others. We must not say, "I am nothing, therefore I will sit still, and do nothing;" but, "I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost in the strength of the grace of Christ." He specifies the ecclesiastical offices appointed in particular churches; in the discharge of which, each must study to do his own duty, for the preserving of order, and the promoting of edification in the church; each knowing his place, and fulfilling it.

Having then gifts. The following induction of particulars supplies the sense of this general. *Having gifts*, let us use them. Authority and ability for the ministerial work are the gift of God.

Gifts differing. The immediate design is different, though the ultimate tendency of all is the same. According to the grace, *χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν*. The free grace of God is the spring and original of all the gifts that are given to men. It is grace that appoints the office, qualifies and inclines the person, works both to will and to do. There were in the primitive church extraordinary gifts of tongues, of discerning, of healing; but he speaks here of those that are ordinary. Compare 1 Cor. 12. 4. 1 Tim. 4. 14. 1 Pet. 4. 10.

Seven particular gifts he specifies, (v. 6—8.) which seem to be meant of so many distinct offices, used by the prudential constitution of many of the primitive churches, especially the larger.

There are two general ones here expressed by *prophesying* and *ministering*; the former the work of the *bishops*, the latter the work of the *deacons*; which were the only two standing officers, Phil. 1. 1. But the particular work belonging to each of these, might be, and, it should seem, was, divided and allotted by common consent and agreement, that it might be done the more effectually; because that which is every body's work, is no body's work; and he despatches his business best, that is *vir unus negotiū—attends to one thing*. Thus David sorted the Levites; (1 Chron. 23. 4, 5.) and in this, *wisdom is profitable to direct*. The five latter will therefore be reduced to the two first.

(1.) *Prophecy.* Whether *prophecy*, let us *prophesy according to the proportion of faith*. It is not meant of the extraordinary gifts of foretelling things to come, but the ordinary office of preaching the word: so *prophesying* is taken, 1 Cor. 14. 1—3, &c. 1 Cor. 11. 4. 1 Thess. 5. 20. The work of the Old Testament prophets was not only to foretell future things, but to warn the people concerning sin and duty, and to be their remembrancers concerning that which they knew before. And thus gospel-preachers are prophets, and do indeed, as far as the revelation of the word goes, foretell things to come. Preaching refers to the eternal condition of the children of men, points directly at a future state.

Now those that preach the word, must do it according to the proportion of faith—*κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως*; that is,

[1.] As to the manner of our prophesying, it must be according to the proportion of the *grace of faith*. He had spoken (v. 3.) of the *measure of faith* dealt to every man. Let him that preaches set all the faith he hath on work, to impress the truths he preaches upon his own heart in the first place. As people cannot hear well, so ministers cannot preach well, without faith. First, *believe* and then *speak*, Ps.

116. 10. 2 Cor. 4. 13. And we must remember the proportion of faith: that, though all men have not faith, yet a great many have beside ourselves: and therefore we must allow others to have a share of knowledge and ability to instruct, as well as we, even those that in lesser things differ from us. "*Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself*; and do not make it a ruling rule to others, remembering that thou hast but thy proportion."

[2.] As to the matter of our prophesying, it must be according to the proportion of the doctrine of faith, as it is revealed in the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament. By this rule of faith the Bereans tried Paul's preaching, Acts 17. 11. Compare Acts 26. 22. Gal. 1. 9. There are some staple-truths, as I may call them; some *prima axiomata—first axioms*, plainly and uniformly taught in the scripture, which are the touchstone of preaching, by which (though we must not *despise prophesying*,) we must *prove all things*, and then *hold fast that which is good*, 1 Thess. 5. 20, 21. Truths that are more dark, must be examined by those that are more clear; and then entertained, when they are found to agree and comport with the analogy of faith; for it is certain, one truth can never contradict another.

See here what ought to be the great care of preachers—to preach sound doctrine, according to the form of wholesome words, Tit. 2. 8. 2 Tim. 1. 13. It is not so necessary that the prophesying be according to the proportion of art, the rules of logic and rhetoric; but it is necessary that it be according to the proportion of faith: for it is the word of faith that we preach.

Now there are two particular works, which he that prophesieth hath to mind—*teaching* and *exhorting*; proper enough to be done by the same person, at the same time; and when he does the one, let him mind that; when he does the other, let him do that too as well as he can. If, by agreement between the ministers of a congregation, this work be divided, either constantly or interchangeably, so that one teaches and the other exhorts, that is, (in our modern dialect,) one expounds, and the other preaches, let each do his work according to the proportion of faith.

First, Let him that teacheth wait on teaching. Teaching is the bare explaining and proving of gospel-truths, without practical application, as in the expounding of the scripture. Pastors and teachers are the same office, (Eph. 4. 11.) but the particular work somewhat different. Now he that has a faculty of teaching, and has undertaken that province, let him stick to it. It is a good gift, let him use it, and give his mind to it. He that teacheth, let him be in his teaching; so some supply it, Ὁ διδάσκων, ἐν τῷ διδάσκειν. Let him be frequent and constant, and diligent in it; let him abide in that which is his proper work, and be in it as his element. See 1 Tim. 4. 15, 16. where it is explained by two words, ἐν τῷ τοῦτο ἰσθῆναι, and ἵπικνεῖν αὐτοῖς, be in these things and continue in them.

Secondly, Let him that exhorteth, wait on exhortation. Let him give himself to that. This is the work of the pastor, as the former of the teacher; to apply gospel-truths and rules more closely to the case and condition of the people, and to press upon them that which is more practical. Many that are very accurate in teaching, may yet be very cold and unskilful in exhorting; and on the contrary. The one requires a clearer head, the other a warmer heart. Now where these gifts are evidently separated, (that the one excels in the one, and the other in the other,) it conduces to edification to divide the work accordingly; and whatsoever the work is, that we undertake, let us mind it.

To wait on our work, is to bestow the best of our

time and thoughts upon it, to lay hold on all opportunities for it; and to study, not only to do it, but to do it well.

(2.) *Ministry.* If a man hath *δυναμειν*—the office of a deacon, or assistant to the pastor and teacher, let him use that office well; a churchwarden, (suppose,) an elder, or an overseer of the poor; and perhaps there were more put into these offices, and there was more solemnity in them, and a greater stress of care and business lay upon them in the primitive churches, than we are now well aware of. It includes all those offices which concern the *τὰ ἔξω* of the church, the outward business of the house of God. See Neh. 11. 16. *Serving tables*, Acts 6. 2. Now he on whom this care of ministering is devolved, let him attend to it with faithfulness and diligence; particularly,

[1.] *He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.* Those church-officers, that were the stewards of the church's alms, collected money, and distributed it according as the necessities of the poor were; let them do it *ἐν ἀπλότητι*—liberally and faithfully; not converting what they receive, to their own use, or distributing it with any sinister design, or with respect of persons: not froward and peevish with the poor, or seeking pretences to put them by; but with all sincerity and integrity, having no other intention in it than to glorify God, and do good.

Some understand it in general of all almsgiving; He that hath wherewithal, let him give, and give plentifully and liberally; so the word is translated, 2 Cor. 8. 2.—9. 13. God loves a cheerful, bountiful giver.

[2.] *He that ruleth, with diligence.* It should seem, he means those that were assistants to the pastors, in exercising church-discipline, as their eyes, and hands, and mouth, in the government of the church; or those ministers that in the congregation did chiefly undertake and apply themselves to this ruling work; for we find those ruling, that laboured in the word and doctrine, 1 Tim. 5. 17. Now such must do it *with diligence*. It denotes both care and industry to discover what is amiss, to reduce those that go astray, to reprove and admonish those that are fallen, to keep the church pure. Those must take a great deal of pains, that will approve themselves faithful in the discharge of this trust, and not let slip any opportunity that may facilitate and advance that work.

[3.] *He that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.* Some think it is meant in general of all that in any thing shew mercy; let them be willing to it, and take a pleasure in it; God loves a cheerful giver. But it seems to be meant of some particular church-officers, whose work it was to take care of the sick, and strangers; and they were generally widows, that were in that matter servants to the church; deaconesses; (1 Tim. 5. 9, 10.) though others, it is likely might be employed. Now this must be done with *cheerfulness*. A pleasing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miserable; when they see it is not done grudgingly and unwillingly, but with pleasant looks and gentle words, and all possible indications of readiness and alacrity. Those that have to do with them who are sick and sore, and commonly cross and peevish, have need to put on not only patience, but cheerfulness, to make the work the more easy and pleasant to them, and the more acceptable to God.

III. Concerning that part of our duty which respects our brethren: of which we have many instances, in brief exhortations.

Now all our duty towards one another, is summed up in one word, and that a sweet word, *love*. In that is laid the foundation of all our mutual duty; and therefore he mentions that first, which is the every of Christ's disciples, and the great law of our religion; *Let love be without dissimulation*: not in

compliment and pretence, but in reality: *not in word and tongue only*, 1 John 3. 18. The right love is love unfeigned; not as the kisses of an enemy, which are deceitful. We should be glad of an opportunity to *prove the sincerity of our love*, 2 Cor. 8. 8.

More particularly, there is a love owing to our friends, and to our enemies. He specifies both.

1. To our friends. He that hath friends, must shew himself friendly. There is a mutual love that Christians owe, and must pay.

(1.) An affectionate love; (v. 10.) *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love*, *φιλαδέλφεια*; it signifies not only love, but a readiness and inclination to love; the most genuine and free affection, kindness flowing out as from a spring. It properly denotes the love of parents to their children; which as it is the most tender, so it is the most natural, of any other; unforced, unconstrained; such must our love be to one another; and such it will be, where there is a new nature, and the law of love is written in the heart. This kind affection puts us on to express ourselves both in word and action with the most courtesy and obligingness that may be. *One to another.* This may recommend the grace of love to us, that, as it is made our duty to love others, so it is as much their duty to love us. And what can be sweeter on this side heaven, than to love and be beloved? He that thus watereth, shall be watered also himself.

(2.) A respectful love; *In honour preferring one another.* Instead of contending for superiority, let us be forward to give to others the pre-eminence. This is explained, Phil. 2. 3. *Let each esteem other better than themselves.* And there is this good reason for it, because, if we know our own hearts, we know more evil by ourselves than we do by any one else in the world. We should be forward to take notice of the gifts and graces, and performances of our brethren, and value them accordingly; be more forward to *praise* another, and more pleased to hear another *praised*, than ourselves; *τῷ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προτιθέμενοι*—going before, or leading one another in honour; so some read it: not in taking honour, but in giving honour. "Strive which of you shall be most forward to pay respect to those to whom it is due, and to perform all christian offices of love (which are all included in the word *honour*) to your brethren, as there is occasion. Let all your contention be, which shall be most humble, and useful, and condescending." So the sense is the same with Tit. 3. 14. *Let them learn, προτιθεσθαι*—to go before in good works. For though we must *prefer* others (as our translation reads it,) and put on others, as more capable and deserving than ourselves, yet we must not make that an excuse for our lying by, and doing nothing; nor, under a pretence of honouring others, and their serviceableness and performances, indulge ourselves in ease and slothfulness. Therefore he immediately adds, (v. 11.) *Not slothful in business.*

(3.) A liberal love; (v. 13.) *Distributing to the necessities of saints.* It is but a mock love, which rests in the verbal expressions of kindness and respect, while the wants of our brethren call for real supplies, and it is in the power of our hands to furnish them.

[1.] It is no strange thing for saints in this world to want necessities for the support of their natural life. In those primitive times, prevailing persecutions must needs reduce many of the suffering saints to great extremities; and still, the poor, even the poor saints, we have always with us. Surely the things of this world are not the best things; if they were, the saints, who are the favourites of heaven would not be put off with so little of them.

[2.] It is the duty of those who have wherewithal to *distribute*, or (as it might better be read,) to *communicate* to those necessities. It is not enough to

draw out the *soul*, but we must draw out the *purse*, to the hungry. See Jam. 2. 15, 16. 1 John 3. 17.

Communicating—*κοινωνήσας*. It intimates that our poor brethren have a kind of interest in that which God hath given us; and that our relieving of them should come from a sense and fellow-feeling of their wants, as though we suffered with them. The charitable benevolence of the Philippians to Paul, is called their communicating *with his affliction*, Phil. 4. 14.

We must be ready, as we have ability and opportunity, to relieve any that are in want; but we are in a special manner bound to communicate to the *saints*. There is a common love owing to our fellow-creatures, but a special love owing to our fellow-Christians; (Gal. 6. 10.) *Especially to them who are of the household of faith*.

Communicating. *ταῖς μνήμας*—to the memories of the saints; so some of the ancients read it, instead of *ταῖς χρεμαῖς*. There is a debt owing to the memory of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; to value it, to vindicate it, to embalm it. Let the memory of the just be blessed; so some read, Prov. 10. 7.

He mentions another branch of this bountiful love; *given to hospitality*. Those who have houses of their own, should be ready to entertain those who go about doing good, or who, for fear of persecution, are forced to wander for shelter. They had not then so much of the convenience of common inns as we have; or the wandering Christians durst not frequent them; or they had not wherewithal to bear the charges; and therefore it was a special kindness to bid them welcome on free-cost. Nor is it yet an antiquated, superseded duty; as there is occasion, we must welcome strangers, for we know not the heart of a stranger. *I was a stranger, and ye took me in*, is mentioned as one instance of the mercifulness of those that shall obtain mercy: *τὸν φιλοξενῶν δούλους*—following or pursuing hospitality. It intimates, not only that we must take opportunity, but that we must seek opportunity, thus to shew mercy. As Abraham, who sat at the tent-door, (Gen. 18. 1.) and Lot, who sat in the gate of Sodom, (Gen. 19. 1.) expecting travellers, whom they might meet and prevent with a kind invitation, and so they entertained angels unawares, Heb. 13. 2.

(4.) A sympathizing love; (v. 15.) *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*. Where there is a mutual love between the members of the mystical body, there will be such a fellow-feeling. See 1 Cor. 12. 26. True love will interest us in the sorrows and joys of one another, and teach us to make them our own. Observe the common mixture in this world, some *rejoicing*, and others *weeping*; (as the people, Ezra 3. 12, 13.) for the trial, as of other graces, so of brotherly love and Christian sympathy. Not that we must participate in the sinful mirths or mournings of any, but only in just and reasonable joys and sorrows: not envying those that prosper, but rejoicing with them; truly glad that others have the success and comfort which we have not; not despising those that are in trouble, but concerned for them, and ready to help them, as being ourselves in the body. This is to do as God does; who not only has *pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*, (Ps. 35. 27.) but is likewise *afflicted in all their afflictions*, Isa. 63. 9.

(5.) A united love; “*Be of the same mind one toward another*; (v. 16.) labour, as much as you can, to agree in apprehension; and wherein you come short of that, yet agree in affection; endeavour to be all one, not affecting to clash, and contradict, and thwart one another; but keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Phil. 2. 2.—3. 15, 16. 1 Cor. 1. 10. *τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονεῖτε*—*wishing the same good to others, that you do to yourselves*,” so some

understand it. This is to love our brethren as ourselves, desiring their welfare as our own.

(6.) A condescending love; *Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate*, v. 16. True love cannot be without lowliness, Eph. 4. 1, 2. Phil. 2. 3. When our Lord Jesus washed his disciples' feet, to teach us brotherly love, (John 13. 5.—14. 34.) it was designed especially to intimate to us, that to love one another aright, is to be willing to stoop to the meanest offices of kindness for the good of one another. Love is a condescending grace; *Non bene conveniunt—majestas et amor—Majesty and love do but ill assort with each other*. Observe how it is pressed here.

[1.] *Mind not high things*. We must not be ambitious of honour and preferment, nor look upon worldly pomp and dignity with any inordinate value or desire, but rather with a holy contempt. When David's advancements were high, his spirit was humble; (Ps. 131. 1.) *I do not exercise myself in great matters*. The Romans, living in the imperial city, which reigned over the kings of the earth, (Rev. 17. 18.) and was at that time in the meridian of its splendour, were perhaps ready to take occasion from thence to think the better of themselves. Even the holy seed were tainted with this leaven. Roman Christians would be ready to look scornfully upon other Christians, as some citizens do upon the country; and therefore the apostle so often cautions them against high-mindedness; compare *ch. 11. 20*. They lived near the court, and conversed daily with the gaiety and grandeur of it; “*Well*,” saith he, “do not mind it, be not in love with it.”

[2.] *Condescend to men of low estate*—*τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαρτίζουσι*.

First, It may be meant of *mean things*, to which we must condescend. If our condition in the world be poor and low, our enjoyments coarse and scanty, our employments despicable and contemptible, yet we must bring our minds to it, and acquiesce in it. So the margin; *Be contented with mean things*. Be reconciled to the place which God in his providence hath put us in, whatever it be. We must account nothing below us but sin: stoop to mean habitations, mean fare, mean clothing, mean accommodations when they are our lot, and not grudge. Nay, we must be *carried with* a kind of impetus, by the force of the new nature, (so the word *συναπαρτίζουσι* properly signifies, and it is very significant,) toward mean things, when God appoints us to them; as the old corrupt nature is carried out toward high things. We must *accommodate* ourselves to mean things. We should make a low condition and mean circumstances more the centre of our desires, than a high condition.

Secondly, It may be meant of *mean persons*: so we read it, (I think both are to be included,) *Condescend to men of low estate*.

We must associate ourselves with, and accommodate ourselves to, those that are poor and mean in the world, if they be such as fear God. David, though a king upon the throne, was a *companion for all such*, (Ps. 119. 63.) We need not be ashamed to converse with the lowly, while the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to look at such. True love values grace in rags as well as in scarlet. A jewel is a jewel, though it lie in the dirt. The contrary to this *condescension* is reproved, Jam. 2. 1—4. *Condescend*; suit yourselves to them, stoop to them for their good; as Paul, 1 Cor. 9. 19, &c. Some think the original word is a metaphor taken from travellers, when those that are stronger and swifter of foot, stay for those that are weak and slow, make a halt, and take them with him; thus must Christians be tender toward their fellow-travellers.

As a means to promote this, he adds, *Be not wise in your own conceits*; to the same purport with v.

3. We shall never find in our hearts to *condescend* to others, while we find there so great a conceit of ourselves: and therefore, that must needs be mortified. *Μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῦς*:—"Be not wise by yourselves, be not confident of the sufficiency of your own wisdom, so as to despise others, or think you have no need of them, (Prov. 3. 7.) nor be shy of communicating what you have to others. We are members one of another; depend upon one another, are obliged to one another; and therefore, *Be not wise by yourselves*; remembering it is the merchandise of wisdom that we profess; now merchandise consists in commerce, receiving and returning."

(7.) A love that engages us, as much as *lies in us, to live peaceably with all men*, v. 18. Even those with whom we cannot live intimately and familiarly, by reason of distance in degree or profession; yet we must with such live *peaceably*, we must be harmless and inoffensive, not giving others occasion to quarrel with us; and we must be gall-less and unrevengeful, not taking occasion to quarrel with them. Thus must we labour to preserve the peace, that it be not broken, and to piece it again, when it is broken. The wisdom from above is pure and peaceable.

Observe how the exhortation is limited. It is not expressed so as to oblige us to impossibilities; *if it be possible, as much as lies in you*. Thus Heb. 12. 14. *Follow peace*. Eph. 1. 3. *Endeavouring to keep*. Study the things that make for peace.

If it be possible. It is not possible to preserve the peace, when we cannot do it without offending God and wounding conscience: *Id possumus quod jure possumus*—That is possible, which is possible without incurring blame. The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, and then peaceable, Jam. 3. 17. Peace without purity, is the peace of the devil's palace.

As much as lieth in you. There must be two words to the bargain of peace. We can but speak for ourselves. We may be unavoidably striven with; as Jeremiah, who was a *man of contention*. (Jer. 15. 10.) and that we cannot help: our care must be, that nothing be wanting on our parts, to preserve the peace, Ps. 120. 7. I am for peace, though, when I speak, they are for war.

2. To our enemies. Since men became enemies to God, they have been found very apt to be enemies one to another. Let but the centre of love be once forsaken, and the lines will either clash and interfere, or be at an uncomfortable distance. And of all men, those that embrace religion have reason to expect to meet with enemies in a world whose smiles seldom concur with Christ's.

Now christianity teaches us how to behave towards our enemies; and in this instruction it quite differs from all other rules and methods, which generally aim at victory and dominion; but this at inward peace and satisfaction. Whoever are our enemies, that wish us ill, and seek to do us ill, our rule is, to do them no hurt, but all the good we can.

(1.) To do them no hurt; (v. 17.) *Recompense to no man evil for evil*. For that is a brutish recompense, and befitteth only those animals, which are not conscious either of any being above them, or of any state before them. Or if mankind were made (as some dream) in a state of war, such recompenses as these were agreeable enough; but we have not so learned God, who does so much for his enemies, (Matt. 5. 45.) much less have we so learned Christ, who died for us when we were enemies, (ch. 5. 8, 10.) *so loved that world, which hated him without a cause*.

"To no man; neither to Jew nor Greek; not to one that has been thy friend, for by recompensing evil for evil, thou wilt certainly lose him; not to one that has been thine enemy, for by not recompensing evil for evil, thou mayest perhaps gain him."

To the same purport, v. 19. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves*. And why must this be ushered in with such an affectionate compellation, rather than any other of the exhortations of this chapter? Surely, because this is intended for the composing of angry spirits, that are hot in the resentment of a provocation. He addresses himself to such in this endearing language, to mollify and qualify them. Any thing that breathes love, sweetens the blood, lays the storm, and cools the intemperate heat. Would you pacify a brother offended? Call him *dearly beloved*. Such a soft word, fitly spoken, may be effectual to turn away wrath.

"*Avenge not yourselves*: when any body has done you any ill turn, do not desire or endeavour to bring the like mischief or inconvenience upon him." It is not forbidden to the magistrate to right those that are wronged, by punishing the wrong-doer; or to make and execute just and wholesome laws against malefactors; but it forbids private revenge, which flows from anger and ill-will; and this is fitly forbidden, for it is presumed that we are incompetent judges in our own case. Nay, if persons wronged in seeking the defence of the law, and magistrates in granting it, act from any particular personal pique or quarrel, and not from a concern that public peace and order be maintained, and right done; even such proceedings, though seemingly regular, will fall under this prohibited self revenging. See how strict the law of Christ is in this matter, Matt. 5. 38—40. It is forbidden not only to take it into our own hands to avenge ourselves, but to desire and thirst after even that judgment in our case, which the law affords, for the satisfying of a revengeful humour.

This is a hard lesson to corrupt nature; and therefore he subjoins,

[1.] A remedy against it; *Rather give place unto wrath*. Not to our own wrath; to give place to that, is to give place to the devil, Eph. 4. 26, 27. We must resist and stifle, and smother, and suppress that; but, *First*, To the wrath of our enemy. "Give place to it, be of a yielding temper; do not answer wrath with wrath, but with love rather. *Yielding facies great offences*, Eccl. 10. 4. Receive affronts and injuries, as a stone is received into a heap of wool, which gives way to it, and so it does not rebound back, or go any further." So it explains that of our Saviour, (Matt. 5. 39.) *Who-soever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*. Instead of meditating how to revenge one wrong, prepare to receive another. When men's passions are up, and the stream is strong, let it have its course; lest by an unreasonable opposition it be made to rage and swell the more. When others are angry, let us be calm; this is a remedy against revenge, and seems to be the genuine sense. But, *Secondly*, Many apply it to the wrath of God; "Give place to that, make room for him to take the throne of judgment, and let him alone to deal with thine adversary."

[2.] A reason against it; *For it is written, Vengeance is mine*. We find it written, Deut. 32. 35. God is the sovereign King, the righteous Judge, and to him it belongs to administer justice; for, being a God of infinite knowledge, by his actions are weighed in unerring balances; and, being a God of infinite purity, he hates sin and cannot endure to look upon iniquity. Some of this power he hath trusted in the hands of the civil magistrates; (Gen. 9. 6. ch. 13. 4.) their legal punishments therefore are to be looked upon as a branch of God's revengings. This is a good reason, why we should not avenge ourselves; for if vengeance be God's, then, *First*, We may not do it. We step into the throne of God, if we do, and take his work out of his hand.

