

God's power but improve it to the uses of religion, as to fear and to trust.

[1.] To fear: Ps. xxxiii. 8, 'Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him;' Job xxxvii. 23, 24, 'Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power . . . men do therefore fear him.' We should have a dread of God because of such power. Who would not fear to enter into the lists with him? By sins committed against God you draw omnipotency about your ears. Would you engage the mighty God against you? There are two causes of carnal compliance: we presume of God's mercy, and fear man's power. To check it, consider God is able by the rebuke of his countenance to turn us to nothing, that made us out of nothing.

[2.] Improve it to trust. In all your straits and exigencies, when nothing appears, then wait upon the Lord; he can create means when he finds none; he can produce all possible things into act, or leave them still in the womb of nothing. He can do you good by contrary means; as Christ cured the blind man's eyes by clay and spittle, by that which seemed to put them out.

## SERMON XII.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.—*  
HEB. xi. 4.

THE apostle cometh to illustrate the properties of faith by the special experiences of the saints. He begins with Abel.

But you will say, Why doth he pass by Adam, the first man, and the first believer in the world? For four reasons.

1. Because Abel was the first persecuted man for righteousness, by Cain professing the same worship: whereas Adam lived a quiet life, without assault and