Secondly, We need not do it, for God will, if we meekly leave the matter with him; he will avenge us as far as there is reason and justice for it; and further we cannot desire it. See Ps. 38. 14, 15. *I heard not, for thou wilt hear*; and what need is there for me to hear, and God hear too?

(2.) We must not only not do hurt to our enemies, but our religion goes higher, and teaches us to do them all the good we can. It is a command peculiar to christianity, and which does highly commend it; *Love your enemies*. Matt. 5. 44. We are here taught to shew that love to them, both in word and deed.

[1.] In word; (v. 14.) *Bless them who persecute you*. It has been the common lot of God's people, to be persecuted, either with a powerful hand, or with a spiteful tongue. Now we are here taught to *bless* those that so persecute us. *Bless them*; *First*, "Speak well of them. If there be any thing in them, that is commendable and praise-worthy, take notice of it, and mention it to their honour." *Secondly*, "Speak respectfully to them, according as their place is; not rendering railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness." And, *Thirdly*, We must wish well to them, and desire their good, so far from seeking any revenge. Nay, *Fourthly*, We must offer up that desire to God, by prayer for them. If it be not in the power of our hand to do any thing else for them, yet we can testify our good will by praying for them; for which our master hath given us not only a rule, but an example to back that rule, Luke 23. 34.

Bless, and curse not. It denotes a thorough goodwill in all the instances and expressions of it; not, "Bless them when you are at prayer, and curse them at other times;" but, "Bless them always, and curse not at all." *Cursing* ill becomes the mouth of those whose work it is to *bless* God, and whose happiness it is to be *blessed* of him.

[2.] In deed; (v. 20.) "*If thine enemy hunger*, as thou hast ability and opportunity, be ready and forward to shew him any kindness, and do him any office of love for his good; and never the less forward for his having been thine enemy, but rather the more that thou mayest thereby testify the sincerity of thy forgiving of him." It was said of Archbishop Crammer, that the way for a man to make him his friend, was to do him an ill turn. It is quoted from Prov. 25. 21, 22. So that, high a precept as it seems to be, the Old Testament was not a stranger to it. Observe here,

First, What we must do. We must do good to our enemies. "*If he hunger*, do not insult over him, and say, 'Now God is avenging me of him, and pleading my cause;' do not make such a construction of his wants. But *feed him*. Then, when he has need of thine help, and thou hast an opportunity of starving him, and trampling upon him, then *feed him*," (ἐπιτρέφε αὐτόν, a significant word,) "*feed him abundantly*, nay, *feed him carefully and indulgently*;" *frustulatim pascere—feed him with small pieces*, "*feed him*, as we do children and sick people, with much tenderness. Contrive to do it so as to express thy love. *If he thirst*, give him drink:" ἐπιτρέφε αὐτόν—*drink to him*, in token of reconciliation and friendship. So confirm your love to him."

Secondly, Why we must do this. Because in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Two senses are given of this, which I think are both to be taken in disjunctively. *Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head*; that is, "Thou shalt either," 1. "Melt him into repentance and friendship, and mollify his spirit toward thee;" alluding to those who melt metals; they not only put fire under them, but heap fire upon them; thus Saul was melted and conquered with the kindness of David, 1 Sam. 24. 16.—26. 21. "thou wilt win a friend by

it, and if thy kindness have not that effect, then," 2. "It will aggravate his condemnation, and make his malice against thee the more inexcusable. Thou wilt hereby hasten upon him the tokens of God's wrath and vengeance." Not that this must be our intention in shewing him kindness, but, for our encouragement, such will be the effect.

To this purpose is the exhortation in the last verse, which suggests a paradox not easily understood by the world; that in all matters of strife and contention, those that revenge are the *conquered*; and those that forgive are the *conquerors*.

(1.) "*Be not overcome of evil*. Let not the evil of any provocation that is given you, have such a power over you, or make such an impression upon you, as to dispossess you of yourselves: to disturb your peace, to destroy your love, to ruffle and discompose your spirits, to transport you to any indecencies, or to bring you to study or endeavour any revenge." He that cannot quietly bear an injury, is perfectly conquered by it.

(2.) "*But overcome evil with good*; with the good of patience and forbearance, nay, and of kindness and beneficence to those that wrong you; learn to defeat their ill designs against you, and either to change them, or however to preserve your own peace." He that hath this rule over his spirit, is better than the mighty.

To conclude, there remain two exhortations yet untouched, which are general, and which recommend all the rest as good in themselves, and of good report.

[1.] As good in themselves: (v. 9.) *Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good*. God hath shewed us what is *good*; these christian duties here enjoined; and that is *evil*, which is opposite to them. Now observe,

First, We must not only *not do evil*, but we must *abhor that which is evil*. We must hate sin with an utter and irreconcilable hatred; have an antipathy to it as the worst of evils, contrary to our new nature, and to our true interest; hating all the appearances of sin, even the garment spotted with the flesh.

Secondly, We must not only *do* that which is good, but we must *cleave* to it. It denotes a deliberate choice of, a sincere affection for, and a constant perseverance in, that which is good. "So cleave to it, as not to be allured or affrighted from it, *cleave to him that is good*, even to the Lord, (Acts 11. 23.) with a dependence and acquiescence." It is subjoined to the precept of brotherly love, as directive of it; we must love our brethren, but not love them so much as for their sakes to commit any sin, or omit any duty; not think the better of any sin for the sake of the person that commits it, but forsake all the friends in the world, to *cleave* to God and duty.

[2.] As of good report; (v. 17.) "*Provide things honest in the sight of all men*; do not only do, but study and forecast and take care to do, that which is amiable and creditable, and recommends religion to all with whom you converse." See Phil. 4. 8. These acts of charity and beneficence are in a special manner of good report among men; and therefore are to be industriously followed by all that consult the glory of God, and the credit of their profession.

CHAP. XIII.

There are three good lessons taught us in this chapter, where the apostle enlarges more upon his precepts than he had done in the foregoing chapter, finding them more needful to be fully pressed. I. A lesson of subjection to lawful authority, v. 1. . 6. II. A lesson of justice and love to our brethren, v. 7. . 10. III. A lesson of sobriety and godliness in ourselves, v. 11, to the end.

1. **L**ET every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

We are here taught how to conduct ourselves toward magistrates, and those that are in authority over us; called here, the *higher powers*; intimating their authority, they are *powers*; and their dignity, they are *higher powers*; including not only the king as supreme, but all inferior magistrates under him: and yet it is expressed, not by the *persons* that are in that power, but the *place* of power itself, in which they are. However the persons themselves may be wicked, and of those *vile persons* which the citizen of Zion *contemneth*, (Ps. 15. 4.) yet the just power which they have must be submitted to and obeyed.

He had taught us, in the foregoing chapter, not to avenge ourselves, or to recompense evil for evil; lest it should seem as if that did cancel the ordinance of a civil magistracy among christians, he takes occasion to assert the necessity of it, and of the due inflicting of punishment upon evil doers, however it looks like recompensing evil for evil. Observe

1. The duty enjoined; *let every soul be sub ecet*. Every soul, every person, one as well as another, not excluding the clergy, who call themselves *spiritual* persons; however the church of Rome does not only exempt such from subjection to the civil powers, but place them in authority above them, making the greatest princes subject to the pope, who thus exalteth himself above all that is called God.

Every soul. Not that our consciences are to be subjected to the will of any man. It is God's prerogative to make laws immediately to bind conscience, and we must render to God the things that are God's. But it intimates that our subjection must be free and voluntary, sincere and hearty. *Curse not the king, no not in thy thought*, Eccl. 10. 20. To compass and imagine is treason begun.

This subjection of soul here required, includes inward honour, (1 Pet. 2. 17.) and outward reverence and respect, both in speaking to them and in speaking of them; obedience to their commands in things lawful and honest, and in other things a patient subjection to the penalty without resistance; a conformity in every thing to the place and duty of subjects, bringing our minds to the relation and condition, and the inferiority and subordination of it. "They are *higher powers*; be content they should be so, and submit to them accordingly."

Now there was good reason for the pressing of this duty of subjection to civil magistrates: 1. Because of the reproach which the christian religion

lay under in the world, as an enemy to public peace, order, and government; as a sect that turned the world upside down, and the embracers of it as enemies to Cæsar, and the more because the leaders were Galileans; an old slander; Jerusalem was represented as a *rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces*, Ezra 4. 15, 16. "Our Lord Jesus was so reproached, though he told them his kingdom was not of this world: no marvel then, if his followers have been loaded in all ages with the like calumnies; called *factionous, seditious, and turbulent*, and looked upon as the troublers of the land; their enemies having found such representations needful for the justifying of their barbarous rage against them. The apostle therefore, for the obviating of that reproach, and the clearing of christianity from it, shews that obedience to civil magistrates is one of the laws of Christ, whose religion helps to make people good subjects; and it was very unjust to charge upon christianity that faction and rebellion, which its principles and rules are so directly contrary to. 2. Because of the temptation which the christians lay under to be otherwise affected to civil magistrates; some of them being originally Jews, and so leavened with a principle, that it was unmeet for any of the seed of Abraham to be subject to one of another nation; their king must be of their brethren, Deut. 17. 15. Besides, Paul had taught them, that they were *not under the law*, they were made free by Christ. Lest that liberty should be turned into licentiousness, and misconstrued to countenance faction and rebellion, the apostle enjoins obedience to civil government; which was the more necessary to be pressed now, because the magistrates were heathen and unbelievers; which yet does not destroy their civil power and authority. Besides, the civil powers were persecuting powers: the body of the law was against them.

II. The reasons to enforce this duty. Why must we be subject?

1. For *wrath's sake*. Because of the danger we run ourselves into by resistance. Magistrates bear the sword, and to oppose them, is to hazard all that is dear to us in this world; for it is to no purpose to contend with him that bears the sword. The christians were then in those persecuting times obnoxious to the sword of the magistrate for their religion, and they needed not make themselves more obnoxious by their rebellion. The least shew of resistance or sedition in a christian would soon be aggravated and improved, and would be very prejudicial to the whole society; and therefore they had more need than others to be exact in their subjection, that those who had so much occasion against them in the matter of their God, might have no other occasion.

To this head must that argument be referred, (v. 2.) *They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: ἡμέτεροι ἀντίστασις*, they shall be called to an account for it. God will reckon with them for it, because the resistance reflects upon him; the magistrate will reckon with them for it, for they will come under the lash of the law, and will find the higher powers too high to be trampled upon, all civil governments being justly strict and severe against treason and rebellion; so it follows, (v. 3.) *Rulers are a terror*. This is a good argument, but it is low for a christian.

2. We must be subject, not only for *wrath*, but for *conscience-sake*: not so much *formidine pænæ*—from the fear of punishment, as *virtutis amore*—from the love of virtue. This makes common civil offices acceptable to God, when they are done for *conscience-sake*, with an eye to God, to his providence putting us into such relations, and to his precept making subjection the duty of those relations. Thus the same thing may be done from a very different principle.

Now to oblige conscience to this subjection, he argues, v. 1—4, 6.

(1.) From the institution of magistracy; *There is no power but of God*; God, as ruler and governor of the world, hath appointed the ordinance of magistracy; so that all civil power is derived from him as from its original, and he hath by his providence put the administration into those hands, whatever they are, that have it. By him *kings reign*, Prov. 8. 15.

The usurpation of power and the abuse of power are not of God, for he is not the author of sin; but the power itself is. As our natural powers, though often abused and made instruments of sin, are from God's creating power, so civil powers are from God's governing power. The most unjust and oppressive princes in the world have no power but what is given them *from above*; (John 19. 11.) The Divine Providence being in a special manner conversant about those changes and revolutions of governments, which have such an influence upon states and kingdoms, and such a multitude of particular persons and lesser communities.

Or, it may be meant of government in general: it is an instance of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, in the management of mankind, that he has disposed them into such a state as distinguishes between governors and governed; and has not left them like the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser. He did herein consult the benefit of his creatures.

The powers that be: whatever the particular form and method of government are; whether by monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy; wherever the governing power is lodged, it is an ordinance of God, and it is to be received and submitted to accordingly; though immediately an ordinance of man, (1 Pet. 2. 13.) yet originally an ordinance of God.

Ordained of God; *τεταγμέναι*; a military word, signifying not only the ordination of magistrates, but the subordination of inferior magistrates to the supreme, as in an army; for among magistrates there is a diversity of gifts, and trusts, and services.

Hence it follows, (v. 2.) that whosoever *resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God*. There are other things from God, that are the greatest calamities: but magistracy is from God, as an ordinance, it is a great law, and it is a great blessing: so that the children of Belial, that will not endure the yoke of government, will be found breaking a law, and despising a blessing. Magistrates are *therefore* called *gods*, (Ps. 82. 6.) because they bear the image of God's authority. And those who spurn at their power, reflect upon God himself. This is not at all applicable to the particular rights of kings and kingdoms, and the branches of their constitution; nor can any certain rule be fetched from hence for the modelling of the original contracts between the governors and governed; but it is intended for direction to private persons in their private capacity, to behave themselves quietly and peaceably in the sphere which God has set them in, with a due regard to the civil powers which God in his providence has set over them, 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2.

Magistrates are here again and again called God's *ministers*. He is the *minister of God*, v. 4, 6. Magistrates are in a more peculiar manner God's servants; the dignity they have, calls for duty. Though they are lords to us, they are servants to God, have work to do for him, and an account to make up to him.

In the administration of public justice, the determining of quarrels, the protecting of the innocent, the righting of the wronged, the punishing of offenders, and the preserving of national peace and order, that every man may not do what is right in his own eyes; in these things it is that magistrates act as God's ministers. As the killing of an inferior

magistrate, while he is actually doing his duty, is accounted treason against the prince; so the resisting of any magistrates in the discharge of these duties of their place, is the resisting of an ordinance of God.

(2.) From the intention of magistracy; *Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil*, &c. Magistracy was designed to be,

[1.] A terror to evil works, and evil workers. They bear the sword; not only the sword of war, but the sword of justice. They are *heirs of restraint*, to put offenders to *shame*; Laish wanted such, Judge. 18. 7. Such is the power of sin and corruption, that many will not be restrained from the greatest enormities, and such as are most pernicious to human society, by any regard to the law of God and nature or the wrath to come; but only by the fear of temporal punishments, which the wilfulness and perverseness of degenerate mankind have made necessary. Hence it appears, that laws with penalties for the *lawless and disobedient*, (1 Tim. 1. 9.) must be constituted in christian nations, and are agreeable with, and not contradictory to, the gospel. When men are become such beasts, such ravenous beasts, one to another, they must be dealt with accordingly, taken and destroyed in *terrorem*—to deter others. The horse and the mule must thus be held in with *bit and bridle*.

In this work the magistrate is the *minister of God*, v. 4. He acts as God's agent, to whom vengeance belongs; and therefore must take heed of infusing into his judgments any private personal resentments of his own. *To execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*. In this the judicial processes of the most vigilant faithful magistrates, though some faint resemblance and prelude of the judgments of the great day, yet come far short of the judgment of God: they reach only to the evil act, can execute wrath only on him that *doeth evil*: but God's judgment extends to the evil thought, and is a discernment of the intents of the heart.

He beareth not the sword in vain. It is not for nothing that God hath put such a power into the magistrate's hand; but it is intended for the restraining and suppressing of disorders. And therefore, *"If thou do that which is evil, which falls under the cognizance and censure of the civil magistrate, be afraid"*; for civil powers have quick eyes and long arms."

It is a good thing when the punishment of malefactors is managed as an ordinance of God, instituted and appointed by him.

First, As a holy God, that hates sin; against which, as it appears and puts up its head, a public testimony is thus borne. *Secondly*, As King of nations, and the God of peace and order, which are hereby preserved. *Thirdly*, As the Protector of the good whose persons, families, estates, and names, are by this means hedged about. *Fourthly*, As one that desires not the eternal ruin of sinners, but by the punishment of some would terrify others, and so prevent the like wickedness, that others may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Nay, it is intended for a kindness to those that are punished, that by the destruction of the flesh the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

[2.] A praise to them that do well. Those that keep in the way of their duty, shall have the commendation and protection of the civil powers, to their credit and comfort. *"Do that which is good, (v. 3.) and thou needest not be afraid of the power, which, though terrible, reaches none but those that by their own sin make themselves obnoxious to it: the fire burns only that which is combustible: nay, thou shalt have praise of it."*

This is the intention of magistracy, and therefore we must; for conscience-sake, be subject to it; as a

constitution designed for the public good, to which all private interests must give way. But pity it is, that ever this gracious intention should be perverted, and that those who bear the sword, while they countenance and connive at sin, should be a terror to those who do well. But so it is, when the vilest men are exalted; (Ps. 12. 1, 8.) and yet even *then*, the blessing and benefit of a common protection and a face of government and order, are such, that it is our duty in that case rather to submit to persecution for well-doing, and to take it patiently, than by any irregular and disorderly practices to attempt a redress. Never did sovereign prince pervert the ends of government as Nero did, and yet to him Paul appealed, and under him had the protection of the law and the inferior magistrates more than once. Better a bad government than none at all.

(3.) From our interest in it; "*He is the minister of God to thee for good.*" Thou hast the benefit and advantage of the government, and therefore must do what thou canst to preserve it, and nothing to disturb it." Protection draws allegiance. If we have protection from the government, we owe subjection to it; by upholding the government, we keep up our own hedge. This subjection is likewise consented to by the tribute we pay; (v. 6.) "*For this cause pay you tribute*; as a testimony of your submission, and an acknowledgment that in conscience you think it to be due. You do by paying taxes contribute your share to the support of the power; if therefore you be not subject, you do but pull down with one hand what you support with the other; and is that conscience?"

"By your paying tribute, you not only own the magistrate's authority, but the blessing of that authority to yourselves; a sense of which you thereby testify, giving him that as a recompense for the great pains he takes in the government; for honour is a burthen; and if he do as he ought, *he is attending continually upon this very thing*: for it is enough to take up all a man's thoughts and time: in consideration of which fatigue, we pay tribute, and must be subject."

Pay you tribute, φόρος πληρώτε. He does not say, "*You give it as an alms,*" but, "*You pay it as a just debt, or lend it to be repaid in all the blessings and advantages of public government, which you reap the benefit of.*" This is the lesson the apostle teaches, and it becomes all christians to learn and practise it, that the godly in the land may be found (whatever others are,) the quiet and the peaceable in the land.

7. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. 8. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. 9. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

We are here taught a lesson of justice and charity.

I. Of justice; (v. 7.) *Render therefore to all their dues*; especially to magistrates, for this refers to what goes before; and likewise to all with whom we have to do. To be just, is to give to all their due, to give every body his own. What we have, we have

it is stewards; others have an interest in it, and must have their dues. "*Render to God his due in the first place, to yourselves, to your families, your relations, to the commonwealth, to the church, to the poor, to those that you have dealings with, in buying, selling, exchanging, &c. Render to all their dues; and that readily and cheerfully, not tarrying till you are by law compelled to it.*" He specifies,

1. Due taxes; *Tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom.* Most of the countries where the gospel was first preached, were subject at this time to the Roman yoke, and were made provinces of the empire. He wrote this to the Romans who, as they were rich, so they were drained by taxes and impositions, to the just and honest payment of which they are here pressed by the apostle. Some distinguish between *tribute* and *custom*, understanding by the former constant standing taxes, and by the other those which were occasionally required: both which are to be faithfully and conscientiously paid as they become legally due. Our Lord was born when his mother went to be taxed; and enjoined the payment of tribute to Cæsar. Many, who in other things seem to be just, yet make no conscience of this, but pass it off with a false ill-favoured maxim, that it is no sin to cheat the king; directly contrary to Paul's rule, *Tribute to whom tribute is due.*

2. Due respect; *Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.* This sums up the duty which we owe not only to magistrates, but to all superiors, parents, masters, all that are over us in the Lord, according to the fifth commandment; *Honour thy father and mother.* Compare Lev. 19. 3. *Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father*; not with a fear of amazement, but a loving, reverent, respectful, obediential fear. Where there is not this respect in the heart to our superiors, no other duty will be paid aright.

3. Due payment of debts; (v. 8.) "*Owe no man any thing*; do not continue in any one's debt, while you are able to pay it, farther than by, at least, the tacit consent of the person to whom you are indebted. Give every one his own. Do not spend that upon yourselves, much less heap it up for yourselves, which you owe to others." *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again,* Ps. 37. 21. Many that are very sensible of the trouble, think little of the sin of being in debt.

II. Of charity; *Owe no man any thing; αγαπάτε—you do owe no man any thing; so some read it*; "Whatever you owe to any relation, or to any with whom you have to do, it is eminently summed up and included in this debt of love. But to *love one another*, that is a debt that must be always in the paying, and yet always owing." Love is a debt; the law of God and the interest of mankind made it so; it is not a thing which we are left at liberty about; but it is enjoined us, as the principle and summary of all duty owing one to another; for love *is* the fulfilling of the law; not perfectly, but it is a good step towards it. It is inclusive of all the duties of the second table, which he specifies v. 9. and those suppose the love of God. See 1 John 4. 20. If the love be sincere, it is accepted as the fulfilling of the law. Surely we serve a good master, that has summed up all our duty in one word, and that a short word and a sweet word, *love*, the beauty and harmony of the universe. Loving and being loved, is all the pleasure, joy, and happiness, of an intelligent being. *God is love*, (1 John 4. 16.) and love is his image upon the soul: where it is, the soul is well moulded, and the heart fitted for every good work. Now, to prove that love is the fulfilling of the law, he gives us,

1. An induction of particular precepts, v. 9. He specifies the five last of the ten commandments, which he observes to be all summed up in this royal

law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; with an *as* of quality, not of equality; "with the same sincerity that thou lovest thyself, though not in the same measure and degree." He that loves his neighbour as himself, will be desirous of the welfare of his neighbour's body, goods, and good name, as of his own. On this is built that golden rule, of doing as we would be done by. Were there no restraints of human laws in these things, no punishments incurred, (which the malignity of human nature hath made necessary,) the law of love would of itself be effectual to prevent all such wrongs and injuries, and to keep peace and good order among us. In the enumeration of these commandments, he puts the seventh before the sixth, and mentions this first, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; for though that commonly goes under the name of love, (pity it is that so good a word should be so abused,) yet it is really as great a violation of it as killing and stealing is: which shews that true brotherly love is love to the souls of our brethren in the first place. He that tempts others to sin, and defiles their minds and consciences, though he may pretend the most passionate love, (Prov. 7. 15, 18.) does really hate them, just as the devil does, who wars against the soul.

2. A general rule concerning the nature of brotherly love; *Love worketh no ill*; (v. 10.) he that walks in love, that is acted and governed by a principle of love, he *worketh no ill*; he neither practices nor contrives any ill to his neighbour, to any one that he has any thing to do with: *ὃς ἐγὼ ἀγαπᾷ*, the projecting of evil is in effect the performing of it. Hence devising of iniquity is called the *working of evil*, upon the bed, Mic. 2. 1. Love intends and designs no ill to any body, is utterly against the doing of that which may turn to the prejudice, offence, or grief, of any. It *worketh no ill*; it prohibits the working of any ill: more is implied than is expressed; it not only worketh no ill, but it worketh all the good that may be, deviseth liberal things. For it is a sin not only to *devise evil* against thy neighbour, but to *withhold good from them* to whom it is due; both are forbidden together, Prov. 3. 27—29. This proves that love is the *fulfilling of the law*, answers all the end of it; for what else is that but to restrain us from evil-doing, and to constrain us to well-doing? Love is a living active principle of obedience to the whole law. The whole law is written in the heart, if the law of love be there.

11. And that, knowing the time, that now *it is high time to wake out of sleep*: for now *is our salvation nearer than when we believed*. 12. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts thereof.

We are here taught a lesson of sobriety and godliness in ourselves. Our main care must be to look to ourselves. Four things we are here taught, as a christian's *directory*, for his day's work; when to awake, how to dress ourselves, how to walk, and what provision to make.

I. When to awake; *Now it is high time to awake*; (v. 11.) to awake out of the sleep of sin; for a sinful condition is a sleeping condition; out of the sleep of carnal security, sloth and negligence; out of the

sleep of spiritual death, and out of the sleep of spiritual deadness; both the wise and foolish virgins slumbered and slept, Matt. 25. 5. We have need to be often excited and stirred up to awake. The word of command to all Christ's disciples, is, *Watch*. "*Awake*, be concerned about your souls and your eternal interest; take heed of sin, be ready to, and serious in, that which is good, and live in a constant expectation of the coming of our Lord. Considering,"

1. "The time we are cast into; *Knowing the time*. Consider what time of day it is with us, and you will see it is high time to awake. It is gospel-time, it is the accepted time, it is working time; it is a time when more is expected than was in the times of that ignorance which God winked at, when people sat in darkness. It is high time to awake; for the sun hath been up a great while, and shines in our faces. Have we this light to sleep in? See 1 Thess. 5. 5, 6. It is high time to awake; for others are awake and up about us. Know the time to be a busy time; we have a great deal of work to do, and our master is calling us to it again and again. Know the time to be a perilous time; we are in the midst of enemies and snares; it is high time to awake, for the Philistines are upon us; our neighbour's house is on fire, and our own in danger. It is time to awake, for we have slept enough, (1 Pet. 4. 3.) high time indeed, for *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh*."

2. "The salvation we are upon the brink of; *Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*; than when we first believed, and so took upon us the profession of christianity. The eternal happiness we chose for our portion, is now nearer us than it was when we became christians. Let us mind our way, and mend our pace, for we are now nearer our journey's end, than we were when we had our first love. The nearer we are to our centre, the quicker should our motion be. Is there but a step betwixt us and heaven, and shall we be so very slow and dull in our christian course, and move so heavily? The more the days are shortened, and the more grace is increased, the nearer is our salvation, and the more quick and vigorous we should be in our spiritual motions."

II. How to dress ourselves. That is the next care, when we are awake and up; "*The night is far spent, the day is at hand*"; therefore it is time to dress ourselves. Clearer discoveries will be quickly made of gospel-grace than have been yet made, as light gets ground. The night of Jewish rage and cruelty is just at an end; their persecuting power is near a period; the day of our deliverance from them is at hand, that day of *redemption* which Christ promised, Luke 21. 28. And the day of our complete salvation, in the heavenly glory, is at hand. Observe them,"

1. "What we must *put off*; put off our night-clothes, which it is a shame to appear abroad in; *cast off the works of darkness*." Sinful works are works of darkness; they come from the darkness of ignorance and mistake; they covet the darkness of privacy and concealment, and they end in the darkness of hell and destruction. Let us therefore, who are of the day, cast them off; not only cease from the practice of them, but detest and abhor them, and have no more to do with them. Because eternity is just at the door, let us take heed lest we be found doing that which will then make against us, 2 Pet. 3. 11, 14.

2. "What we must *put on*." The christian's care must be *wherewithal we shall be clothed*, how shall we dress our souls?

(1.) *Put on the armour of light*. Christians are soldiers in the midst of enemies, and their life a warfare, therefore their array must be armour, that they may stand upon their defence; the *armour of God*, which we are directed to, Eph. 6. 13, &c. A christian may reckon himself undressed, if he be

unarmed. The graces of the Spirit are this *armour*, to secure the soul from Satan's temptations, and the assaults of this present evil world.

This is called the *armour of light*, some think, alluding to the bright glittering armour which the Roman soldiers used to wear; or such armour as becomes us to wear in the day-light. The graces of the Spirit are suitable, splendid ornaments; are, in the sight of God, of great price.

(2.) *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, v. 14. This stands in opposition to a great many base lusts, mentioned v. 13. *Rioting and drunkenness*, which must be cast off: one would think it should follow, but, "Put on sobriety, temperance, chastity, the opposite virtues:" no, "*Put on Christ*, that includes all. Put on the righteousness of Christ for justification; be found in him, (Phil. 3. 9.) as a man is found in his clothes; put on the priestly garments of the elder brother, that in them you may obtain the blessing; put on the spirit and grace of Christ for sanctification; put on the *new man*, (Eph. 4. 24.) get the habit of grace confirmed, the acts of it quickened." Jesus Christ is the best clothing for Christians to adorn themselves with, to arm themselves with; it is decent, distinguishing, dignifying, and defending. Without Christ, we are naked, deformed; all other things are filthy rags, fig-leaves, a sorry shelter. God has provided us coats of skins; large, strong, warm, and durable. By baptism we have in profession *put on Christ*, Gal. 3. 27. Let us do it in truth and sincerity.

The Lord Jesus Christ; "Put him on as Lord to rule you, as Jesus to save you, and in both, as Christ anointed and appointed by the Father, to this ruling, saving work."

III. How to walk. When we are up and dressed, we are not to sit still in an affected closeness and privacy, as monks and hermits. What have we good clothes for, but to appear abroad in them?

Let us walk. Christianity teaches us how to walk so as to please God, whose eye is upon us: 1 Thess. 4. 1. *Walk honestly as in the day*. Compare Eph. 5. 8. *Walk as children of light*. Our conversation must be as becomes the gospel.

Walk honestly; *εὐχρηστῶς*—*decently* and becomingly, so as to credit your profession, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend religion in its beauty to others. Christians should be in a special manner careful to conduct themselves well in those things wherein men have an eye upon them, and to study that which is lovely and of good report. Particularly, here are three pair of sins we are cautioned against.

1. We must not walk in *rioting and drunkenness*; we must abstain from all excess in eating and drinking. We must not give the least countenance to revelling, nor indulge our sensual appetite in any private excesses. Christians must not overcharge their hearts with surfeiting and drunkenness, Luke 21. 34. This is not walking as in the day; for they that are *drunk, are drunk in the night*, 1 Thess. 5. 7.

2. *Not in chambering and wantonness*; not in any of those lusts of the flesh, those works of darkness, which are forbidden in the seventh commandment. Downright adultery and fornication are the *chambering* forbidden; lascivious thoughts and affections, lascivious looks, words, books, songs, gestures, dances, dalliances, which lead to, and are degrees of, that uncleanness, are the *wantonness* here forbidden; whatsoever transgresseth the pure and sacred law of chastity and modesty.

3. *Not in strife and envying*. These are also works of darkness; for though the acts and instances of strife and envy are very common, yet none are willing to own the principles, or to acknowledge themselves envious and contentious. It may be the lot of the best saints to be envied and striven

with; but to strive and to envy, ill becomes the disciples and followers of the peaceable and humble Jesus. Where there are *riot and drunkenness*, there usually are *chambering and wantonness*, and *strife and envy*. Solomon puts them all together, Prov. 23. 29, &c. Those that tarry long at the wine, (v. 30.) have contentions and wounds without cause, (v. 29.) and their eyes behold strange women, v. 33.

IV. What provision to make; (v. 14.) "*Make not provision for the flesh*. Be not careful about the body." Our great care must be to provide for our souls; but must we take no care about our bodies? Must we not provide for them, when they need it? Yes, but two things are here forbidden;

1. Preplexing ourselves with an inordinate care, intimated in those words, *πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιᾶτε*; "Be not solicitous in forecasting for the body; do not stretch your wits, nor set your thoughts, upon the tenter-hooks in making this provision: be not careful and cumbered about it, do not *take thought*," Matt. 6. 31. It forbids an anxious cumbering care.

2. Indulging ourselves in an irregular desire. We are not forbidden barely to *provide* for the body, (it is a lamp that must be supplied with oil,) but we are forbidden to *fulfil the lusts thereof*. The necessities of the body must be considered, but the lusts of it must not be gratified. Natural desires must be answered, but wanton appetites must be checked and denied. To ask meat for our necessities, is duty, we are taught to pray for daily bread; but to ask meat for our lusts, is provoking, Ps. 78. 18. Those who profess to walk in the spirit, must not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, Gal. 5. 16.

CHAP. XIV.

The apostle having, in the former chapter, directed our conduct one towards another in civil things, and prescribed the sacred laws of justice, peaceableness, and order, to be observed by us as members of the commonwealth; he comes, in this, and part of the following chapter, in like manner to direct our demeanour one towards another in sacred things, which pertain more immediately to conscience and religion, and which we observe as members of the church. Particularly, he gives rules how to manage our different apprehensions about indifferent things; in the management of which, it seems, there was something amiss among the Roman Christians, to whom he wrote, which he here labours to redress. But the rules are general, and of standing use in the church, for the preservation of that Christian love which he had so earnestly pressed in the foregoing chapter as the fulfilling of the law. It is certain that nothing is more threatening, nor more often fatal, to Christian societies, than the contentions and divisions of their members. By these wounds the life and soul of religion expire. Now in this chapter, we are furnished with the sovereign balm of Gilead; the blessed apostle prescribes like a wise physician. Why then is not the hurt of the daughter of many people recovered, but because his directions are not followed? This chapter, rightly understood, made use of, and lived up to, would set things to rights, and heal us all.

1. **H**IM that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.
2. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.
3. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.
4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.
5. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully per-

suaded in his own mind. 6. He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. 7. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. 10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. 11. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way. 14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there* is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it* is unclean. 15. But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. 16. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: 17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. 18. For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men. 19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. 20. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it* is evil for that man who eateth with offence. 21. *It* is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. 22. Hast thou faith? Have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. 23. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

We have, in this chapter,

I. An account of the unhappy contention which had broken out in the christian church. Our master had foretold that offences would come; and, it seems, so they did, for want of that wisdom and love which would have prevented it, and kept up union among them.

1. There was a difference among them about the distinction of *meats* and *days*; those are the two things specified. There might be other similar occasions of difference, while these made the most noise, and were most taken notice of.

The case was this: the members of the christian church at Rome were some of them originally Gentiles, and others of them Jews. We find Jews at Rome, believing, Acts 8. 24. Now those that had been Jews, were trained up in the observance of the ceremonial appointments, touching *meats* and *days*. This, which had been bred in the bone with them, would hardly be got out of the flesh, even after they turned christians; especially with some of them, who were not easily weaned from what they had long been wedded to. They were not well instructed touching the cancelling of the ceremonial law by the death of Christ, and therefore retained the ceremonial institutions, and practised accordingly; while other christians, that understood themselves better, and knew their christian liberty, made no such difference.

(1.) Concerning meats; (v. 2.) *One believeth that he may eat all things*, he is well satisfied that the ceremonial distinction of meats into clean and unclean, is no longer in force, but that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused; nothing *unclean of itself*, v. 14. This he was assured of, not only from the general tenor and scope of the gospel, but particularly from the *revelation*, which Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, (and therefore more immediately concerned in it,) had to this purport, Acts 10. 15, 28. This the strong christian is clear in, and practises accordingly; eating what is set before him, and asking no question for conscience-sake, 1 Cor. 10. 27.

On the other hand, *another, who is weak*, is dissatisfied in this point, is not clear in his christian liberty, but rather inclines to think, that the meats forbidden by the law, remain still unclean; and therefore, to keep at a distance from them, he will eat no flesh at all, but *eateth herbs*, contenting himself only with the fruits of the earth. See to what degrees of mortification and self-denial a tender conscience will submit. None know but they that experience it, how great both the restraining and the constraining power of conscience is.

(2.) Concerning days; (v. 5.) Those who thought themselves still under some kind of obligation by the ceremonial law, esteemed *one day above another*; kept up a respect to the times of the passover, pentecost, new moons, and feasts of tabernacles; thought those days better than other days, and solemnized them accordingly with particular observances, binding themselves to some religious rest and exercise on those days. Those who knew that all these things were abolished and done away by Christ's coming, esteemed *every day* alike. We must understand it with an exception of the Lord's day, which all christians unanimously observed; but they made no account, took no notice, of those antiquated festivals of the Jews.

Here the apostle speaks of the distinction of meats and days as a thing indifferent, when it went no further than the opinion and practice of some particular persons, who had been trained up all their days to such observances, and therefore were the more excusable if they hardly parted with them. But in the epistle to the Galatians, where he deals with those that were originally Gentiles, but were influenced by some judaizing teachers, not only to believe such a distinction, and to practise accordingly, but to lay a stress upon it as necessary to salvation, and to make the observation of the Jewish festivals public and congregational; here the case was altered, and it is charged upon them as the frustrating of the design of the gospel, falling from

grace, Gal. 4. 9—11. These here did it out of weakness, the Galatians did it out of wilfulness and wickedness; and therefore the apostle handles them thus differently.

This epistle is supposed to have been written some time before that to the Galatians. The apostle seems willing to let the ceremonial law wither by degrees, and to let it have an honourable burial; now these weak Romans seem to be only following it weeping to its grave, but those Galatians were raking it out of its ashes.

2. It was not so much the difference itself that did the mischief, as the mismanagement of the difference, making it a bone of contention.

(1.) Those who were strong, and knew their christian liberty, and made use of it, *despised* the weak, who did not: whereas they should have pitied them, and helped them, and afforded them meek and friendly instruction, they trampled upon them as silly, and humoursome, and superstitious, for scrupling those things which they knew to be lawful. So apt are those who have knowledge, to be puffed up with it, and to look disdainfully and scornfully upon their brethren.

(2.) Those who were weak, and durst not use their christian liberty, *judged* and censured the strong, who did, as if they were loose christians, carnal professors, that cared not what they did, but walked at all adventures, and stuck at nothing. They judged them as breakers of the law, contemners of God's ordinance, and the like. Such censures as these discovered a great deal of rashness and uncharitableness, and would doubtless tend much to the alienating of affection.

Well, this was the disease, and we see it remaining in the church to this day; the like differences, in like manner mismanaged, are still the disturbers of the church's peace. But,

If we have proper directions and suggestions laid down for allaying this contention, and preventing the ill consequences of it. The apostle, as a wise physician, prescribes proper remedies for the disease; which are made up of rules and reasons.

Such gentle methods does he take, with such cords of a man does he draw them together; not by excommunicating, suspending and silencing either side, but by persuading them both to a mutual forbearance: and as a faithful day's-man, he lays his hand upon them both; reasoning the case with the strong, that they should not be so scornful; and with the weak, that they should not be so censorious. If the contending parties will but submit to this fair arbitration, each abate of his rigour, and sacrifice their differences to their graces, all will be well quickly.

Let us observe the rules he gives, some to the strong, and some to the weak, and some to both, for they are interwoven; and reduce the reasons to their proper rules.

1. Those who are weak, must be *received*, but not to doubtful disputations, v. 1. "Take this for a general rule; spend your zeal in those things wherein you and all the people of God are agreed, and do not dispute about matters that are doubtful. *Receive him*, *προσλαβέτω*—take him to you, bid him welcome, receive him with the greatest affection and tenderness; *Porrige manum*; (so the Syriac;) *Lend him your hand*, to help him, to fetch him to you, to encourage him. *Receive him* into your company and converse and communion, entertain him with readiness and condescension, and treat him with all possible endearments."

"*Receive him*; not to quarrel with him, and to argue about uncertain points that are in controversy, which will but confound him, and fill his head with empty notions, perplex him, and shake his faith. Let not your christian friendship and fellowship be

disturbed with such vain janglings and strifes of words."

"*Not to judge his doubtful thoughts*;" (so the margin;) "not to pump out his weak sentiments concerning those things, which he is in doubt about, that you may censure and condemn him. Receive him, not to expose him, but to instruct and strengthen him." See 1 Cor. 1. 10. Phil. 3. 15, 16.

2. Those who are strong, must by no means *despise* the weak; nor those who are weak, *judge* the strong, v. 3. This is levelled directly against the fault of each party. It is seldom that any such contention exists, but there is a fault on both sides, and both must mend.

He argues against both these jointly; we must not despise or judge our brethren. Why so?

(1.) Because God *hath received* them; and we reflect upon him, if we reject those whom he hath received. God never cast off any one that had true grace, though we were but weak in it; never broke the bruised reed. Strong believers and weak believers, those that eat, and those that eat not, if they be true believers, are accepted of God.

It will be good for us to put this question to ourselves, when we are tempted to behave scornfully towards our brethren, to disdain and censure them; "Has not God owned them; and if he has, dare I disown them?"

"*Nay*, God doth not only receive him, but *hold him up*, v. 4. You think that he who eateth, will fall by his presumption, or that he who eateth not, will sink under the weight of his own fears and scruples; but if they have true faith, and an eye to God, the one in the intelligent use of his christian liberty, and the other in the conscientious forbearance of it, they shall be *held up*; the one in his *integrity*, and the other in his *comfort*. This hope is built upon the power of God, for *God is able to make him stand*; and being able, no doubt he is willing to exert that power for the preservation of those that are his own." In reference to spiritual difficulties and dangers, (our own and others,) much of our hope and comfort is grounded upon the divine power, 1 Pet. 1. 5. Jude v. 24.

(2.) Because they are servants to their own master; (v. 4.) *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?* We reckon it a piece of ill manners to meddle with other people's servants, and to find fault with them, and censure them. Weak and strong christians are indeed our brethren, but they are not our servants. This rash judging is reproved, Jam. 3. 1. under the notion of being *many masters*. We make ourselves our brethren's masters, and do in effect usurp the throne of God, when we take upon us thus to judge them; especially to judge their thoughts and intentions, which are out of our view; to judge their persons and state, concerning which it is hard to conclude by those few indications which fall within our cognizance. God sees not as man sees; and he is their master, and not we. In judging and censuring our brethren, we meddle with that which does not belong to us: we have work enough to do at home; and if we must needs be judging, let us exercise our faculty upon our own hearts and ways.

To his own master he stands or falls; his doom will be according to his master's sentence, and not according to our's. How well for us is it, that we are not to stand or fall by the judgment one of another, but by the righteous and unerring judgment of God, which is according to truth! "While thy brother's cause is before thy judgment, it is *coram non judice*—before one who is not the judge; the court of heaven is the proper court for trial, where, and where only, the sentence is definitive and concluding; and to which, if his heart be upright, he may comfortably appeal from thy rash censure."

(3.) Because both the one and the other, if they be true believers, and are right in the main, have an eye to God, and do approve themselves to God in what they do, v. 6.

He *that regards the day*, that makes conscience of observing the Jewish fasts and festivals, not imposing it upon others, nor laying a stress upon it, but willing to be as he thinks on the surer side, as thinking there is no harm in resting from worldly labours, and worshipping God on those days, it is well. We have reason to think, because in other things he conducts himself like a good christian, that in this also his eye is single, and that *he regardeth it unto the Lord*; and God will accept of his honest intention, though he be under a mistake about the observation of days; for the sincerity and uprightness of the heart were never rejected for the weakness and infirmity of the head: so good a master do we serve.

On the other hand, he *that regards not the day*, that does not make a difference between one day and another; does not call one day holy, and another profane; one day lucky, and another unlucky; but esteems every day alike: he does not do it out of a spirit of opposition, contradiction, or contempt of his brother; if he be a good christian, he does not, he dares not, do it from such a principle: and therefore we charitably conclude, that to the *Lord he doth not regard it*. He *therefore* makes no such difference of days, because he knows God hath made none; and therefore intends his honour in endeavouring to dedicate every day to him.

So for the other instance; *He that eateth* whatever is set before him, though it be blood, though it be swine's flesh, if it be *food convenient* for him, he *eateth to the Lord*. He understands the liberty that God has granted him, and uses it to the glory of God, with an eye to his wisdom and goodness, in enlarging our allowance now under the gospel, and taking off the yoke of legal restraints; and he *giveth God thanks*, for the variety of food he has, and the liberty he has to eat it, and that in those things his conscience is not fettered.

On the other hand, he *that eateth not* those meats which were forbidden by the ceremonial law, *to the Lord he eateth not*; it is for God's sake, because he is afraid of offending God by eating that which he is sure was once prohibited; and he *giveth God thanks too*, that there is enough beside. If he conscientiously deny himself that which he takes to be *forbidden fruit*, yet he blesses God that of other trees in the garden he may freely eat. Thus while both have an eye to God in what they do, and approve themselves to him in their integrity, why should either of them be judged or despised?

Observe, Whether we eat flesh, or eat herbs, it is a thankful regard to God, the author and giver of all our mercies, that sanctifies and sweetens it.

Bishop Sanderson, in his 34th sermon, upon 1 Tim. 4. 4. justly makes this observation: It appears by this, that *saying grace* (as we commonly call it, perhaps from 1 Cor. 10. 30.) before and after meat, was the common known practice of the church, among christians of all sorts, weak and strong: an ancient, commendable, apostolical, christian practice, derived down from Christ's example through all the ages of the church; (Matt. 14. 19.—15. 36. Luke 9. 15. John 6. 11. Matt. 26. 26, 27. Acts 27. 35.) blessing the creatures in the name of God before we use them, and blessing the name of God for them after, both included; for *ἐὺλας εἶναι* and *ἐὺχαριστεῖν* are used promiscuously.

To clear this argument against rash judging and despising, he shews how essential it is to true christianity, to have a regard to God, and not to ourselves; which therefore, unless the contrary do manifestly appear, we must presume, concerning

those that in lesser things differ from us. Observe his description of true christians, taken from their end and aim, (v. 7, 8.) and the ground of it, v. 9.

[1.] *Our end and aim*: not self, but the Lord. As the particular end specifies the action, so the general scope and tendency specify the state. If we would know what way we walk *in*, we must inquire what end we walk *toward*.

First, Not to self. We have learned to deny ourselves; that was our first lesson; *None of us liveth to himself*. This is a thing in which all the people of God are one, however they differ in other things; though some are weak and others are strong, yet both agree in this, not to live to themselves. Not one that hath given up his name to Christ, is allowedly a self-seeker; it is contrary to the foundation of true christianity.

We neither *live to ourselves*, nor *die to ourselves*, we are not our own masters, nor our own proprietors; we are not at our own disposal. The business of our lives is not to please ourselves, but to please God. The business of our deaths, which we are every day exposed to, and delivered to, is not to make ourselves talked of; we run not such hazards out of vain-glory, while we are dying daily. When we come to die actually, neither is that to ourselves; it is not barely that we would be *unclothed*, and eased of the burthen of the flesh; but it is *to the Lord*, that we may depart, and be with Christ, may be *present with the Lord*.

Secondly, But to the Lord, (v. 8.) to the Lord Christ, to whom all power and judgment are committed, and in whose name we are taught, as christians, to do every thing we do, (Col. 3. 17.) with an eye to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, Phil. 1. 21. *Christ is the gain* we aim at, living and dying. *We live*, to glorify him in all the actions and affairs of life; *we die*, whether a natural or a violent death, to glorify him, and to go to be glorified with him. Christ is the centre, in which all the lines of life and death do meet. This is true christianity, which makes Christ all in all.

So that, whether *we live or die*, *we are the Lord's*, devoted to him, depending on him, designed and designing for him. Though some christians are weak, and others strong; though of different sizes, capacities, apprehensions and practices, in lesser things, yet they are all the Lord's: alleys, and serving, and approving themselves to Christ, and are accordingly owned and accepted of him. Is it for us then to judge or despise them, as if we were their masters, and they were to make it their business to please us, and to stand or fall by our dooms?

[2.] The ground of this, v. 9. It is grounded upon Christ's absolute sovereignty and dominion, which were the fruit and end of his death and resurrection. To this end *he both died, and rose, and revived*, (he, being risen, entered upon a heavenly life, the glory which he had before, that *he might be Lord, both of dead and living*, that he might be universal Monarch, Lord of all, (Acts 10. 36.) all the animate and inanimate creatures; for he is head over all things to the church. He is Lord of those that are *living*, to rule them, of those that are *dead*, to revive them, and raise them up. This was that *name above every name*, which God gave him as the reward of his humiliation, Phil. 2. 8, 9. It was after he had died and risen, that he said, *All power is given unto me*; (Matt. 28. 18.) and presently he exerts that power in issuing out commissions, v. 19, 20.

Now if Christ paid so dear for his dominion over souls and consciences, and has such a just and undisputed right to exercise that dominion; we must not so much as seem to invade it, or intrench upon it,

by judging the consciences of our brethren, and arraigning them at our bar.

When we are ready to reproach, and reflect upon, the name and memory of those that are *dead* and gone, and to pass a censure upon them, (which some the rather do, because such judgments of the dead are more likely to pass uncontrolled and uncontradicted,) we must consider that Christ is *Lord of the dead*, as well as of the living. If they are dead, they have already given up their account, and let that suffice.

And this leads to another reason against judging and despising;

(4.) Because both the one and the other must shortly give an account, v. 10—12. A believing regard to the judgment of the great day, would silence all these rash judgments; *Why dost thou that art weak, judge thy brother that is strong?* And *why dost thou that art strong, set at nought thy brother that is weak?* Why is all this clashing, and contradicting, and censuring, among christians? *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ*, 2 Cor. 5. 10. Christ will be the Judge, and he has both authority and ability to determine men's eternal state according to their works, and before him we shall stand as persons to be tried, and to give up an account; expecting our final doom from him, which will be eternally conclusive.

To illustrate this, (v. 11.) he quotes a passage out of the Old Testament, which speaks of Christ's universal sovereignty and dominion, and that established with an oath; *As I live*, (saith the Lord,) *every knee shall bow to me*. It is quoted from Isa. 45. 23. there it is, *I have sworn by myself*; here it is, *As I live*. So that whenever God saith, *As I live*, it is to be interpreted as swearing by himself; for it is God's prerogative to have life in himself: there is a further ratification of it there, *The word is gone out of my mouth*.

It is a prophecy, in general, of Christ's dominion; and here very fully applied to the judgment of the great day, which will be the highest and most illustrious exercise of that dominion. Here is a proof of Christ's godhead, he is *the Lord*, and he is *God*, equal with the Father. Divine honour is due to him, and must be paid. It is paid to God through him as Mediator. God will judge the world by him, Acts 17. 31.

The *bowing of the knee* to him, and the *confession* made with the *tongue*, are but outward expressions of inward adoration and praise. *Every knee*, and *every tongue*, either freely, or by force.

[1.] All his friends do it *freely*; are made willing in the day of his power. Grace is the soul's cheerful, entire, and avowed subjection to Jesus Christ. *First*, *Bowing* to him; the understanding bowed to his truths, the will to his laws, the whole man to his authority; and this expressed by the bowing of the knee, the posture of adoration and prayer. It is proclaimed before our Joseph, *Bow the knee*, Gen. 41. 43. Though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet as it is guided by inward fear and reverence, it is accepted. *Secondly*, *Confessing* to him; acknowledging his glory, grace, and greatness; acknowledging our own meanness and vileness, confessing our sins to him; so some understand it.

[2.] All his foes shall be constrained to do it, whether they will or no. When he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him; then, and not till then, will all those promises, which speak of his victories over his enemies and their subjection to him, have their full and complete accomplishment; then his foes shall be his footstool, and all his enemies shall lick the dust.

Hence he concludes, (v. 12.) *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God*. We must not give account for others, nor they for us: but every one

for himself. We must give account how we have spent our time, how we have improved our opportunities: what we have done, and how we have done it.

And therefore, *First*, We have little to do, to judge others, for they are not accountable to us, nor are we accountable for them; (Gal. 2. 6.) *Whosoever they were, it maketh no matter to me, God accepteth no man's person*. Whatever they are, and whatever they do, they must give account to their own master, and not to us; if we can in any thing be helpers of their joy, it is well; but we have not dominion over their faith. And, *Secondly*, We have the more to do, to judge ourselves, we have an account of our own to make up; and that is enough for us; let every man *prove his own work*, (Gal. 6. 4.) state his own accounts, search his own heart and life; let that take up his thoughts, and he that is strict in judging himself and abasing himself, will not be apt to judge and despise his *brother*. Let all these differences be referred to the arbitration of Christ at the great day.

(5.) Because the stress of christianity is not to be laid upon these things, nor are they at all essential to religion, either on the one side or on the other. This is his reason, (v. 17, 18.) which is reducible to this branch of exhortation;

Why should you spend your zeal either for or against those things which are so minute and inconsiderable in religion? Some make it a reason, why, in case of offence likely to be taken, we should refrain the use of our christian liberty; but it seems directed in general against that heat about those things, which he observed on both sides. *The kingdom of God is not meat*, &c. Observe here,

[1.] The nature of true christianity, what it is it is here called, *The kingdom of God*; it is a religion intended to rule us, a kingdom: it stands in a true and hearty subjection to God's power and dominion. The gospel-dispensation is in a special manner called *the kingdom of God*, in distinction from the legal dispensation, Matt. 3. 2.—4. 17.

First, *It is not meat and drink*; it does not consist either in using, or in abstaining from, such and such meats and drinks. Christianity gives no rule in that case, either in one way or other. The Jewish religion consisted much in *meats and drinks*; (Heb. 9. 10.) abstaining from some meats religiously, (Lev. 11. 2.) eating other meats religiously; as in several of the sacrifices, part of which were to be eaten before the Lord: but all those appointments are now abolished, and are no more, Col. 2. 21, 22. The matter is left at large; every creature of God is good, 1 Tim. 4. 4. So, as to other things, it is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, (Gal. 5. 6.—6. 15. 1 Cor. 7. 19.) it is not being of this party and persuasion, of this or the other opinion in lesser things, that will recommend us to God. It will not be asked at the great day, "Who ate flesh, and who ate herbs?" "Who kept holy days, and who did not?" Nor will it be asked, "Who was conformist, and who was nonconformist?" But it will be asked, "Who feared God, and worked righteousness, and who did not?" Nothing more destructive to true christianity than placing it in modes and forms, and circumstantialities, which eat out the essentials.

Secondly, *It is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. These are some of the essentials of christianity; things in which all the people of God are agreed; in the pursuit of which we must spend our zeal, and which we must mind with an excellent care. Righteousness, peace, and joy, are very comprehensive words; and each of them includes much, both of the foundation and the superstructure of religion. Might I limit the sense of them, it should be thus. As to God, our great concern is *righteousness*; to appear before him justified by the merit of

Christ's death, sanctified by the spirit of his grace; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. As to our brethren, it is *peace*; to live in peace and love, and charity with them; following peace with all men; Christ came into the world, to be the great Peace-maker. As to ourselves, it is *joy in the Holy Ghost*; that spiritual joy which is wrought by the blessed Spirit in the hearts of believers, which respects God as their reconciled Father, and heaven as their expected home. Next to our complacency with God, the life of religion consists in our complacency in him; to delight ourselves always in the Lord. Surely we serve a good Master, who makes peace and joy so essential to our religion. Then and then only we may expect peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, when the foundation is laid in righteousness, Isa. 32. 17.

Thirdly, It is in these things to *serve Christ*, (v. 18.) to do all this out of respect to Christ himself as our Master, to his will as our rule, and to his glory as our end. That which puts an acceptableness upon all our good duties, is, a regard to Christ in the doing of them. We are to serve his interests and designs in the world; which are in the first place to reconcile us to God, and then to reconcile us one to another. What is *Christianity* but the serving of *Christ*? And we may well afford to serve him, who for us and for our salvation took upon him the form of a servant.

[2.] The advantages of it. He that duly observeth these things,

First, Is acceptable to God. God is well pleased with such a one, though he be not in every thing just of our length. He has the love and favour of God; his person, his performances, are accepted of God, and we need no more to make us happy. If God now accepts thy works, thou mayest eat thy bread with joy. Those are most pleasing to God, that are best pleased with him; and they are those that abound most in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, He is *approved of men*, of all wise and good men, and the opinion of others is not to be regarded. The persons and things, which are acceptable to God, should be approved of us. Should not we be pleased with that which God is pleased with? What is it to be sanctified, but to be of God's mind? Observe, The approbation of men is not to be slighted; for we must provide things honest in the sight of all men, and study those things that are lovely and of good report: but the acceptance of God is to be desired and aimed at in the first place, because, sooner or later, God will bring all the world to be of his mind.

3. Another rule here given, is this, that in these doubtful things, every one not only may, but must, walk according to the light that God hath given him. This is laid down, v. 5. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*; that is, "Practice according to your own judgment in those things, and leave others to do so too. Do not censure the practice of others, let them enjoy their own opinion; if they be persuaded in their own mind that they ought to do so and so, do not condemn them; but if your sober sentiments be otherwise, do not make their practice a rule to you, any more than you must prescribe yours as a rule to them. Take heed of acting contrary to the dictates of a doubting conscience. First, be persuaded that what you do is lawful, before you venture to do it." In doubtful things, it is good keeping on the sure side of the hedge. If a weak christian doubt whether it be lawful to eat flesh, while he remains under that doubt he had best forbear, till he be fully persuaded in his own mind. We must not pin our faith upon any one's sleeve, or make the practice of others our rule; but follow the dictates of our own understanding.

To this purport he argues, v. 14. and v. 23. Which two verses explain this, and give us a rule not to act against the dictates,

(1.) Of a *mistaken* conscience, v. 14. If a thing be indifferent, so that it is not in itself a sin not to do it, if we really think it a sin to do it, it is to us a sin, though not to others, because we act against our consciences, though mistaken and misinformed.

He specifies the case in hand, concerning the difference of meats. Observe,

[1.] His own clearness in this matter; "*I know and am persuaded*, I am fully persuaded, I am acquainted with my christian liberty, and am satisfied in it, without any doubt or scruple, that there is *nothing unclean of itself*, no kind of meat that lies under any ceremonial uncleanness, nor is forbidden to be eaten, if it be food proper for human bodies." Several kinds of meat were forbidden to the Jews, that in that, as in other things, they might be a peculiar and separate people, Lev. 11. 44. Dent. 14. 2, 3. Sin had brought a curse upon the whole creation, *Cursed is the ground for thy sake*; the use of the creatures and dominion over them were forfeited, so that to man they were all unclean, Tit. 1. 15. In token of which, God in the ceremonial law prohibited the use of some, to shew what he might have done concerning all; but now that Christ has removed the curse, the matter is set at large again, and that prohibition is taken away.

Therefore he says that he was persuaded by the Lord Jesus, not only as the author of that persuasion, but as the ground of it; it was built upon the efficacy of Christ's death, which removed the curse, took off the forfeiture, and restored our right to the creature in general, and consequently, put a period to that particular distinguishing prohibition. So that now there is nothing *unclean of itself*, every creature of God is good; nothing *common*: so the margin, *δὲν κοινόν*; nothing which is common to others to eat, from the use of which the professors of religion are restrained: nothing profane; in this sense the Jews used the word *common*. It is explained by the word *ἀκαθάρτου*, Acts 10. 14. nothing *common or unclean*.

It was not only from the revelation made to Peter in this matter, but from the tenor and tendency of the whole gospel, and the manifest design of Christ's death in general, that Paul learned to count nothing common or unclean. This was Paul's own clearness, and he practised accordingly.

[2.] But here is a caution he gives to those who had not that clearness in this matter, which he had; *To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean*, though it be his error, yet to him it is *unclean*. This particular case, thus determined, gives a general rule, That he who does a thing which he verily believes to be unlawful, however the thing be in itself, to him it is a sin. This arises from that unchangeable law of our creation, which is, that our wills, in all their choices, motions and directions, should follow the dictates of our understandings. This is the order of nature; which order is broken, if the understanding (though mis-guided) tell us that such a thing is a sin, and yet we will do it. This is a *will* to do evil; for if it appears to us to be sin, there is the same pravity and corruption of the will in the doing of it, as if really it were a sin; and therefore we ought not to do it. Not that it is in the power of any man's conscience to alter the nature of the action in itself, but only as to himself. It must be understood likewise with this proviso, though men's judgments and opinions may make that which is good in itself, to become evil to them, yet they cannot make that which is evil in itself, to become good, either in itself or to them. If a man were verily persuaded (it is Dr. Sander-son's instance, sermon on ch. 14. 23.) that it were

evil to ask his father's blessing, that mispersuasion would make it become evil to him : but if he should be as verily persuaded that it were good to curse his father, that would not make it become good. The Pharisees taught people to plead conscience, when they made *corban* an excuse for denying relief to their parents, Matt. 15. 5, 6. But that would not serve any more than Paul's erroneous conscience would justify his rage against christianity, (Acts 26. 9.) or their's, John 16. 2.

(2.) Nor must we act against the dictates of a *doubting* conscience. In those indifferent things which we are sure it is no sin not to do, and yet are not clear that it is lawful to do them, we must not do them while we continue under those doubts; for he that *doubteth, is damned if he eat*, (v. 23.) it turns into sin to him; he is *damned*, καταδικάζεται—he is *condemned* of his own conscience, because he *eateth not of faith*, because he does that which he is not fully persuaded he may lawfully do. He is not clear that it is lawful for him to eat swine's flesh, (suppose,) and yet is drawn, notwithstanding his doubts, to eat it, because he sees others do it, because he would gratify his appetite with it, or because he would not be reproached for his singularity. Here his own heart cannot but condemn him as a transgressor. Our rule is, to walk as far as we have attained, not further, Phil. 3. 15, 16. *For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin*. Taking it in general, it is the same with that of the apostle, (Heb. 11. 6.) *Without faith it is impossible to please God*. Whatever we do in religion, it will not turn to any good account, except we do it from a principle of faith, with a believing regard to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, and to the righteousness of Christ as our plea. Here it seems to be taken more strictly; whatever is not of faith, whatever is done while we are not clearly persuaded of the lawfulness of it, is a sin against conscience. He that will venture to do that which his own conscience suggests to him to be unlawful, when it is not so in itself, will by a like temptation be brought to do that which his conscience tells him is unlawful, when it is really so. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, and it is a dangerous thing to debase and put a force upon conscience, though it be under a mistake.

This seems to be the meaning of that aphorism, which sounds somewhat darkly, (v. 22.) *Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows*. Many a one *allows* himself in practice to do that, which yet in his judgment and conscience he *condemns* himself for; allows it for the sake of the pleasure, profit, or credit of it; allows it in conformity to the custom; and yet whilst he does it, and pleads for it, his own heart gives him the lie, and his conscience condemns him for it. Now, happy is the man who so orders his conversation, as not in any action to expose himself to the challenges and reproaches of his own conscience; that does not make his own heart his adversary, as he must needs do, who does that which he is not clear he may lawfully do. He is happy, that has peace and quietness within; for the testimony of conscience will be a special cordial in troublesome times; though men condemn us, it is well enough if our hearts condemn us not, 1 John 3. 21.

4. Another rule here prescribed is to those who are clear in these matters, and know their christian liberty, yet to take heed of using it so as to give offence to a weak brother. This is laid down, v. 13. *Let us not judge one another any more*. Let it suffice, that you have hitherto continued in this uncharitable practice, and do so no more." The better to insinuate the exhortation, he puts himself in; Let us not; as if he had said, "It is what I have resolved against, therefore do you leave it: but

judge this rather; instead of censuring the practice of others, let us look to the conduct of our own, *let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way*, τρεσκ. μμλ, η σκωδωλλον. We must take heed of saying or doing any thing which may occasion our brother to stumble or fall; the one signifies a lesser, the other a greater degree of mischief and offence, that which may be an occasion,

(1.) Of grief to our brother. "One that is weak, and thinks it unlawful to eat such and such meats, will be gradually troubled to see thee eat them, out of a concern for the honour of the law which he thinks forbids them, and for the good of thy soul which he thinks is wronged by them; especially when thou dost it wilfully, and with a seeming presumption, and not with that tenderness and that care to give satisfaction to thy weak brother, which would become thee." Christians should take heed of grieving one another, and of saddening the hearts of Christ's little ones. See Matt. 18. 6. 10.

(2.) Of guilt to our brother. The former is a *stumbling-block*, that gives our brother a great shake, and is a hindrance and discouragement to him; but this is an *occasion to fall*. "If thy weak brother, purely by thine example and influence, without any satisfaction received concerning his christian liberty, be drawn to act against his conscience, and to walk contrary to the light he has, and so to contract guilt upon the soul; though the thing were lawful to thee, yet not being so to him, (he having not yet *thereto* attained,) thou wast to be blamed for giving him the occasion." See this case explained, 1 Cor. 8. 9—11.

To the same purport, (v. 21.) he recommends it to our care, not to give offence to any one by the use of lawful things. It is good neither to *eat flesh*, nor to *drink wine*; these are things lawful indeed and comfortable, but not necessary to the support of human life; and therefore we may, and must, deny ourselves in them, rather than give offence.

It is good, pleasing to God, profitable to our brother, and no harm to ourselves. Daniel and his fellows were in better liking with pulse and water, than they were, who ate the portion of the king's meat. It is a generous piece of self-denial, for which we have Paul's example; (1 Cor. 8. 13.) *If meat make my brother to offend*; he does not say, *I will eat no meat*, that is to destroy himself; *I will eat no flesh*, that is to deny himself, *while the world stands*. This is to be extended to all such indifferent things, whereby thy brother *stumbleth*, or is *offended*, is involved either in sin or in trouble; or, *is made weak*; his graces weakened, his comforts weakened, his resolutions weakened. *Is made weak*, that is, takes occasion to shew his weakness by his censures and scruples. We must not weaken those that are weak; that is to quench the smoking flax, and to break the bruised reed.

Observe the motives to enforce this caution.

[1.] Consider the royal law of christian love and charity, which is hereby broken; (v. 15.) *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat*, be troubled to see thee eat those things which the law of Moses did forbid, which yet thou mayest lawfully do; possibly thou art ready to say, "Now he talks foolishly and weakly, and it is no great matter what he says." We are apt, in such a case, to lay all the blame on that side. But the reproof here is given to the stronger and more knowing christian: *Now walkest thou not charitably*. Thus the apostle takes part with the weakest, and condemns the defect in love on the one side more than the defect in knowledge on the other side; agreeably to his principles elsewhere, that the way of love is the *more excellent way*, 1 Cor. 12. 31. Knowledge puffeth up, but *charity edifieth*, 1 Cor. 8. 1—3. Now walkest thou not charitably. Charity to the souls of our brethren

is the best charity. True love would make us tender of their peace and purity, and beget a regard to their consciences as well as to our own. Christ deals gently with those that have true grace, though they are weak in it.

[2.] Consider the design of Christ's death; *Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died, v. 5.* First, Drawing of a soul to sin, threatens the destruction of that soul. By shaking his faith, provoking his passion, and tempting him to act against the light of his own conscience, thou dost, as much as in thee lies, destroy him, giving him an occasion to return to judaism again. *Μὴ ἀπολλύει.* It notes an utter destruction. The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water; we are not sure that it will stop any where on this side eternal destruction. *Secondly,* The consideration of the love of Christ in dying for souls, should make us very tender of the happiness and salvation of souls, and careful not to do any thing which may obstruct and hinder it. Did Christ quit a life for souls, such a life, and shall not we quit a morsel of meat for them? Shall we despise those whom Christ valued at so high a rate? Did he think it worth while to deny himself so much for them as to die for them, and shall not we think it worth while to deny ourselves so little for them as abstaining from flesh comes to?

With thy meat. Thou pleadest that it is thy own meat, and thou mayest do what thou wilt with it; but remember, that though the meat is thine, the brother offended by it, is Christ's, and a part of his purchase. While thou destroyest thy brother, thou art helping forward the Devil's design, for he is the great destroyer; and, as much as in thee lies, thou art crossing the design of Christ, for he is the great Saviour; and dost not only offend thy brother, but offend Christ; for the work of salvation is that which his heart is upon.

But are any destroyed, for whom Christ died? If we understand it of the sufficiency and general intentment of Christ's death, which was to save all upon gospel terms, no doubt but multitudes are. If of the particular determination of the efficacy of his death to the elect, then, though none that were given to Christ shall perish, (John 6. 39.) yet thou mayest, as much as in thy power, destroy such. No thanks to thee if they be not; by doing that which hath a tendency to it, thou dost manifest a great opposition to Christ. Nay, and thou mayest utterly destroy some, whose profession may be so justifiable, that thou art bound to believe in a judgment of charity, that Christ died for them. Compare this with 1 Cor. 8. 10, 11.

[3.] Consider the work of God; (v. 20.) "*For meat destroy not the work of God, the work of grace, particularly the work of faith in thy brother's soul.*" The works of peace and comfort are destroyed by such an offence given; take heed of it therefore; it will not undo that which God hath done; you should work together with God, do not counterminish his work.

First, The work of grace and peace is the *work of God*: it is wrought by him, it is wrought for him; it is a good work of his beginning, Phil. 1. 6. Observe, The same *for whom Christ died*, (v. 15.) are here called the *work of God*; beside the work that is wrought for us, there is a work to be wrought in us, in order to our salvation. Every saint is God's *workmanship*, his husbandry, his building, Eph. 2. 10. 1 Cor. 3. 9.

Secondly, We must be very careful to do nothing which tends to the destruction of this work, either in ourselves or others. We must deny ourselves in our appetites, inclinations, and in the use of christian liberty, rather than obstruct and prejudice our own or others' grace and peace. Many do for meat and drink destroy the work of God in themselves;

nothing more destructive to the soul than pampering and pleasing the flesh, and fulfilling the lusts of it; so likewise in others, by wilful offence given. Think what thou destroyest, *the work of God*, whose work is honourable and glorious; think for what thou destroyest it, *for meat*, which was but for the belly, and the belly for it.

[4.] Consider the evil of giving offence, and what an abuse it is of our christian liberty. He grants, that *all things indeed are pure*; we may lawfully eat flesh, even those meats which were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but if we abuse this liberty, it turns into sin to us; *it is evil to him that eats with offence.* Lawful things may be done unlawfully. *Eats with offence*; either carelessly, or designedly, giving offence to his brethren.

It is observable, that the apostle directs his reproof most against those who gave the offence; not as if they were not to be blamed, who causelessly and weakly took the offence from the ignorance of christian liberty, and the want of that charity which is not easily provoked, and which thinketh no evil; (he several times tacitly reflects upon them;) but he directs his speech to the strong, because they were better able to bear the reproof, and to begin the reformation.

For the further pressing of this rule, we may here observe two directions which have relation to it.

First, Let not then your good be evil spoken of; (v. 16.) take heed of doing any thing which may give occasion to others to speak evil, either of the christian religion in general, or of your christian liberty in particular. The gospel is *your good*; the liberties and franchises, the privileges and immunities granted by it, are *your good*; your knowledge and strength of grace to discern and use your liberty in things disputed, are *your good*; a good which the weak brother hath not. Now let not this be *evil spoken of*. It is true, we cannot hinder loose and ungoverned tongues from speaking evil of us, and of the best things we have; but we must not (if we can help it) give them any occasion to do it. Let not the reproach arise from any default of ours; as 1 Tim. 4. 12. *Let no man despise thee*, that is, do not make thyself despicable. So here, Do not use your knowledge and strength in such a manner as to give occasion to people to call it presumption and loose walking, and disobedience to God's law. We must deny ourselves in many cases for the preservation of our credit and reputation; forbearing to do that which we rightly know we may lawfully do, when our doing of it may be a prejudice to our good name: as, when it is suspicious, and hath the appearance of evil; or when it is become scandalous among good people; or hath any way a brand upon it. In such a case we must rather cross ourselves than shame ourselves. Though it be but a *little folly*, it may be like a dead fly, very prejudicial to one that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, Eccl. 10. 1.

We may apply it more generally. We should manage all our good duties in such a manner that they may not be evil spoken of. That which for the matter of it is good and unexceptionable, may sometimes, by mismanagement, be rendered liable to a great deal of censure and reproach. Good praying, preaching, and discourse, may often, for want of prudence in ordering the time, the expression, and other circumstances to edification, be evil spoken of. It is indeed their sin, who do speak evil of that which is good, for the sake of any such circumstantial errors; but it is our folly, if we give any occasion to do so. As we tender the reputation of the good we profess and practise, let us so order it that it may not be evil spoken of.

Secondly, Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself be-

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fore God, v. 22. It is not meant of justifying faith; (that must not be hid, but manifested by our works;) but of a knowledge and persuasion of our christian liberty in things disputed. "Hast thou clearness in such a particular? Art thou satisfied that thou mayest eat all meats, and observe all days, (except the Lord's day,) alike? *Have it to thyself*, enjoy the comfort of it in thy own bosom, and do not trouble others by the imprudent use of it, when it might give offence, and cause thy weak brother to stumble and fall." In these indifferent things, though we must never contradict our persuasion, yet we may sometimes conceal it, when the avowing of it will do more hurt than good. "*Have it to thyself*; a rule to thyself, not to be imposed upon others, or made a rule to them; or a rejoicing to thyself." Clearness in doubtful matters contributes very much to our comfortable walking, as it frees us from those scruples, jealousies, and suspicions, which those who have not such clearness, are entangled in endlessly. Compare Gal. 6. 4. *Let every man prove his own work*, bring it to the touchstone of the word, and try it by that so exactly, as to be well satisfied in what he does; and then he *shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another*. Paul had faith in these things; *I am persuaded that there is nothing unclean of itself*; but he had it to himself, so as not to use his liberty to the offence of others.

How happy were it for the church, if those that have a clearness in disputable things, would be satisfied to have it to themselves before God, and not impose those things upon others, and make them terms of communion; than which nothing is more opposite to christian liberty, nor more destructive both to the peace of churches and the peace of consciences. That healing method is not the less excellent for being common; in things necessary, let there be unity, in things unnecessary let there be liberty, and in both let there be charity, then all will be well quickly.

Have it to thyself before God. The end of such knowledge is, that, being satisfied in our liberty, we may have a conscience void of offence toward God, and let that content us. That is the true comfort which we have before God. Those are right indeed, that are so in God's sight.

5. There is one rule more laid down here; and it is general, *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*, v. 19. Here is the sum of our duty towards our brethren.

(1.) We must study mutual peace. Many wish for peace, and talk loud for it, that do not follow the things that make for peace, but the contrary. Liberty in things indifferent, condescension to those that are weak and tender, zeal in the great things of God wherein we are all agreed; these are things that *make for peace*. Meekness, humility, self-denial, and love, are the springs of peace; the things that make for our peace. We are not always so happy as to obtain peace; there are so many that delight in war; but the God of peace will accept us, if we follow after the things that make for peace, if we do our endeavour.

(2.) We must study mutual edification. The former makes way for this. We cannot edify one another, while we are quarrelling and contending. There are many ways by which we may edify one another, if we did but seriously mind it; by good counsel, reproof, instruction, example, building up not only ourselves, but one another, in the most holy faith. We are God's building, God's temple, and have need to be edified; and therefore must study to promote the spiritual growth one of another. None so strong but they may be edified; none so weak, but may edify; and while we edify others, we benefit ourselves.

The apostle in this chapter, continues the discourse of the former, concerning mutual forbearance in indifferent things; and so draws towards a conclusion of the epistle. Where such differences of apprehension, and consequently distances of affection, are among christians, there is need of precept upon precept, line upon line, to allay the heat, and to beget a better temper. The apostle, being desirous to drive the nail home, as a nail in a sure place, follows his blow, unwilling to leave the subject till he had some hopes of prevailing: to which end he orders the cause before them, and fills his mouth with the most pressing arguments.

We may observe, in this chapter, I. His precepts to them. II. His prayers for them. III. His apology for writing to them. IV. His account of himself and his own affairs. V. His declaration of his purpose to come to see them. VI. His desire of a share in their prayers.

1. **WE** then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2. Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. 3. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. 4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The apostle here lays down two precepts, with reasons to enforce them, shewing the duty of the strong christian to consider and condescend to the weakest.

I. We must *bear the infirmities of the weak*, v. 1. We all have our infirmities; but the weak are more subject to them than others; the weak in knowledge or grace; the bruised reed, and the smoking flax. We must consider these; not trample upon them, but encourage them, and *bear with their infirmities*. If through weakness they judge and censure us, and speak evil of us, we must bear with them, pity them, and not have our affections alienated from them. Alas! it is their weakness, they cannot help it. Thus Christ bore with his weak disciples, and excused for them. But there is more in it; we must also *bear their infirmities*, by sympathizing with them, concerning ourselves for them, ministering strength to them, as there is occasion. That is bearing one another's burthens.

II. We must *not please ourselves*, but *our neighbour*, v. 1, 2. We must deny our own humour, in consideration of our brethren's weakness and infirmity. 1. Christians must not please themselves. We must not make it our business to gratify all the little appetites and desires of our own heart; it is good for us to cross ourselves sometimes; and then we shall the better bear others crossing of us. We shall be spoiled, (as Adonijah was,) if we be always humoured. The first lesson we have to learn, is, to deny ourselves, Matt. 16. 24. 2. Christians must *please their brethren*. The design of christianity is to soften and meekens the spirit, to teach us the art of obliging and true complaisance; not to be servants to the lusts of any, but to the necessities and infirmities of our brethren; to comply with all that we have to do with, as far as we can with a good conscience. Christians should study to be pleasing.

Not *please ourselves* in the use of our christian liberty, which was allowed us, not for our own pleasure, but for the glory of God, and the profit and edification of others. So we must please our *neighbour*. How amiable and comfortable a society would the church of Christ be, if christians would study to please one another, as now we see them common

ly industrious to cross, and thwart, and contradict one another!

Please his neighbour, not in every thing, it is not an unlimited rule; but *for his good*, especially for the good of his soul: not please him by serving his wicked wills, and humouring him in a sinful way, or consenting to his enticements, or suffering sin upon him; this is a base way of pleasing our neighbour to the ruin of his soul: if we thus please men, we are not the servants of Christ: but please him for his good; not for our own secular good, or to make a prey of him, but for his spiritual good.

To edification, not only for his profit, but for the profit of others, to edify the body of Christ, by studying to oblige one another. The closer the stones lie, and the better they are squared to fit one another, the stronger is the building.

Now observe the reason, why christians must please one another; *for even Christ pleased not himself*. The self-denial of our Lord Jesus is the best argument against the selfishness of christians. Observe,

(1.) That Christ *pleased not himself*. He did not consult his own worldly credit, ease, safety, or pleasure; he had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, would not be made a king; detested no proposal with greater abhorrence than that, *Master, spare thyself*; did not seek his own will, (John 5. 30.) washed his disciples' feet, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, troubled himself, (John 11. 33.) did not consult his own honour; and, in a word, emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation: and all this for our sakes, to bring in a righteousness for us, and to set us an example. His whole life was a self-denying, self-displeasing life. He bore the *infirmities of the weak*, Heb. 4. 15.

(2.) That herein the scripture was fulfilled; *As it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me*. This is quoted out of Ps. 69. 9. the former part of which verse is applied to Christ, (John 2. 17.) *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*; and the latter part here; for David was a type of Christ, and his sufferings, of Christ's sufferings.

It is quoted, to shew that Christ was so far from pleasing himself, that he did in the highest degree displease himself. Not as if his undertaking, considered on the whole, were a task and grievance to him, for he was very willing to it, and very cheerful in it; but in his humiliation, the content and satisfaction of natural inclination were altogether crossed and denied. He preferred our benefit before his own ease and pleasure. This the apostle chooses to express in scripture-language; for how can the things of the Spirit of God be better spoken of than in the Spirit's own words? And in that scripture he alleges, *The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me*.

[1.] The shame of those reproaches which Christ underwent. Whatever dishonour was done to God, was a trouble to the Lord Jesus. He was grieved for the hardness of people's hearts, beheld a sinful place with sorrow and tears. When the saints were persecuted, Christ so far displeased himself, as to take what was done to them as done against himself; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Christ also did himself endure the greatest indignities; there was much of *reproach* in his sufferings.

[2.] The sin of those reproaches which Christ undertook to satisfy for; so many understand it. Every sin is a kind of reproach to God, especially presumptuous sins; now the guilt of these fell upon Christ, when he was made Sin, that is, a sacrifice, a Sin-offering for us. When the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, they fell upon him as upon our surety. *Upon me be the curse*.

This was the greatest piece of self-displacency

that could be: considering his infinite spotless purity and holiness; the infinite love of the Father to him, and his eternal concern for his Father's glory; nothing could be more contrary to him, nor more against him, than to be made Sin and a Curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him; especially, considering for whom he thus displeased himself, for strangers, enemies, and traitors; the *just for the unjust*, 1 Pet. 3. 18.

This seems to come in as a reason, *why we should bear the infirmities of the weak*. We must not please ourselves, for Christ pleased not himself; we must bear the infirmities of the weak, for Christ bore the reproaches of those that reproached God. He bore the guilt of sin, and the curse for it; we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it. He bore the presumptuous sins of the wicked; we are called only to bear the infirmities of the weak.

Even Christ; ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός. Even he who was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, who needed not us or our services; even he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, who had reason enough to please himself, and no reason to be concerned, much less to be crossed, for us; even he pleased not himself, even he bore our sins. And should not we be humble and self-denying, and ready to consider one another, who are members one of another?

(3.) That therefore we must go and do likewise; *For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning*. [1.] That which is written of Christ, concerning his self-denial and sufferings, is *written for our learning*; he hath left us an example. If Christ denied himself, surely we should deny ourselves, from a principle of ingenuousness and of gratitude, and especially of conformity to his image. The example of Christ, in what he did and said, is recorded for our imitation. [2.] That which is written in the scriptures of the Old Testament in the general, is written for our learning. What David had said in his own person, Paul had just now applied to Christ. Now lest this should look like a straining of the scripture, he gives us this excellent rule in general, that all the scriptures of the Old Testament (much more those of the New) were written *for our learning*, and are not to be looked upon as of *private interpretation*. What happened to the Old Testament saints, happened to them for ensample; and the scriptures of the Old Testament have many fulfillings. The scriptures are left for a standing rule to us: they are *written*, that they might *remain* for our use and benefit.

First, For our learning. There are many things to be learned out of the scripture; and that is the best learning, that is drawn from those fountains. Those are the most learned, that are most mighty in the scriptures. We must therefore labour, not only to understand the literal meaning of the scriptures, but to learn out of it that which will do us good; and have need of help therefore not only to roll away the stone, but to draw out the water; for in many places the well is *deep*. Practical observations are more necessary than critical expositions.

Secondly, That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. That *hope* which hath eternal life for its object, is here proposed as the end of scripture-learning. The scripture was written, that we might know what to hope for from God, and upon what grounds, and in what way.

This should recommend the scripture to us, that it is a special friend to christian hope. Now the way of attaining this hope, is, *through patience and comfort of the scripture*. *Patience and comfort* suppose trouble and sorrow; such is the lot of the saints in this world; and were it not so, we should have no occasion for *patience and comfort*. But both these befriend that hope, which is the life of

our souls. *Patience works experience, and experience, hope*, that maketh not ashamed, *ch. 5. 3—5*. The more patience we exercise under troubles, the more hopefully we may look through our troubles; nothing more destructive to hope than impatience.

And the *comfort of the scriptures*, that comfort which springs from the word of God, (that is the surest and sweetest comfort,) is likewise a great stay to hope, as it is an earnest in hand of the good hoped for. The Spirit, as a *Comforter*, is the Earnest of our inheritance.

5. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus: 6. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle, having delivered two exhortations, before he proceeds to more, intermixes here a prayer for the success of what he had said. Faithful ministers water their preaching with their prayers, because, whoever sows the seed, it is God that gives the *increase*. We can but speak to the ear, it is God's prerogative to speak to the heart. Observe,

I. The title he gives to God; the *God of patience and consolation*, who is both the Author and the Foundation of all the patience and consolation of the saints; from whom it springs, and on whom it is built. He gives the grace of *patience*, he confirms and keeps it up as the God of *consolation*; for the comforts of the Holy Ghost help to support believers, and to bear them up with courage and cheerfulness under all their afflictions. When he comes to beg the pouring out of the spirit of love and unity, he addresses himself to God as the *God of patience and consolation*; 1. As a God that bears with us, and comforts us; is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, but is ready to comfort them that are cast down; to teach us so to testify our love to our brethren, and by these means to preserve and maintain unity, by being patient one with another, and comfortable one to another. Or, 2. As a God that gives us *patience and comfort*. He had spoken (v. 4.) of patience and comfort of the scriptures; but here he looks up to God as the God of *patience and consolation*: it comes through the scripture as the conduit-pipe, but from God as the fountain-head. The more patience and comfort we receive from God, the better disposed we are to love one another. Nothing breaks the peace more than an impatient and peevish, and fretful melancholy temper.

II. The mercy he begs of God; *Grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ*. 1. The foundation of christian love and peace is laid in like-mindedness; a consent in judgment, as far as you have attained; or however, a concord and agreement in affection. *Τὸ αὐτὸ ὁρῶντες* — *to mind the same thing*, all occasions of difference removed, and all quarrels laid aside. 2. This like-mindedness must be *according to Christ Jesus*; according to the precept of Christ, the royal law of love, according to the pattern and example of Christ, which he had propounded to them for their imitation, v. 3. Or, "Let Christ Jesus be the Centre of unity. Agree in the truth, not in any error." It was a cursed concord and harmony of those who were of one mind, to give their power and strength to the beast; (Rev. 17. 13.) that was not a like-mindedness *according to Christ*, but *against Christ*; like the Babel-builders, who were *one* in their rebellion, Gen. 11. 6. The method of our prayer must be, first for truth, and then for peace; for such is the method of the wisdom that is from above; it is *first pure, then peaceable*. That is to be like-minded

ed according to Christ Jesus: 3. Like-mindedness among christians, according to Christ Jesus, is the gift of God; and a precious gift it is, for which we must come to seek unto him. He is the *Father of spirits*, and fashions the hearts of men alike, (Ps. 33. 15.) opens the understanding, softens the heart, sweetens the affections, and gives the grace of love, and the Spirit, as a Spirit of love, to those that ask him. We are taught to pray, that the will of God may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven: now, there it is done unanimously, among the angels, who are one in their praises and services: and our desire must be, that the saints on earth may be so too.

III. The end of his desire; that God may be glorified, v. 6. This is his plea with God in prayer, and is likewise an argument with them to endeavour it. We should have the glory of God in our eye in every prayer; therefore our first petition, as the foundation of all the rest, must be, *Hallowed be thy name*.

Like-mindedness among christians, is in order to our glorifying of God;

1. With *one mind and one mouth*. It is desirable that christians should agree in every thing, that so they may agree in this, to praise God together. It tends very much to the glory of God who is one, and his name one, when it is so. It will not suffice, that there be one mouth, but there must be one mind; for God looks at the heart; nay, there will hardly be one mouth, where there is not one mind; and God will scarcely be glorified, where there is not a sweet conjunction of both. One mouth in confessing the truths of God, in praising the name of God; *one mouth* in common converse, not jarring, biting, and devouring one another; *one mouth* in the solemn assembly; one speaking, but all joining.

2. As *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. That is his New Testament style. God must be glorified as he has now revealed himself in the face of Jesus Christ; according to the rules of the gospel, and with an eye to Christ, in whom he is our Father. The unity of christians glorifies God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; because it is a kind of counter-part or representation of the oneness that is between the Father and the Son. We are warranted so to speak of it, and, with that in our eye, to desire it, and pray for it, from John 17. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee*: a high expression of the honour and sweetness of the saints' unity. And it follows, *That the world may believe that thou hast sent me*; and so God may be glorified as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. 8. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: 9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. 10. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. 11. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. 12. And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

The apostle here returns to his exhortation to christians. What he says here, (v. 7.) is to the

same purport with the former; but the repetition shews how much the apostle's heart was upon it.

"Receive one another into your affection, into your communion, and into your common conversation, as there is occasion." He had exhorted the strong to receive the weak; (*ch.* 14. 1.) here, *Receive one another*; for sometimes the prejudices of the weak christian make him shy of the strong, as much as the pride of the strong christian makes him shy of the weak; neither of which ought to be. Let there be a mutual embracing among christians. Those that have received Christ by faith, must receive all christians by brotherly love; though poor in the world, though persecuted and despised, though it may be matter of reproach and danger to you to receive them; though in the less weighty matters of the law they are of different apprehensions, though there may have been occasion for private piques; yet laying aside these, and the like considerations, *receive ye one another*.

Now the reason why christians must receive one another, is taken, as before, from the condescending love of Christ to us; *As Christ also received us, to the glory of God*. Can there be a more cogent argument? Has Christ been so kind to us, and shall we be so unkind to those that are his? Was he so forward to entertain us, and shall we be backward to entertain our brethren? Christ has *received* us into the nearest and dearest relations to himself: has received us into his fold, into his family, into the adoption of sons, into a covenant of friendship, yea, into a marriage-covenant with himself; has received us (though we were strangers and enemies, and had played the prodigal) into fellowship and communion with himself.

Those words, *to the glory of God*, may refer both to Christ's receiving us, which is our pattern; and to our receiving one another, which is our practice according to that pattern.

I. Christ hath received us *to the glory of God*. The end of our reception by Christ, is, that we might glorify God in this world, and be glorified with him in that to come. It was the glory of God, and our glory in the enjoyment of God, that Christ had in his eye, when he condescended to receive us. We are called to an eternal glory by Christ Jesus, John 17. 24. See to what he received us, to a happiness transcending all comprehension: see for what he received us, for his Father's glory; he had that in his eye in all the instances of his favour to us.

II. We must receive one another *to the glory of God*. That must be our great end in all our actions, that God may be glorified; and nothing more conduces to that, than the mutual love and kindness of those that profess religion; compare *v.* 6. *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God*.

That which was a bone of contention among them, was, a different apprehension about meats and drinks, which took rise in distinction, between Jews and Gentiles. Now, to prevent and make up this difference, he shews how Jesus Christ hath received both Jews and Gentiles; in him they are both one, *one new man*, Eph. 2. 14—16. Now it is a rule, *Quæ convenient in aliquo tertio, inter se conveniunt*—Things which agree with a third thing, agree with each other. Those that agree in Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and the great Centre of unity, may well afford to agree among themselves. This coalescence of the Jews and Gentiles in Christ and christianity, was a thing that filled and affected Paul so much, that he could not mention it without some enlargement and illustration.

1. He received the Jews, *v.* 8. Let not any think hardly or scornfully therefore of those that were originally Jews, and still, through weakness, retain some savour of their old Judaism: for,

(1.) Jesus Christ was a *Minister of the circumcision*. That he was a *Minister*, *διδάσκων*—a *Servant*, speaks his great and exemplary condescension, and puts an honour upon the ministry; but that he was a *Minister of the circumcision*, was himself circumcised, and made under the law, and did in his own person preach the gospel to the Jews, who were of *the circumcision*—this makes the nation of the Jews more considerable than otherwise they appear to be. Christ conversed with the Jews, blessed them, looked upon himself as primarily sent to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel, laid hold of the seed of Abraham*, (Heb. 2. 16. *margin*;) and by them, as it were, caught at the whole body of mankind. Christ's personal ministry was appropriated to him, though the apostles had their commission enlarged.

(2.) He was *sent for the truth of God*. That which he preached to them, was, the *truth*; for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, John 18. 37. And he is himself the Truth, John 14. 6. Or, *for the truth of God*, that is, to make good the promises given to the patriarchs, concerning the special mercy God had in store for their seed. It was not for the merit of the Jews, but *for the truth of God*, that they were thus distinguished; that God might approve himself true to this word which he had spoken.

To confirm the promises made unto the fathers. The best confirmation of promises is the performance of them. It was promised, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that Shiloh should come from between the feet of Judah; that out of Israel should proceed he that should have the dominion; that out of Zion should go forth the law; and many the like. There were many intermediate providences, which seemed to weaken those promises; providences which threatened the fatal decay of that people; but when Messiah the Prince appeared in the fulness of time, as a *Minister of the circumcision*, all these promises were confirmed, and the truth of them was made to appear; for in Christ all the promises of God, both those of the Old Testament and those of the New, are Yea, and in him Amen. Understanding by *the promises made to the fathers*, the whole covenant of grace, darkly administered under the Old Testament, and brought to a clearer light now under the gospel; it was Christ's great errand to confirm that covenant, Dan. 9. 27. He confirmed it by shedding the blood of the covenant.

2. He received the Gentiles likewise. This he shews, *v.* 9—12.

(1.) Observe Christ's favour to the Gentiles, in taking them in to praise God—the work of the church on earth, and the wages of that in heaven. One design of Christ, was, that the Gentiles likewise might be converted; that they might be one with the Jews in Christ's mystical body. A good reason why they should not think the worse of any christian for his having been formerly a Gentile; for Christ hath received him. He invites the Gentiles, and welcomes them. Now observe how their conversion is here expressed; *That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy*. A periphrasis of conversion.

[1.] They shall have matter for praise, even the *mercy* of God. Considering the miserable and deplorable condition that the Gentile world was in, the receiving of them appears more as an act of *mercy* than the receiving of the Jews.

They that were *Lo-ammi*—not a people, were *Lo-ruhamah*—not obtaining mercy, Hos. 1. 6, 9.—2. 23. The greatest mercy of God to any people, is, the receiving of them into covenant with himself: and it is good to take notice of God's mercy in receiving us.

[2.] They shall have a heart for praise. They

shall glorify God for his mercy. Unconverted sinners do nothing to glorify God; but converting grace works in the soul a disposition to speak and do all to the glory of God; God intended to reap a harvest of glory from the Gentiles, who had been so long turning his glory into shame.

(2.) The fulfilling of the scriptures in this. The favour of God to the Gentiles was not only mercy, but *truth*. Though there were not promises directly given to them, as to the *fathers of the Jews*; yet there were many prophecies concerning them, which related to the calling of them, and the embodying of them in the church: some of which he mentions, because it was a thing that the Jews were hardly persuaded to believe. Thus, by referring them to the Old Testament, he labours to qualify their dislike of the Gentiles, and so to reconcile the parties at variance.

[1.] It was foretold, that the Gentiles should have the gospel preached to them, "*I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, (v. 9.) thy name shall be known, and owned in the Gentile world; there shall gospel-grace and love be celebrated.*" This is quoted from Ps. 18. 49. *I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen.* A thankful explication and commemoration of the name of God, are an excellent means of drawing others to know and praise God. Christ, in and by his apostles and ministers, whom he sent to disciple all nations, did confess to God among the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ, as well as the conversion of sinners, is set forth by the praising of God. Christ's declaring God's name to his brethren, is called *his praising of God in the midst of the congregation*, Ps. 22. 22.

Taking these words as spoken by David, they were spoken when he was old and dying, and he was not likely to confess to God among the Gentiles: but when David's psalms are read and sung among the Gentiles, to the praise and glory of God, it may be said, that David is *confessing to God among the Gentiles, and singing to his name*. He that was the sweet psalmist of Israel, is now the sweet psalmist of the Gentiles. Converting grace makes people greatly in love with David's psalms. Taking them as spoken by Christ, the Son of David, it may be understood of his spiritual indwelling by faith in the hearts of all the praising saints.

If any confess to God among the Gentiles, and sing to his name, it is not they, but Christ and his grace in them. *Live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*; so, I praise, yet not I, but Christ in me.

[2.] That the Gentiles should *rejoice with his people*, v. 10. This is quoted from that song of Moses, Deut. 32. 43. Observe, Those who were incorporated among his people, are said to rejoice with his people. No greater joy can come to any people, than the coming of the gospel among them in power. Those Jews that retain a prejudice against the Gentiles, will by no means admit them to any of their joyful festivities; for (say they) a stranger intermeddeth not with the joy, Prov. 14. 10. But the partition-wall being taken down, the Gentiles are welcome to rejoice with his people. Being brought into the church, they share in its sufferings, are companions in patience and tribulation; to recompense which, they share in the joy.

[3.] That they should praise God; (v. 11.) *Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles.* This is quoted out of that short psalm, Ps. 117. 1. Converting grace sets people a praising God, furnishes with the richest matter for praise, and gives a heart to it. The Gentiles had been, for many ages, praising their idols of wood and stone, but now they are brought to praise the Lord; and this, David in spirit speaks of. In calling upon all the nations to praise the Lord, it is intimated, that they shall have the knowledge of him.

[4.] That they should believe in Christ, (v. 12.) quoted from Isa. 11. 10. Where observe,

First, The revelation of Christ, as the Gentiles' King. He is here called the *Root of Jesse*, that is, such a Branch from the family of David, as is the very life and strength of the family: compare Isa. 11. 1.

Christ was David's Lord, and yet withal he was the Son of David, (Matt. 22. 45.) for he was the *Root and Offspring of David*, Rev. 22. 16. Christ, as God, was David's Root; Christ, as Man, was David's Offspring.

And he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles. This explains the figurative expression of the prophet, he shall *stand for an ensign of the people*. When Christ rose from the dead, when he ascended on high, it was to reign over the Gentiles.

Secondly, The recourse of the Gentiles to him; *In him shall the Gentiles trust.* Faith is the soul's confidence in Christ, and dependence on him. The prophet has it, *To him shall the Gentiles seek.* The method of faith, is, first to seek unto Christ, as to one proposed to us for a Saviour; and, finding him able and willing to save, then to trust in him. They that know him will trust in him. Or, this seeking to him is the effect of a trust in him; seeking him by prayer, and pursuant endeavours. We shall never seek to Christ till we trust in him. Trust is the mother; diligence in the use of means, the daughter.

Jews and Gentiles being thus united in Christ's love, why should they not be united in one another's love?

13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Here is another prayer directed to God, as the *God of hope*; and it is, as the former, (v. 5, 6.) for spiritual blessings; those are the best blessings, and to be first and chiefly prayed for.

I. Observe how he addresses himself to God, as the *God of hope*. It is good in prayer to fasten upon those names, titles, and attributes of God, which are most suitable to the errand we come upon, and will best serve to encourage our faith concerning it. Every word in the prayer should be a plea. Thus should the cause be skilfully ordered, and the mouth filled with arguments. God is the *God of hope*. He is the Foundation on which our hope is built, and he is the Builder that doth himself raise it: he is both the Object of our hope, and the Author of it. That hope is but fancy, and will deceive us, which is not fastened upon God, (as the Goodness hoped for, and the Truth hoped in,) and which is not of his working in us. We have both together, Ps. 119. 49. *Thy word*, (there is God the Object,) *on which thou hast caused me to hope*, there is God the Author of our hope, 1 Pet. 1. 3.

II. What he asks of God; not for himself, but for them.

1. *That they might be filled with all joy and peace in believing.* Joy and peace are two of those things in which the kingdom of God consists, ch. 14. 17. Joy in God, peace of conscience, both arising from a sense of our justification; see ch. 5. 1, 2. Joy and peace in our own bosoms would promote a cheerful unity and unanimity with our brethren. Observe.

(1.) How desirable this joy and peace are: they are filling. Carnal joy puffs up the soul, but cannot fill it; therefore in laughter the heart is sad. True, heavenly, spiritual joy is *filling* to the soul; it has a satisfaction in it, answerable to the soul's vast and just desires. Thus does God satiate and replenish the weary soul. Nothing more than this joy, only more of it, even the perfection of it in glory, is the

desire of the soul that hath it, Ps. 4, 6, 7.—36. 8.—53. 5.—65. 4.

(2.) How it is attainable. [1.] By prayer. We must go to God for it; he will for this be inquired of. Prayer fetches in spiritual joy and peace. [2.] By believing; that is the means to be used. It is vain, and flashy, and transient joy, that is the product of fancy; true substantial joy is the fruit of faith. *Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable*, 1 Pet. 1. 8. It is owing to the weakness of our faith, that we are so much wanting in joy and peace. Only believe; believe the goodness of Christ, the love of Christ, the promises of the covenant, and the joys and glories of heaven; let faith be the substance and evidence of these things, and the result must needs be joy and peace.

Observe, It is *all* joy and peace; all sorts of true joy and peace. When we come to God by prayer, we must enlarge our desires; we are not straitened in him, why should we be straitened in ourselves? Ask for *all* joy; open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it.

2. That they might *abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost*. The joy and peace of believers arise chiefly from their hopes. What is laid out upon them, is but little, compared with what is laid up for them; therefore the more hope they have the more joy and peace they have. We do then *abound* in hope, when we hope for great things from God, and are greatly established and confirmed in these hopes. Christians should desire and labour after an abundance of hope, such hope as will not make ashamed. This is through the *power of the Holy Ghost*. The same almighty power that works grace, begets and strengthens this hope. Our own power will never reach it; and therefore where this hope is, and is abounding, the blessed Spirit must have all the glory.

14. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. 15. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, 16. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Here,

1. He commends these Christians with the highest characters that could be. He began his epistle with their praises, (ch. 1. 8.) *Your faith is spoken of throughout the world*, thereby to make way for his discourse: and now he concludes with the like commendation, because sometimes he had reproved them sharply, to qualify them, and to part friends. This he does like an orator. It was not a piece of idle flattery and compliment, but a due acknowledgment of their worth, and of the grace of God in them. We must be forward to observe and commend that in others, which is excellent and praiseworthy; it is part of the present recompense of virtue and usefulness, and will be of use to quicken others to a holy emulation. It was a great credit to the Romans to be commended by Paul, a man of so great judgment and integrity, too skilful to be deceived, and too honest to flatter.

Paul had no personal acquaintance with these Christians, and yet he says, he was *persuaded* of their excellencies, though he knew them only by hearsay. As we must not, on the one hand, be so

simple as to believe every word; so, on the other hand, we must not be so sceptical as to believe nothing; but especially we must be forward to believe good concerning others: in that case charity hopeth all things, and believeth all things, and (if the probabilities be any thing strong, as here they were) is *persuaded*. It is safer to err on that hand.

Now observe what it was that he commended them for.

1. That they *were full of goodness*; therefore the more likely to take in good part what he had written, and to account it a kindness; and not only so, but to comply with it, and to put it in practice; especially that which relates to their union, and to the healing of their differences. A *good* understanding of one another, and a good will to one another, would soon put an end to strife.

2. *Filled with all knowledge*. Goodness and knowledge together! A very rare and an excellent conjunction: the head and heart of the new man. All *knowledge*, all necessary knowledge, all the knowledge of those things which belong to their everlasting peace.

3. *Able to admonish one another*. To this there is a further gift requisite, even the gift of utterance. Those that have *goodness* and *knowledge*, should communicate what they have for the use and benefit of others. "You that excel so much in good gifts, may think you have no need of any instructions of mine." It is a comfort to faithful ministers, to see their work superseded by the gifts and graces of their people. How gladly would ministers leave off their admonishing work, if people were able and willing to admonish one another! Would to God, that all the Lord's people were prophets. But that which is every body's work, is no body's work; and therefore,

II. He clears himself from the suspicion of intermeddling needlessly with that which did not belong to him, v. 15. Observe how affectionately he speaks to them; *My brethren*, (v. 14.) and again, *brethren*, v. 15. He had himself, and taught others, the art of obliging. He calls them all his *brethren*, to teach them brotherly love one to another. Probably, he wrote the more courteously to them, because, being Roman citizens, living near the court, they were more genteel, and made a better figure; and therefore Paul, who became all things to all men, was willing, by the respectfulness of his style, to please them for their good. He acknowledges he had written *boldly in some sort*—τολμησάμενος ὅτις μέρος, in a manner that looked like boldness and presumption, and for which some might perhaps charge him with taking too much upon him. But then consider,

1. He did it only as their remembrancer; *as putting you in mind*. Such humble thoughts had Paul of himself, though he excelled in knowledge, that he would not pretend to tell them that which they did not know before; but only to remind them of that in which they had formerly been by others instructed. So Peter, 2 Pet. 1. 12.—3. 1. People commonly excuse themselves from the hearing of the word, that the minister can tell them nothing but what they knew before. If it be so, yet have they not need to know it better, and to be put in mind of it?

2. He did it as the apostle of the Gentiles. It was in pursuance of his office; *Because of the grace* (the *apostleship*, ch. 1. 5.) *given to me of God*, to be the minister of *Jesus Christ to the Gentiles*, v. 16. Paul reckoned it a great favour, and an honour that God had put upon him, in putting him into that office. Now because of this grace given to him, he thus laid out himself among the Gentiles, that he might not receive that grace of God in vain. Christ received, that he might give; so did Paul; so have we

talents which must not be buried. Places and offices must be filled up with duty. It is good for ministers to be often remembering the grace that is given unto them of God. *Minister verbi es, hoc age—You are a minister of the word; give yourself wholly to it,* was Mr. Perkins's motto. Paul was a minister. Observe here,

(1.) Whose minister he was; the *minister of Jesus Christ*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. He is our Master; his we are, and him we serve.

(2.) To whom; to the Gentiles. So God had appointed him, Acts 22. 21. So Peter and he had agreed, Gal. 2. 7—9. These Romans were Gentiles; "Now," says he, "I do not thrust myself upon you, or seek any lordship over you; I am appointed to it: if you think I am rude and bold, my commission is my warrant, and must bear me out."

(3.) What he ministered; the *gospel of God*; *ἡμεροῦντα τὸ ἑσπέρηνον*—ministering as about holy things; so the word signifies; executing the office of a christian priest, more spiritual, and therefore more excellent, than the Levitical priesthood.

(4.) For what end; *that the offering up* (or sacrificing) *of the Gentiles might be acceptable*, that God may have the glory which would redound to his name by the conversion of the Gentiles. Paul laid out himself thus, to bring about something that might be acceptable to God. Observe how the conversion of the Gentiles is expressed; it is the *offering up of the Gentiles*; it is *προσφορά πνεύματος*—the oblation of the Gentiles: in which the Gentiles are looked upon, either, [1.] As the priests offering the oblation of prayer and praise, and other acts of religion. Long had the Jews been the holy nation, the kingdom of priests, but now the Gentiles are become priests unto God, (Rev. 5. 10.) by their conversion to the christian faith consecrated to the service of God, that the scripture might be fulfilled, (Mal. 1. 11.) *In every place incense shall be offered, and a pure offering.* The converted Gentiles are said to be *made nigh*, (Eph. 2. 13.)—the periphrasis of priests. Or, [2.] The Gentiles are themselves the sacrifice offered up to God by Paul, in the name of Christ; a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, ch. 12. 1. A sanctified soul is offered up to God in the flames of love, upon Christ the Altar. Paul gathered in souls by his preaching, not to keep them to himself, but to offer them up to God; *Behold, I, and the children that God hath given me.* And it is an acceptable offering; *being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.* Paul preached to them, and dealt with them; but that which made them sacrifices to God, was, their sanctification; and that was not his work, but the work of the Holy Ghost. None are acceptably offered to God, but those that are sanctified: unholy things can never be pleasing to the holy God.

17. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. 18. For I will not dare to speak any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, 19. Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20. Ye see, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: 21. But, as it is written, To whom he was not

spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

The apostle here gives some account of himself and of his own affairs. Having mentioned his ministry and apostleship, he goes on further to magnify his office in the efficacy of it; and to mention, to the glory of God, the great success of his ministry, and the wonderful things that God had done by him; for encouragement to the christian church at Rome, that they were not alone in the profession of christianity; but though, compared with the multitude of their idolatrous neighbours, they were but a little flock, yet, up and down the country, there were many that were their companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. It was likewise a great confirmation of the truth of the christian doctrine, that it had such strange success, and was so far propagated by such weak and unlikely means; such multitudes captivated to the obedience of Christ by the foolishness of preaching. Therefore Paul gives them this account; which he makes the matter of his *glorying*; not vain glory, but holy, gracious glorying; which appears by the limitations; it is *through Jesus Christ*. Thus does he centre all his glorying in Christ; he teaches us to do so, 1 Cor. 1. 31. *Not unto us, Ps. 115. 1.* And it is *in those things which pertain to God*. The conversion of souls is one of those things that pertain to God, and therefore is the matter of Paul's glorying; not the things of the flesh.

Whereof I may glory, *ἔχω ἐν αὐτῷ Χριστῷ ἡσθῆναι τὰ πρὸς Θεόν.* I would rather read it thus; *Therefore I have a rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, (it is the same word that is used, 2 Cor. 1. 12. and Phil. 3. 3. where it is the character of the circumcision, that they rejoice—*καυχόμενοι*, in Christ Jesus,) *concerning the things of God*; or those things that are offered to God—the living sacrifices of the Gentiles, v. 16. Paul would have them to rejoice with him in the extent and efficacy of his ministry; of which he speaks not only with the greatest deference possible to the power of Christ, and the effectual working of the Spirit as all in all; but with a protestation of the truth of what he said; (v. 18.) *I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me.* He would not boast of things without his line, nor take the praise of another man's work, as he might have done when he was writing to distant strangers, who perhaps could not contradict him; but (says he) *I dare not do it*: a faithful man dares not lie, however he be tempted; *dares* be true, however he be terrified.

Now, in this account of himself, we may observe,

I. His unwearied diligence and industry in his work. He was one that laboured *more abundantly than they all*.

1. He preached in many places; *from Jerusalem*, whence the law went forth as a lamp that shineth, and round about unto Illyricum, many hundred miles distant from Jerusalem. We have in the book of the Acts an account of Paul's travels. There we find him, after he was sent forth to preach to the Gentiles, (Acts 13.) labouring in that blessed work in Seleucia, Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia; (ch. 13, 14.) afterward travelling through Syria and Cilicia, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Trœus; and thence called over to Macedonia, and so into Europe, ch. 15, 16. Then we find him very busy at Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and the parts adjacent. Those that know the extent and distance of these countries, will conclude Paul an active man, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. Illyricum is the country now called Slavonia, bordering upon Hungary. Some take it for the same with Bulgaria; others for the lower Pannonia: however, it was a great way from Jerusalem. Now it might

be suspected, that if Paul undertook so much work, surely he did it by the halves. "No," says he, "*I have fully preached the gospel of Christ*; have given them a full account of the truth and terms of the gospel; have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, (Acts 20. 27.) I have kept back nothing that was necessary for them to know." *Filled the gospel*, so the word is; *παραπληρῶσαι τὴν εὐαγγέλιον*, filled it as the net is filled with fishes in a large draught; or filled the gospel, that is, filled them with the gospel. Such a change does the gospel make, that, when it comes in power to any place, it fills the place. Other knowledge is airy, and leaves souls empty, but the knowledge of the gospel is filling.

2. He preached in places that had not heard the gospel before, v. 20, 21. He brake up fallow ground, laid the first stone in many places, and introduced christianity there, where nothing had reigned for many ages but idolatry and witchcraft, and all sorts of diabolism. Paul brake the ice, and therefore must needs meet with the more difficulties and discouragements in his work. Those who preached in Judea, had, upon this account, a much easier task than Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles; for they entered into the labours of others, John 4. 38.

Paul, being a hardy man, was called out to the hardest work; there were many instructors, but Paul was the great father; many that watered, but Paul was the great planter. Well, he was a bold man that made the first attack upon the palace of the strong man armed in the Gentile world; that first assaulted Satan's interest there; and Paul was that man who ventured the first onset in many places, and suffered greatly for it. He mentions this as a proof of his apostleship; for the office of the apostles was especially to bring in those that were without, and to lay the foundations of the new Jerusalem; see Rev. 21. 14. Not but that Paul preached in many places where others had been at work before him; but he principally and mainly laid himself out for the good of those that sat in darkness. He was in care not to *build upon another man's foundation*, lest he should thereby disprove his apostleship, and give occasion to those who sought occasion to reflect upon him. He quotes a scripture for this, out of Isa. 52. 15. *To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see. That which had not been told them, shall they see*; so the prophet has it, much to the same purport. This made the success of Paul's preaching the more remarkable. The transition from darkness to light is more sensible than the after-growth and increase of that light. And commonly the greatest success of the gospel is at its first coming to a place; afterward, people become sermon-proof.

II. The great and wonderful success that he had in this work. It was effectual to *make the Gentiles obedient*. The design of the gospel is to bring people to be *obedient*; it is not only a truth to be believed, but a law to be obeyed. This Paul aimed at in all his travels; not his own wealth and honour, (if he had, he had sadly missed his aim,) but the conversion and salvation of souls: that his heart was upon, and for that he travailed in birth again.

Now how was this great work wrought?

1. Christ was the principal Agent. He does not say, "which I worked," but, "which Christ wrought by me," v. 18. Whatever good we do, it is not we, but Christ by us, that does it; the work is his, the strength his; he is All in all, he works all our works, Phil. 2. 13. Isa. 26. 12. Paul takes all occasions to own this, that the whole praise might be transmitted to Christ.

Paul was a very active minister; *By word and deed*, that is, by his preaching, and by the miracles he wrought to confirm his doctrine; or his preaching and his living. Those ministers are likely to win

souls, that preach both by *word and deed*; by their conversation shewing forth the power of the truths they preach. This is according to Christ's example, who began both to *do and teach*, Acts 1. 1.

Through mighty signs and wonders: *ἡ δυνάμις σημεῖων*—by the power, or in the strength, of signs and wonders. These made the preaching of the word so effectual, being the appointed means of conviction, and the divine seal affixed to the gospel-charter, Mark 16. 17, 18.

3. The *power of the Spirit of God* made this effectual, and crowned all with the desired success, v. 19. (1.) The power of the Spirit in Paul, as in the other apostles, for the working of those miracles. Miracles were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, (Acts 1. 8.) therefore reproaching the miracles is called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Or, (2.) The power of the Spirit in the hearts of those to whom the word was preached, and who saw the miracles, making these means effectual to some, and not to others. It is the Spirit's operation that makes the difference. Paul himself, great a preacher as he was, with all his mighty signs and wonders, could not make one soul obedient farther than the power of the Spirit of God accompanied his labours. It was the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that made those great mountains plain before this Zerubbabel. This is an encouragement to faithful ministers, who labour under the sense of great weakness and infirmity, that it is all one to the blessed Spirit to work by many, or by those that have no power. The same almighty Spirit that wrought with Paul, often perfects strength in weakness, and ordains praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. This success which he had in preaching, is that which he here rejoices in; for the converted nations were his joy, and crown of rejoicing; and he tells them of it, not only that they might rejoice with him, but that they might be the more ready to receive the truths which he had written to them, and to own him whom Christ had thus signally owned.

22. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 24. Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*. 25. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. 29. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

St. Paul here declares his purpose to come and see the christians at Rome. Upon this head his *matter* is but common and ordinary, appointing a visit to his

friends; but the *manner of his expression* is gracious and savoury, very instructive, and for our imitation. We should learn by it to speak of our common affairs in the language of Canaan. Even our common discourse should have an air of grace; by that it will appear what country we belong to.

It should seem that Paul's company was very much desired at Rome. He was a man that had as many friends and as many enemies as most men ever had: he passed through evil report and good report. No doubt, they had heard much of him at Rome, and longed to see him. Should the apostle of the Gentiles be a stranger at Rome, the metropolis of the Gentile world? Why, as to this, he excuses it, that he had not come yet, he promises to come shortly, and gives a good reason why he could not come now.

I. He excuses it, that he never came yet. Observe how careful Paul was to keep in with his friends, and to prevent and anticipate any exceptions against him; not as one that lorded it over God's heritage.

1. He assures them that he had a great desire to see them; not to see Rome, though it was now in its greatest pomp and splendour; nor to see the emperor's court; nor to converse with the philosophers and learned men that were then at Rome, though such conversation must needs be very desirable to so great a scholar as Paul was, but *to come unto you*, (v. 33.) a company of poor despised saints in Rome, hated of the world, but loving God, and beloved of him. These were the men that Paul was ambitious of an acquaintance with at Rome; they were the excellent ones in whom he delighted, Ps. 16. 3. And he had a special desire to see them, because of the great character they had in all the churches for faith and holiness; they were men that excelled in virtue, and *therefore* Paul was so desirous to come to them.

This desire Paul had had for *many years*, and yet could never compass it. The providence of God wisely over-rules the purposes and desires of men. God's dearest servants are not always gratified in every thing that they have a mind to. Yet all that delight in God, *have the desire of their heart fulfilled*, (Ps. 37. 4.) though all the *desires* in their heart be not humoured.

2. He tells them, that *therefore* he could not come to them, because he had so much work cut out for him elsewhere. *For which cause*, that is, because of his labours in other countries, thence it was that he was so much *hindered*. God had opened a wide door for him in other places, and so diverted him.

Observe, in this, (1.) The gracious providence of God conversant in a special manner about his ministers, casting their lot, not according to their contrivance, but according to his own purpose. Paul was several times crossed in his intentions; sometimes hindered by Satan, (as 1 Thess. 2. 18.) sometimes forbidden by the Spirit, (Acts 16. 7.) and here diverted by other work. Man purposes but God disposes, Prov. 16. 9.—19. 21. Jer. 10. 23. Ministers purpose, and their friends purpose concerning them, but God over-rules both, and orders the journeys, removes, and settlements, of his faithful ministers as he pleases. The stars are in the right hand of Christ, to shine where he sets them. The gospel does not come by chance to any place, but by the will and counsel of God. (2.) The gracious providence of Paul, in bestowing his time and pains there where there was most need. Had Paul consulted his own ease, wealth, and honour, the greatness of the work would never have hindered him from seeing Rome, but would rather have driven him thither, where he might have had more preferment, and taken less pains. But Paul sought the things of Christ more than his own things, and therefore would not leave his work of planting churches, no not for a time, to go see Rome. The Romans were whole, and needed not the physician so as other poor places that were

sick and dying. While men and women were every day dropping into eternity, and their precious souls perishing for lack of vision, it was no time for Paul to trifle. There was now a gale of opportunity, the fields were white unto the harvest; such a season slipt might never be retrieved; the necessities of poor souls were pressing, and called loud, and therefore Paul must be busy. It concerns us all to do that first, which is most needful. True grace teaches us to prefer that which is necessary before that which is unnecessary, Luke 10. 41, 42. And christian prudence teaches us to prefer that which is more necessary before that which is less so. This, Paul mentions as a sufficient satisfying reason. We must not take it ill of our friends, if they prefer necessary work, which is pleasing to God, before unnecessary visits and compliments, which may be pleasing to us. In this, as in other things, we must deny ourselves.

II. He promised to come and see them shortly, v. 23, 24, 29.

Having no more place in these parts, that is, in Greece, where he then was. The whole of that country being more or less leavened with the savour of the gospel, churches being planted in the most considerable towns, and pastors settled to carry on the work which Paul had begun, he had little more to do there. He had driven the chariot of the gospel to the sea-coast, and having thus conquered Greece, he is ready to wish there were another Greece to conquer. Paul was one that went through with his work, and yet then did not think of taking his ease, but set himself to contrive more work, to devise liberal things. Here was a workman that needed not be ashamed. Observe,

1. How he forecasted his intended visit. His project was to see them in his way to *Spain*. It appears by this, that Paul intended a journey into Spain, to plant christianity there. The difficulty and peril of the work, the distance of the place, the danger of the voyage, the other good works (though less needful, he thinks) which Paul might find to do in other places, did not quench the flame of his holy zeal for the propagating of the gospel, which did even eat him up, and make him forget himself. But it is not certain, whether ever he fulfilled this purpose, and went to Spain. Many of the best expositors think he did not, but was hindered in this as he was in others of his purposes. He did indeed come to Rome, but he was brought thither a prisoner, and there was detained two years; and whither he went after is uncertain: but several of his epistles which he wrote in prison, intimate his purpose to go eastward, and not toward Spain. However, *Paul, for as much as it was in thine heart* to bring the light of the gospel into Spain, *thou didst well, in that it was in thine heart*; as God said to David, 2 Chron. 6. 8. The grace of God often with favour accepts the sincere intention, when the providence of God in wisdom prohibits the execution. And do not we serve a good Master then? 2 Cor. 8. 12.

Now, in his way to Spain, he proposed to come to them. Observe his prudence. It is wisdom for every one of us to order our affairs so that we may do the most work in the least time.

Observe how doubtfully he speaks; *I trust to see you*: not, "I am resolved I will," but, "I hope I shall." We must purpose all our purposes and make all our promises, in like manner, with a submission to the Divine Providence; not boasting ourselves of to-morrow, because we know not what a day may bring forth, Prov. 27. 1. James 4. 13—15.

2. What he expected in this intended visit.

(1.) What he expected from them. He expected they would bring him on his way toward Spain. It was not a stately attendance, such as princes have, but a loving attendance, such as friends give, that Paul expected. Spain was then a province of the

empire, well known to the Romans, who had a great correspondence with it, and therefore they might be helpful to Paul in his voyage thither; and it was not barely the accompanying of him part of the way, but their furthering him in his expedition, that he counted upon: not only out of their respect to Paul, but out of respect to the souls of those poor Spaniards that Paul was going to preach to. It is justly expected from all christians, that they should lay out themselves for the promoting and furthering of every good work, especially that blessed work of the conversion of souls; which they should contrive to make as easy as may be to their ministers, and as successful as may be to poor souls.

(2.) What he expected in them; to be *somewhat filled with their company*. That which Paul desired, was, their *company* and conversation. The good company of the saints is very desirable and delightful. Paul was himself a man of great attainments in knowledge and grace, taller by head and shoulders than other christians in these things, and yet see how he pleased himself with the thoughts of good company; for as iron sharpens iron, so does a man the countenance of his friend. He intimates that he intended to make some stay with them, for he would be *filled* with their company; not just look at them, and away: and yet he thinks their converse so pleasant, that he should never have enough of it; it is but *somewhat* filled, he thought he should leave them with a desire of more of their company. Christian society, rightly managed and improved, is a heaven upon earth, a comfortable earnest of our gathering together unto Christ at the great day. Yet observe, it is but *somewhat* filled, ἀπο μέρους—in part. The satisfaction we have in communion with the saints in this world, is but partial; we are but *somewhat* filled: it is partial, compared with our communion with Christ; that, and that only, will completely satisfy, that will fill the soul: it is partial, compared with the communion we hope to have with the saints in the other world. When we shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, we shall have enough of that society, and be quite filled with that company.

(3.) What he expected from God with them, v. 29. He expected to come in the *fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ*. Observe, Concerning what he expected from them he speaks doubtfully, *I trust to be brought on my way, and to be filled with your company*. Paul had learnt not to be too confident of the best. These very men slipped from him afterward, when he had occasion for service therein; (2 Tim. 16.) *At my first answer, no man stood by me*; none of the christians at Rome. The Lord teach us to cease from man. But concerning what he expected from God, he speaks confidently. It was uncertain whether he should come or no, but *I am sure when I do come, I shall come in the fulness, &c.* We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God. Now Paul expected that God would bring him to them, loaded with blessings, so that he should be an instrument of doing a deal of good among them, and fill them with the blessings of the gospel. Compare ch. 1. 11. *That I may impart unto you some spiritual gift*. The blessing of the gospel of Christ is the best and more desirable blessing. When Paul would raise their expectation of something great and good in his coming, he directs them to hope for the blessings of the gospel, spiritual blessings, knowledge, and grace, and comfort. There is then a happy meeting between people and ministers, when they are both under the fulness of the blessing. The *blessing of the gospel* is the treasure, which we have in earthen vessels. When ministers are fully prepared to give out, and people fully prepared to receive, this bless-

ing, both are happy. Many have the gospel, who have not the blessing of the gospel, and so they have it in vain. The gospel will not profit, unless God bless it to us; and it is our duty to wait upon him for that blessing, and for the fulness of it.

III. He gives them a good reason why he could not come and see them now; because he had other business upon his hands, which required his attendance, upon which he must first make a journey to Jerusalem, v. 25—28. He gives a particular account of it, to shew that the excuse was real. He was going to Jerusalem, as the messenger of the church's charity to the poor saints there. Observe what he says,

1. Concerning this charity itself. And he speaks of that upon this occasion—probably, to excite the Roman christians to do the like, according to their ability. Examples are moving, and Paul was very ingenious at begging, not for himself, but for others. Observe,

(1.) For whom it was intended: *for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem*, v. 26. It is no strange thing for saints to be poor. Those whom God favours, the world often frowns upon; therefore riches are not the best things, nor poverty a curse.

It seems, the saints at Jerusalem were poorer than other saints; either, because the wealth of that people in general was now declining, as their utter ruin was hastening on; and, to be sure, if any must be kept poor, the saints must: or, because the famine that was over all the world in the days of Claudius Cæsar, did in a special manner prevail in Judea, a dry country; and God having called the poor of this world, the christians smarted most by it. This was the occasion of that contribution mentioned Acts 11. 28—30. Or, because the saints at Jerusalem suffered most by persecution; for of all people the unbelieving Jews were most inveterate in their rage and malice against the christians, wrath being come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. 2. 16. The christian Hebrews are particularly noted to as having had their *goods spoiled*, (Heb. 10. 34.) in consideration of which this contribution was made for them. Though the saints at Jerusalem were at a great distance from them, yet they thus extended their bounty and liberality to them; to teach us, as we have ability, and as there is occasion, to stretch out the hand of our charity to all that are of the *household of faith*, though in places distant from us. Though in personal instances of poverty, every church should take care to maintain their own poor, (for such poor we have always with us,) yet sometimes, when more public instances of poverty are presented as objects of our charity, though a great way off from us, we must extend our bounty, as the sun his beams; and with the virtuous woman, *stretch out our hands to the poor, and reach forth our hand to the needy*, Prov. 31. 20.

(2.) By whom it was collected; *by them of Macedonia* (the chief of whom were the Philippians) and *Achaia*, (the chief of whom were the Corinthians,) two flourishing churches, though yet in their infancy, newly converted to christianity. And I wish the observation did not hold, that people are commonly more liberal at their first acquaintance with the gospel than they are afterward; that, as well as other instances of the first love and the love of the espousals, being apt to cool and decay after a while.

It seems, they of Macedonia and Achaia were rich and wealthy, while they at Jerusalem were poor and needy; Infinite Wisdom ordering it so, that some should have what others want, and so this mutual dependence of christians one upon another might be maintained.

It pleased them. This intimates how ready they were to it; they were not pressed or constrained to

t, but they did it of their own accord; and how cheerful they were in it, they took a pleasure in doing good; and God loves a cheerful giver.

To make a certain contribution; *κοινωνίαν τινά—*a communication; in token of the communion of saints, and their fellow-membership, as in the natural body one member communicates to the relief, and succour, and preservation of another, as there is occasion. Every thing that passes between christians should be a proof and instance of that common union which they have one with another in Jesus Christ.

Time was, when the saints at Jerusalem were on the giving hand, and very liberal they were, when they laid their estates at the apostles' feet for charitable uses, and took special care that the Grecian widows should not be neglected in the daily ministration, Acts 6. 1, &c. And now that the providence of God had turned the scale, and made them necessitous, they found the Grecians kind to them; for the merciful shall obtain mercy. We should therefore give a portion to seven, and also to eight, because we know not what evil may be on the earth, which may make us glad to be beholden to others.

(3.) What reason there was for it; (v. 27.) *And their debtors they are.* Alms are called righteousness, Ps. 112. 9. Being but stewards of what we have, we owe it there where our great Master (by the calls of providence, concurring with the precepts of the word) orders us to dispose of it: but here there was a special debt owing; the Gentiles were greatly beholden to the Jews, and were bound in gratitude to be very kind to them. From the stock of Israel came Christ himself, according to the flesh, who is the Light to lighten the Gentiles; out of the same stock came the prophets, and apostles, and first preachers of the gospel. The Jews, having had the lively oracles committed to them, were the christians' library-keepers; *out of Zion went forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*; their political church-state was dissolved, and they were cut off, that the Gentiles might be admitted in. Thus did the *Gentiles partake of their spiritual things*, and did receive the gospel of salvation as it were at second-hand from the Jews; and therefore *their duty is*, they are bound in gratitude, to minister unto them in carnal things: it is the least they can do: *αὐτοῖς ὑποτάσσαι—to minister as unto God in holy things*; so the word signifies. A conscientious regard to God in works of charity and almsgiving, makes them an acceptable service and sacrifice to God, and fruit abounding to a good account. Paul mentions this, probably, as the argument he had used with them to persuade them to it, and it is an argument of equal cogency to other Gentile churches.

2. Concerning Paul's agency in this business. He could himself contribute nothing; silver and gold he had none, but lived upon the kindness of his friends; yet he ministered unto the saints, (v. 25.) by stirring up others, receiving what was gathered, and transmitting it to Jerusalem. Many good works of that kind stand at a stay for want of some one active person to lead in them, and to set the wheels a-going.

Paul's labour in this work is not to be interpreted as any neglect of his preaching-work; nor did Paul leave the word of God, to serve tables; for beside that Paul, had other business in this journey, to visit and confirm the churches, and took this by the bye; this was indeed a part of the trust committed to him, in which he was concerned to approve himself faithful; (Gal. 2. 10.) *They would that we should remember the poor.* Paul was one that laid out himself to do good every way, like his Master, to the bodies as well as the souls of people. Minister-

ing to the saints is good work, and is not below the greatest apostles.

This, Paul had undertaken, and therefore he resolves to go through with it, before he fell upon other work; (v. 28.) *When I have sealed to them this fruit.* He calls the alms fruit, for it is one of the fruits of righteousness; it sprang from the root of grace in the givers, and redounded to the benefit and comfort of the receivers. And his sealing of it intimates his great care about it, that what was given might be kept entire, and not embezzled, but disposed of according to the design of the givers. Paul was very solicitous to approve himself faithful in the management of this matter: an excellent pattern for ministers to write after, that the ministry may in nothing be blamed.

30. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; 31. That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints: 32. That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. 33. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen

Here we have,

I. St. Paul's desire of a share in the prayers of the Romans for him, expressed very earnestly, v. 30—32. Though Paul was a great apostle, yet he begged the prayers of the meanest christians, not here only, but in several other of the epistles. He had prayed much for them, and this he desires as the return of his kindness. Interchanging of prayers is an excellent token of the interchanging of loves. Paul speaks like one that knew himself, and would hereby teach us how to value the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous. How careful should we be lest we do any thing to forget our interest in the love and prayers of God's praying people!

1. Observe why they must pray for him. He begs it with the greatest importunity. He might suspect they would forget him in their prayers, because they had no personal acquaintance with him, and therefore he urged them very closely, and begs it with the most affectionate obtestations, by all that is sacred and valuable; *I beseech you,*

(1.) "*For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake*; He is my Master, I am going about his work, and his glory is interested in the success of it: if you have any regard to Jesus Christ, and to his cause and kingdom, pray for me. You love Christ, and own Christ; for his sake then do me this kindness."

(2.) "*For the love of the Spirit.* As a proof and instance of that love which the Spirit works in the hearts of believers one to another, pray for me; as a fruit of that communion which we have one with another by the Spirit, though we never saw one another. If ever you experienced the Spirit's love to you, and would be found returning your love to the Spirit, be not wanting in this office of kindness."

2. How they must pray for him; *that ye strive together.*

(1.) That ye strive in prayer. Those that would prevail in prayer, must strive in prayer. We must put forth all that is within us, in that duty; pray with fixedness, faith, and fervency; wrestle with God, as Jacob did; pray in praying, as Elias did, (Jam. 5. 17.) and stir up ourselves to take hold on God; (Isa. 64. 7.) and this is not only when we are praying for ourselves, but when we are praying for our

friends. True love to our brethren should make us as earnest for them as sense of our own need makes it for ourselves.

(2.) That ye strive *together with me*. When he begged their prayers for him, he did not intend thereby to excuse his praying for himself; no, "*Strive together with me, who am wrestling with God daily, upon my own and my friends' account.*" He would have them to ply the same oar. Paul and these Romans were distant in place, and likely to be so, and yet they might join together in prayer; those who are put far asunder by the disposal of God's providence, may yet meet together at the throne of his grace. Those who beg the prayers of others, must not neglect to pray for themselves.

3. What they must beg of God for him. He mentions particulars; for in praying both for ourselves and for our friends, it is good to be particular. *What wilt thou that I shall do for thee?* So says Christ, when he holds out the golden sceptre. Though he knows our state and wants perfectly, he will know them from us. He recommends himself to their prayers, with reference to three things.

(1.) The dangers which he was exposed to; *That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea*. The unbelieving Jews were the most violent enemies Paul had, and most enraged against him, and some prospect he had of trouble from them in this journey: and therefore they must pray that God would deliver him. We may, and must, pray against persecution. This prayer was answered in several remarkable deliverances of Paul, recorded Acts 21, 22, 23, 24.

(2.) His services; *Pray, that my service which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints*. Why, was there any danger that it would not be accepted? Can money be otherwise than acceptable to the poor? Yes, there was some ground of suspicion in this case; for Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and as the unbelieving Jews looked spitefully at him, which was their wickedness, so those that believed, were shy of him upon that account, which was their weakness. He does not say, "Let them choose whether they will accept it or no; if they will not, it shall be better bestowed;" but, "Pray that it may be accepted." As God must be sought unto for the restraining of the ill will of our enemies, so also for the preserving and increasing of the good will of our friends; for God hath the hearts both of the one and of the other in his hands.

(3.) His journey to them. To engage their prayers for him, he interests them in his concerns; (v. 32.) *That I may come unto you with joy*. If his present journey to Jerusalem proved unsuccessful, his intended journey to Rome would be uncomfortable. If he should not do good, and prosper, in one visit, he thought he should have small joy of the next: *may come with joy, by the will of God*. All our joy depends upon the will of God. The comfort of the creature is in every thing according to the disposal of the Creator.

II. Here is another prayer of the apostle for them; (v. 33.) *Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen*. The Lord of hosts, the God of battle, is the God of peace, the Author and Lover of peace. He describes God under this title here, because of the divisions among them, to recommend peace to them; if God be the God of peace, let us be men of peace. The Old Testament blessing, was, *Peace be with you*; now, *The God of peace be with you*. They who have the fountain, cannot want any of the streams. *With you all*; both weak and strong. To dispose them to a nearer union, he puts them all together in this prayer. Those who are united in the blessing of God, should be united in affection one to another.

CHAP. XVI.

Paul is now concluding this long and excellent epistle, and he does it with a great deal of affection. As in the main body of the epistle he appears to have been a very knowing man, so in these appurtenances of it he appears to have been a very loving man. So much knowledge and so much love are a very rare, but (where it is) a very excellent and amiable, composition: for what is heaven, but knowledge and love made perfect? It is observable how often Paul speaks as if he were concluding, and yet takes fresh hold again. One would have thought that solemn benediction which closed the foregoing chapter, should have ended the epistle; and yet here he begins again, and in this chapter he repeats the blessing, (v. 20.) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen. And yet he has something more to say; nay, again he repeats the blessing, (v. 24.) and yet has not done; an expression of his tender love. These repeated benedictions, which stand for valedictions, speak Paul loath to part.

Now, in this closing chapter, we may observe,

I. His recommendation of one friend to the Roman Christians, and his particular salutation of several among them, v. 1. . 16. II. A caution to take heed of those who caused divisions, v. 17. . 20. III. Salutations added from some who were with Paul, v. 21. . 24. IV. He concludes with a solemn celebration of the glory of God, v. 25. . 27.

1. **I** COMMEND unto you Phebe our sister, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; 2. That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. 3. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4. Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well beloved Epenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ. 6. Greet Mary who bestowed much labour on us. 7. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. 8. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. 9. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. 10. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. 11. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that are of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. 12. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord. 13. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. 15. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. 16. Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

Such remembrances as these are usual in letters between friends; and yet Paul, by the savouriness

of his expressions, sanctifies these common compliments.

I. Here is the recommendation of a friend, by whom (as some think) this epistle was sent—one *Phebe*, v. 1, 2. It should seem, that she was a person of quality and estate, who had business which called her to Rome, where she was a stranger; and therefore Paul recommends her to the acquaintance of the christians there: an expression of his true friendship to her. Paul was as well skilled in the art of obliging as most men. True religion, rightly received, never made any man uncivil. Courtesy and christianity agree well together. It was not in compliment to her, but in sincerity, that,

1. He gives a very good character of her.

(1.) As a sister to Paul; *Phebe our sister*: not in nature, but in grace; not in affinity or consanguinity, but in pure christianity: his own sister in the faith of Christ; loving Paul, and beloved of him, with a pure and chaste and spiritual love, as a sister; for there is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus, Gal. 3. 28. Both Christ and his apostles had some of their best friends among the *devout* (and upon that account *honourable*) women.

(2.) As a *servant to the church at Cenchrea*: *δίακονος*, a servant by office, a stated servant, not to preach the word, (that was forbidden to women,) but in acts of charity and hospitality. Some think she was one of the widows that ministered to the sick, and were taken into the church's number, 1 Tim. 5. 9. But those were old and poor, whereas Phebe seems to have been a person of some account; and yet it was no disparagement to her to be a servant to the church. Probably, they used to meet at her house, and she undertook the care of entertaining the ministers, especially strangers. Every one in his place should strive to *serve* the church, for therein he serves Christ, and it will turn to a good account another day. Cenchrea was a small seaport town adjoining to Corinth, about twelve furlongs distant. Some think there was a church there, distinct from that at Corinth; though, being so near, it is very probable that the church of Corinth is called the *church of Cenchrea*, because their place of meeting might be there, on account of the great opposition to them in the city; (Acts 18. 12.) as at Philippi they met out of the city by the water-side, Acts 16. 13. So the reformed church of Paris might be called the *church at Charenton*, where they formerly met, out of the city.

(3.) As a *succourer of many*, and particularly of Paul, v. 2. She relieved many that were in want and distress; a good copy for women to write after, that have ability. She was kind to those that needed kindness, intimated in her *succouring* of them; and her bounty was extensive, she was a succourer of *many*. Observe the gratitude of Paul in mentioning her particular kindness to him; *and to myself also*. Acknowledgment of favours is the least return we can make. It was much to her honour, that Paul left this upon record; for wherever this epistle is read, her kindness to Paul is told for a memorial of her.

2. He recommends her to their care and kindness, as one worthy to be taken notice of with peculiar respect.

(1.) "*Receive her in the Lord*. Entertain her, bid her welcome." This pass, under Paul's hand, could not but recommend her to any christian church. "*Receive her in the Lord*," that is, "for the Lord's sake; receive her as a servant and friend of Christ." *As it becometh saints to receive*; who love Christ, and therefore love all that are his, for his sake: or, *as becometh saints to be received*, with love and honour and the tenderest affection. There may be occasion sometimes to improve our interest in our friends, not only for ourselves, but for others

also; *interest* being a price in the hand for doing good.

(2.) *Assist her in whatsoever business she has need of you*. Whether she had business of trade, or law-business at the court, is not material; however, being a woman, a stranger, a christian, she had need of help: and Paul engaged them to be assistant to her. It becomes christians to be helpful one to another in their affairs, especially to be helpful to strangers; for we are members one of another, and we know not what need of help we may have ourselves. Observe, Paul bespeaks help for one that had been so helpful to many; he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.

II. Here are commendations to some particular friends among those to whom he wrote, more than in any other of the epistles. Though the care of all the churches came upon Paul daily, enough to distract an ordinary head, yet he could retain the remembrance of so many; and his heart was so full of love and affection, as to send salutations to each of them, with particular characters of them, and expressions of love to them, and concern for them. *Greet them, salute them*; it is the same word, *ἀσπάζομαι*. "Let them know that I remember them, and love them, and wish them well." There is something observable in divers of these salutations.

1. Concerning *Aquila and Priscilla*, a famous couple, that Paul had a special kindness for. They were originally of Rome, but were banished thence by the edict of Claudius, Acts 18. 2. At Corinth, Paul became acquainted with them, wrought with them at the trade of tent-making; after some time, when the edge of that edict was rebated, they returned to Rome, and thither he now sends commendations to them. He calls them his *helpers in Christ Jesus*; by private instructions and converse furthering the success of Paul's public preaching; one instance whereof we have in their instructing of Apollos, Acts 18. 26. Those are helpers to faithful ministers, that lay out themselves in their families and among their neighbours, to do good to souls. Nay, they did not only do much, but they *venture* much, for Paul; they have *for my life laid down their own necks*. They exposed themselves, to secure Paul; hazarded their own lives for the preservation of his, considering how much better they might be spared than he. Paul was in a great deal of danger at Corinth, while he sojourned with them; but they sheltered him, though they thereby made themselves obnoxious to the enraged multitude, Acts 18. 12, 17. It was a good while ago that they had done Paul this kindness; and yet he speaks as sensibly of it as if it had been but yesterday. *To whom* (says he) *not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles*; who were all beholden to these good people for helping to save the life of him that was the apostle of the Gentiles. Paul mentions this, to engage the christians at Rome to be more kind to Aquila and Priscilla.

He sends likewise greeting to the *church in their house*, v. 5. It seems then, a church in a house is no such absurd thing as some make it to be. Perhaps there was a congregation of christians that used to meet at their house at stated times; and then, no doubt, it was, like the house of Obed-Edom, blessed for the ark's sake. Others think that the church was no more than a religious, pious, well-governed family, that kept up the worship of God. Religion, in the power of it reigning in a family, will turn a house into a church. And doubtless it had a good influence upon this, that Priscilla the good wife of the family was so very eminent and forward in religion; so eminent, that she is often named first. A virtuous woman, that looks well to the ways of her household, may do much toward the advancement of religion in a family. When Priscilla and Aquila

were at Ephesus, though but sojourners there, yet there also they had a *church in their house*, 1 Cor. 16. 19. A truly godly man will be careful to take religion along with him, wherever he goes. When Abraham removed his tent, he renewed his altar, Gen. 13. 18.

2. Concerning *Ephesus*, v. 5. He calls him his *well-beloved*. [Where the law of love is in the heart, the law of kindness will be in the tongue. Endearing language should pass among christians, to *express love*, and to *engage love*. So he calls *Amplias*, *beloved in the Lord*, with true christian love for Christ's sake; and *Stachys*, his *beloved*: a sign that Paul had been in the third heaven, he was so much made up of love.

Of Epenetus it is further said, that he was the *first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ*: not only one of the most eminent believers in that country, but one of the first that was converted to the faith of Christ; one that was offered up to God by Paul, as the first-fruits of his ministry there; an earnest of a great harvest; for in Corinth, the chief city of Achaia, God had much people, Acts 18. 10. Special respect is to be paid to those that set out early, and come to work in the vineyard at the first hour, at the first call. The *household of Stephanas* is likewise said to be the *first-fruits of Achaia*, 1 Cor. 16. 15. Perhaps Epenetus was one of that household; or, however, he was one of the *first three*; not the first alone, but one of the first fleece of christians, that the region of Achaia afforded.

3. Concerning *Mary*, and some others who were laborious in that which is good; industrious christians; *Mary*, who *bestowed much labour on us*. True love never sticks at labour, but rather takes a pleasure in it; where there is much love, there will be much labour. Some think this Mary had been at some of those places where Paul was, though now removed to Rome, and had personally ministered to him; others think Paul speaks of her labour as bestowed upon *him*, because it was bestowed upon his *friends and fellow-labourers*, and he took what was done to them as done to himself. He says of *Tryphena* and *Tryphosa*, two useful women in their places, that they *laboured in the Lord*; (v. 12.) and of the *beloved Persis*, another good woman, that she *laboured much in the Lord*, more than others did. Among useful people, some are more useful than others; abounding more in the work of the Lord.

4. Concerning *Andronicus and Junia*, v. 7. Some take them for a man and his wife, and the original will well enough bear it; and considering the name of the latter, that is more probable than that they should be two men, as others think, and brethren. Observe,

(1.) They were Paul's *cousins*, akin to him; so was Herodion, v. 11. Religion does not take away, but rectifies, sanctifies, and improves, our respect to our kindred; engaging us to lay out ourselves most for their good, and to rejoice in them the more, when we find them related to Christ by faith.

(2.) They were his *fellow-prisoners*. Partnership in suffering sometimes does much toward the union of souls and the knitting of affections. We do not find in the story of the Acts any imprisonment of Paul before the writing of this epistle, but that at Philippi, Acts 16. 23. But Paul was in *prisons more frequent*; (2 Cor. 11. 23.) in some of which, it seems, he met with his friends Andronicus and Junia; yoke-fellows, as in other things, so in suffering for Christ, and bearing his yoke.

(3.) They were of *note among the apostles*; not so much perhaps, because they were persons of estate and quality in the world, as because they were eminent for knowledge, and gifts, and graces, which made them famous among the apostles, who were

competent judges of those things, and were endued with a spirit of discerning not only the sincerity, but the eminency, of christians.

(4.) *Who also were in Christ before me*, that is, were converted to the christian faith. In time they had got the start of Paul, though he was converted the next year after Christ's ascension. How ready was Paul to acknowledge in others any kind of precedence!

5. Concerning *Apelles*, who is here said to be *approved in Christ*; (v. 10.) a high character! He was one of known integrity and sincerity in his religion, one that had been tried; his friends and enemies had tried him, and he was as gold. He was of approved knowledge and judgment, approved courage and constancy; a man that one might trust and repose a confidence in.

6. Concerning *Aristobulus and Narcissus*; notice is taken of their *household*, v. 10, 11. Those of their household which *are in the Lord*, (as it is limited, v. 11.) that were christians. How studious was Paul to leave none out of his salutations! that he had any knowledge of or acquaintance with! Aristobulus and Narcissus themselves, some think, were absent, or lately dead; others think they were unbelievers, and such as did not themselves embrace christianity; so Pareus: and some think this Narcissus was the same with one of that name, who is frequently mentioned in the life of Claudius, as a very rich man that had a great family, but was very wicked and mischievous. It seems then, there were some good servants, or other retainers, even in the family of a wicked man; a common case, 1 Tim. 6. 1. Compare v. 2. The poor servant is called, and chosen, and faithful, while the rich master is passed by, and left to perish in unbelief. Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

7. Concerning Rufus, (v. 13.) *chosen in the Lord*. He was a choice christian, whose gifts and graces did evidence that he was eternally chosen in Christ Jesus. He was one of a thousand for integrity and holiness. *And his mother and mine*; his mother by nature, and mine by christian love and spiritual affection; as he calls Phoebe his *sister*, and teaches Timothy to treat the elder women as mothers, 1 Tim. 5. 2. This good woman, upon some occasion or other, had been as a mother to Paul, in caring for him, and comforting of him; and Paul here gratefully owns it, and calls her *mother*.

8. Concerning the rest, this is observable, that he salutes the *brethren which are with them*, (v. 14.) and the *saints which are with them*, (v. 15.) with them in family-relations, with them in the bond of christian communion. It is the good property of saints to delight in being together; and Paul thus joins them together in his salutations to endear them one to another. Lest any should find themselves aggrieved, as if Paul had forgotten them, he concludes with the remembrance of the rest, as *brethren and saints*, though not named. In christian congregations there should be lesser societies linked together in love and converse, and taking opportunities of being often together. Among all these to whom Paul sends greeting, here is not a word of Peter; which gives occasion to suspect that he was not bishop of Rome, as the Papists say he was; for if he was, we cannot but suppose him resident: or however, how could Paul write so long an epistle to the christians there, and take no notice of him?

Lastly, He concludes with the recommendation of them to the love and embraces one of another; *Salute one another with a holy kiss*. Mutual salutations, as they express love, so they increase and strengthen love, and endear christians one to another: therefore Paul here encourages the use of them, and only directs that they may be *holy*; a

chaste kiss, in opposition to that which is wanton and lascivious; a sincere kiss, in opposition to that which is treacherous and dissembling, as Judas's, when he betrayed Christ with a kiss. He adds, in the close, a general salutation to them all, in the name of the churches of Christ; (v. 16.) "*The churches of Christ salute you*; the churches which I am with, and which I am accustomed to visit personally, as knit together in the bonds of the common christianity, desire me to testify their affection to you and good wishes for you." This is one way of maintaining the communion of saints.

17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. 19. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. 20. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The apostle having endeavoured by his endearing salutations to unite them together, it was not improper to subjoin a caution to take heed of those whose principles and practices were destructive to christian love. And we may observe,

I. The caution itself, which is given in the most obliging manner that could be; *I beseech you, brethren*. He does not will and command, as one that lorded it over God's heritage, but, for love's sake beseeches. How earnest, how endearing, are Paul's exhortations! He teaches them,

1. To see their danger; *Mark them which cause divisions and offences*. Our Master had himself foretold, that divisions and offences would come; but had entailed a woe on those by whom they come; (Matt. 18. 7.) against such we are here cautioned. Those who burthen the church with dividing and offending impositions, who uphold and enforce those impositions, who introduce and propagate dividing and offending notions, which are erroneous or justly suspected, who, out of pride, ambition, affectation of novelty, or the like, causelessly separate from their brethren, and by perverse disputes, censures, and evil surmisings, alienate the affections of christians one from another; these *cause divisions and offences*, contrary to, or different from, (for that also is implied, it is *παρά τὴν διδασχίαν*;) the doctrine which we have learned. Whatever varies from the form of sound doctrine which we have in the scriptures, opens a door to divisions and offences. If truth be once deserted, unity and peace will not last long.

Now, mark those that thus cause divisions; *σημεῖον*. Observe them, the method they take, the end they drive at; there is need of a piercing watchful eye to discern the danger we are in from such people: for commonly the pretences are plausible, when the projects are very pernicious. Do not look only at the *divisions and offences*, but run up those streams to the fountain, and mark those that *cause* them; and especially that in them which causes these divisions and offences; those lusts on each side, whence come these wars and fightings. A danger discovered is half prevented.

2. To shun it; "*Avoid them*. Shun all unnecessary communion and communication with them,

lest you be leavened and infected by them. Do not strike in with any dividing interests, nor embrace any of those principles or practices which are destructive to christian love and charity, or to the truth which is according to godliness. *Their word will eat as doth a canker*." Some think he especially warns them to take heed of the Judaizing teachers, who, under the covert of the christian name, kept up the Mosaic ceremonies, and preached the necessity of them; who were industrious in all places to draw disciples after them, and whom Paul in most of his epistles cautions the churches to take heed of.

II. The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. Because of the pernicious policy of these seducers, v. 18. The worse they are, the more need we have to watch against them. Now observe his description of them, in two things.

(1.) The master they serve: *not our Lord Jesus Christ*; though they call themselves *christians*, they do not serve Christ; do not aim at his glory, promote his interest, or do his will, whatever they pretend. How many are there, who call Christ Master and Lord, that are far from serving him! But they *serve their own belly*, their carnal, sensual, secular interests; it is some base lust or other that they are pleasing; pride, ambition, covetousness, luxury, lasciviousness, these are the designs which they are really carrying on. *Their God is their belly*, Phil. 3. 19. What a base master do they serve, and how unworthy to come in competition with Christ, that serve their own bellies; that make gain their godliness, and the gratifying of a sensual appetite the very scope and business of their lives, to which all other purposes and designs must truckle and be made subservient.

(2.) The method they take to compass their design; *By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple*. Their words and speeches have a shew of holiness and zeal for God; (it is an easy thing to be godly from the teeth outward;) and a shew of kindness and love to those into whom they instil their corrupt doctrines, speaking them fair when they intend them the greatest mischief. Thus by *good words and fair speeches* the serpent beguiled Eve. Observe, They corrupt their heads by *deceiving their hearts*; pervert their judgments by a sly insinuating of themselves into their affections. We have great need therefore to keep our *hearts* with all diligence, especially when seducing spirits are abroad.

2. Because of the peril we are in, through our proneness and aptness to be inveigled and ensnared by them; "*For your obedience is come abroad unto all men*; you are noted in all the churches for a willing, tractable, complying people." And,

(1.) Therefore, because it was so, these seducing teachers would be the more apt to assault them. The Devil and his agents have a particular spite at flourishing churches and flourishing souls. The ship that is known to be richly laden, is most exposed to privateers; the adversary and enemy covets such a prey, therefore look to yourselves, 2 John, v. 8. "*The false teachers hear that you are an obedient people, and therefore they will be likely to come among you, to see if you will be obedient to them*." It has been the common policy of seducers, to set upon those who are softened by convictions, and begin to inquire what they shall do, because such do most easily receive the impressions of their opinions. Sad experience witnesses, how many who have begun to ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, have fatally split upon this rock: which speaks it much the duty of ministers, with a double care, to feed the lambs of the flock, to lay a good foundation, and gently to lead those that are with young.

(2.) *Though* it were so, yet they were in danger from these seducers. This Paul suggests with a great deal of modesty and tenderness; not as one suspicious of them, but as one solicitous for them; "*Your obedience is come abroad unto all men; we grant that and rejoice in it; I am glad therefore on your behalf.*" Thus does he insinuate their commendation, the better to make way for the caution. A holy jealousy of our friends may very well consist with a holy joy in them. "You think yourselves a very happy people, and so do I too: but for all that you must not be secure; *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.* You are a willing good-natured people, but you had best take heed of being imposed upon by those seducers." A pliable temper is good when it is under good conduct; but otherwise it may be very insinuating; and therefore he gives two general rules.

[1.] *To be wise unto that which is good*, to be skilful and intelligent in the truths and ways of God. "*Be wise to try the spirits, to prove all things, and then to hold fast that only which is good.*" There is need of a great deal of wisdom in our adherence to good truths, and good duties, and good people, lest in any of these we be imposed upon and deluded. *Be ye therefore wise as serpents;* (Matt. 10. 16.) wise to discern that which is really good from that which is counterfeit; wise to distinguish things that differ, to improve opportunities. While we are in the midst of so many deceivers, we have great need of that wisdom of the prudent, which to understand his way, Prov. 14. 8.

[2.] *To be simple concerning evil*; so wise as not to be deceived, and yet so simple as not to be deceivers. It is a holy simplicity; not to be able to contrive, or palliate, or carry on, any evil design; *simple as doves*—harmless, unmixed, inoffensive. *In malice be ye children*, 1 Cor. 14. 20. The wisdom of the serpent becomes Christians, but not the subtlety of the old serpent. We must withal be *harmless as doves*. That is a wisely simple man, that knows not how to do any thing against the truth.

Now Paul was the more solicitous for the Roman church, that that might keep its integrity, because it was so famous; it was a city upon a hill, and many eyes were upon the Christians there, so that an error prevailing there would be a bad precedent, and have an ill influence upon other churches. As indeed it has since proved in fact; the great apostasy of the latter days taking its rise from that capital city. The errors of leading churches, are leading errors. When the bishop of Rome fell as a *great star* from heaven, (Rev. 8. 10.) *his tail drew a third part of the stars* after him, Rev. 12. 4.

3. Because of the promises of God, that we should have victory at last; which is given to quicken and encourage, not to supersede, our watchful cares and vigorous endeavours. It is a very sweet promise, (v. 20.) *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.*

(1.) The titles he gives to God; *the God of peace*, the Author and Giver of all good. When we come to God for spiritual victories, we must not only eye him as the Lord of hosts, whose all power is, but as the God of peace, a God at peace with us, speaking peace to us, working peace in us, creating peace for us. Victory comes from God more as the God of peace than as the God of war; for in all our conflicts, peace is the thing we must contend for. God, as the God of peace, will restrain and vanquish all those that cause divisions and offences, and so break and disturb the peace of the church.

(2.) The blessing he expects from God; a victory over Satan. If he mean primarily those false doctrines and seducing spirits spoken of before, of which Satan was the prime founder and author, yet, doubtless, it comprehends all the other designs and

devices of Satan against souls, to defile, disturb, and destroy them; all his attempts to keep us from the purity of heaven, the peace of heaven here, and the possession of heaven hereafter. Satan tempting and troubling, acting as a deceiver and as a destroyer, the *God of peace* will *bruise under our feet*. He had cautioned them before against simplicity: now they, being conscious of their own great weakness and folly, might think, "How shall we evade and escape these snares that are laid for us? Will not these adversaries of our souls be at length too hard for us?" "No," says he, "fear not; though you cannot overcome in your own strength and wisdom, yet the God of peace will do it for you; and through him that loved us we shall be more than conquerors."

[1.] The victory shall be complete; *He shall bruise Satan under your feet*; plainly alluding to the first promise of the Messiah made in paradise, (Gen. 3. 15.) that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head; which is in the fulfilling every day, while the saints are enabled to resist and overcome the temptations of Satan; and will be perfectly fulfilled, when, in spite of all the powers of darkness, all that belong to the election of grace shall be brought triumphantly to glory. When Joshua had conquered the kings of Canaan, he called the captains of Israel to set their feet upon the necks of those kings; (Josh. 10. 24.) so will Christ, our Joshua, enable all his faithful servants and soldiers to set their feet upon Satan's neck, to trample upon, and triumph over, their spiritual enemies. Christ hath overcome for us, disarmed the strong man armed, broken his power, and we have nothing to do but to pursue the victory and divide the spoil. Let this quicken us to our spiritual conflict, to fight the good fight of faith; we have to do with a conquered enemy, and the victory will be perfect shortly.

[2.] The victory shall be speedy; *He shall do it shortly*. Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come. He hath said it, *Behold, I come quickly*. When Satan seems to have prevailed, and we are ready to give up all for gone, then will the God of peace cut the work short in righteousness. It will encourage soldiers, when they know the war will be at an end quickly, in such a victory. Some refer it to the happy period of their contentions in true love and unity; others to the period of the church's persecutions in the conversion of the powers of the empire to christianity, when the bloody enemies of the church were subdued and trampled on by Constantine, and the church under his government; it is rather to be applied to the victory which all the saints shall have over Satan, when they come to heaven, and shall be for ever out of his reach; together with the present victories which through grace they obtain in earnest of that. Hold out therefore, faith and patience, yet a little while; when we are once got through the Red sea, we shall see our spiritual enemies dead on the shore, and triumphantly sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb.

To this therefore he subjoins the benediction, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*; the good will of Christ toward you, the good work of Christ in you. This will be the best preservative against the snares of heretics, and schismatics, and false teachers. If the grace of Christ be with us, who can be against us so as to prevail? *Be strong therefore in the grace which is in Christ Jesus*. Paul, not only as a friend, but as a minister and an apostle, who had received grace for grace, thus with authority blesses them with this blessing, and repeats it, v. 24.

21. Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kins-

men, salute you. 22. I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord. 23. Gaius, my host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. 24. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

As the apostle had before sent his own salutations to many of this church, and that of the churches round him to them all; he here adds an affectionate remembrance of them from some particular persons who were now with him, the better to promote acquaintance and fellowship among distant saints; and that the subscribing of these worthy names, known to them, might the more recommend this epistle. He mentions,

1. Some that were his particular friends, and, probably, known to the Roman christians; *Timotheus my work-fellow*. Paul sometimes calls Timothy his *son*, as an inferior; but here he styles him his *work-fellow*, as one equal with him; such a respect does he put upon him: and *Lucius*, probably Lucius of Cyrene, a noted man in the church of Antioch, (Acts 13. 1.) as *Jason* was at Thessalonica, where he suffered for entertaining Paul, (Acts 17. 5, 6.) and *Sosipater*, supposed to be the same with *Sophater of Berea*, mentioned Acts 20. 4. These last Paul calls his *kinsmen*; not only more largely, as they were Jews, but as they were in blood or affinity nearly allied to him. It seems, Paul was of a good family, that he met with so many of his kindred in several places. It is a very great comfort to see the holiness and usefulness of our kindred.

2. One that was Paul's amanuensis; (v. 22.) *I Tertius, who wrote this epistle*. Paul made use of a scribe, not out of state, or idleness, but 'because he wrote a bad hand, which was not very legible, which he excuses, when he wrote to the Galatians with his own hand, Gal. 6. 11. *πολύκις γράμματα*—*with what kind of letters*. Perhaps this Tertius was the same with Silas; for Silas (as some think) signifies the *third* in Hebrew, as *Tertius* in Latin. Tertius either wrote as Paul dictated, or transcribed it fair over out of Paul's foul copy. The least piece of service done to the church, and the ministers of the church, shall not pass without a remembrance and a recompense. It was an honour to Tertius, that he had a hand, though but as a scribe, in writing this epistle.

3. Some others that were of note among the christians; (v. 23.) *Gaius my host*. It is uncertain whether this was Gaius of Derbe, (Acts 20. 4.) or Gaius of Macedonia, (Acts 19. 29.) or rather Gaius of Corinth; (1 Cor. 1. 14.) and whether any of these was he to whom John wrote his third epistle. However, Paul commends him for his great hospitality; not only *my host*, but of the *whole church*; one that entertained them all, as there was occasion, opened his doors to their church-meetings, and eased the rest of the church by his readiness to treat all christian strangers that came to them.

Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, is another; he means of the city of Corinth, whence this epistle was dated. It seems, he was a person of honour and account, one in public place, steward or treasurer. Not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but some are. His estate, and honour, and employment, did not take him off from attending on Paul, and laying out himself for the good of the church, it should seem, in the work of the ministry; for he is joined with Timothy, (Acts 19. 22.) and is mentioned 2 Tim. 4. 20. It was no disparagement to the chamberlain of the city, to be a preacher of the gospel of Christ. *Quartus* is likewise mentioned, and called a *brother*; for as one is our Father, even Christ, so all we are brethren

25. Now to him who is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, (according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith,) 27. To God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Here the apostle solemnly closes his epistle with a magnificent ascription of glory to the blessed God, as one that terminated all in the praise and glory of God, and studied to return all to him, seeing all is of him, and from him. He does, as it were, breathe out his soul to these Romans in the praise of God, choosing to make that the end of his epistle, which he made the end of his life. Observe here,

1. A description of the gospel of God, which comes in in a parenthesis; having occasion to speak of it, as the *means* by which the power of God stablishes souls, and the *rule* of that establishment; *To stablish you according to my gospel*. Paul calls it *his* gospel, because he was the preacher of it, and because he did so much glory in it. Some think he means especially that declaration, explication, and application, of the doctrine of the gospel, which he had now made in this epistle: but it rather takes in all the preaching and writing of the apostles, among whom Paul was a principal labourer. Through *their* word, (John 17. 20.) the word committed to them. Ministers are the ambassadors, and the gospel is their embassy. Paul had his head and heart so full of the gospel, that he could scarcely mention it without a digression to set forth the nature and excellency of it.

1. It is the *preaching of Jesus Christ*. Christ was the Preacher of it himself; it began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. 2. 3. So pleased was Christ with his undertaking for our salvation, that he would himself be the Publisher of it. Or, Christ is the Subject-matter of it; the sum and substance of the whole gospel was *Jesus Christ*, and him crucified. We preach not ourselves, says Paul, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*. That which stablishes souls, is, the plain preaching of Jesus Christ.

2. *It is the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, and by the scriptures of the prophets made known*. The subject-matter of the gospel is a *mystery*; our redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ, in the foundation, method, and fruits of it, are, without controversy, a great mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. 3. 16. This speaks the honour of the gospel; it is no vulgar common thing, hammered out by any human wit, but it is the admirable product of the eternal wisdom and counsel of God, and has in it such an unconceivable height, such an unfathomable depth, as pass knowledge. It is a mystery which the angels desire to look into, and cannot find the bottom of. And yet, blessed be God, there is as much of this mystery made plain as will suffice to bring us to heaven, if we do not wilfully neglect so great salvation. Now,

(1.) This mystery was *kept secret since the world began*; *ἡ ἀπόκρυφτος ἀποκρυφτός*. It was *wrapped up in silence from eternity*; so some; *ἀtemporibus æternis*; it is no new and upstart notion, no late invention, but took rise from the days of eternity and the purposes of God's everlasting love. Before the foundation of the world was laid, this mystery was hid in God, Eph. 3. 9. Or, *since the world began*, so we translate it; during all the times of the Old

Testament, this mystery was comparatively kept secret in the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, and the dark predictions of the prophets, which pointed at it, but so that they could not steadfastly look to the end of those things, 2 Cor. 3. 13. Thus it was hid from ages and generations, even among the Jews; much more among the Gentiles that sat in darkness, and had no notices at all of it. Even the disciples of Christ themselves, before his resurrection and ascension, were very much in the dark about the mystery of redemption, and their notion of it was very much clouded and confused; such a secret was it for many ages. But,

(2.) It is now *made manifest*. The veil is rent, the shadows of the evening are done away, and life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and the Sun of righteousness is risen upon the world. Paul does not pretend to have the monopoly of this discovery, as if he alone knew it; no, it is made manifest to many others.

But how is it made manifest by the *scriptures of the prophets*? Surely, because now the event had given the best exposition to the prophecies of the Old Testament. Being accomplished, they were explained. The *preaching* of the prophets, as far as it related to this mystery, was dark and unintelligible in a great measure, in the ages wherein they lived; but the scriptures of the prophets, that which they left in writing, is now not only made plain in itself, but by it this mystery is *made known* to all nations. The Old Testament does not only borrow light from, but return light to, the revelation of the New Testament. If the New Testament explains the Old, the Old Testament, by way of requital, very much illustrates the New. Thus the Old Testament prophets *prophesy again*, now their prophecies are fulfilled, *before many people, and nations, and tongues*. I refer to Rev. 10. 11. which this explains. Now Christ appears to have been the Treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament. To him bear *all the prophets witness*. See Luke 24. 27.

(3.) It is manifested according to the *commandment of the everlasting God*, the purpose, counsel, and decree, of God from eternity; and the commission and appointment given first to Christ, and then to the apostles, in the fulness of time. They received *commandment from the Father*, to do what they did in preaching the gospel. Lest any should object, "Why was this mystery kept secret so long, and why made manifest now?" He resolves it into the will of God, who is an absolute Sovereign, and gives not account of any of his matters. The commandment of the everlasting God was enough to bear out the apostles and ministers of the gospel in their preaching.

The everlasting God. This attribute of eternity is here given to God very emphatically. [1.] He is *from everlasting*; which intimates that, though he had kept this mystery secret since the world began, and had but lately revealed it, yet he had framed and contrived it from everlasting, before the worlds were. The oaths and covenants in the written word, are but the copy of the oath and covenant which were between the Father and the Son from eternity: those the extracts, these the original. And, [2.] He is *to everlasting*; intimating the eternal continuance of this revelation, and its eternal consequence to us. We must never look for any new revelation, but abide by this, for this is according to the commandment of the *everlasting God*. Christ in the gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

(4.) It is *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*. The extent of this revelation he often takes notice of; that whereas hitherto in Judah

only God was known, now Christ is Salvation to the ends of the earth, *to all nations*. And the design and intention of it is very observable; it is *for the obedience of faith*; that they might believe and obey it, receive it, and be ruled by it. The gospel is revealed, not to be talked of and disputed about, but to be submitted to. The *obedience of faith* is that obedience which is *paid to the word of faith*, (see that phrase, Acts 6. 7.) and which is *produced* by the *grace* of faith. See here what is the right *faith*—even that which works in obedience; and what is the right obedience—even that which springs from faith; and what is the design of the gospel—to bring us to both.

II. A doxology to that God whose gospel it is; ascribing *glory* to him *for ever*, (v. 27.) acknowledging that he is a glorious God, and adoring him accordingly, with the most awful affections; desiring and longing to be at this work with the holy angels, where we shall be doing it to eternity.

This is praising God, ascribing glory to him for ever. Observe,

1. The matter of this praise. In thanking God, we fasten upon his favours to us; in praising and adoring God, we fasten upon his perfections in himself.

Two of his principal attributes are here taken notice of.

(1.) His power; (v. 25.) *To him that is of power to establish you*. It is no less than a divine power that stabilishes the saints. Considering the disposition that is in them to fall, the industry of their spiritual enemies that seek to overthrow them, and the shaking times into which their lot is cast, no less than an almighty power will establish them.

That power of God, which is put forth for the establishment of the saints, is, and ought to be, the matter of our praise, as Jude v. 24. To him that is *able to keep you from falling*. In giving God the glory of this power, we may, and must, take to ourselves the comfort of it; that, whatever our doubts, and difficulties, and fears, may be, our God, whom we serve, is of power to establish us. See 1 Pet. 1. 5. John 10. 29.

(2.) His wisdom; (v. 27.) *To God only wise*. Power to effect without wisdom to contrive, and wisdom to contrive without power to effect, are alike vain and fruitless; but both together, and both infinite, make a *perfect being*. He is *only wise*; not the Father only wise, exclusive of the Son, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God, only wise, compared with the creatures. Man, the wisest of all the creatures in the lower world, is born like a wild ass's colt; nay, the angels themselves are *charged with folly*, in comparison with God. He only is perfectly and infallibly wise; he only is originally wise, in and of himself; for he is the Spring and Fountain of all the wisdom of the creatures; the *Father of all the lights* of wisdom that any creature can pretend to; (James 1. 17.) with him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and deceiver are his.

2. The Mediator of this praise; *through Jesus Christ*. To God *only wise through Jesus Christ*; so some. It is in and through Christ that God is manifested to the world as the only wise God; for he is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. Or rather, as we read it, *glory through Jesus Christ*. All the glory that passes from fallen man to God, so as to be accepted of him, must go through the hands of the Lord Jesus, in whom alone it is that our persons and performances are, or can be, pleasing to God. Of his righteousness therefore we must make mention, even of his only; who, as he is the Mediator of all our prayers, so he is, and I believe will be, to eternity, the Mediator of all our praises.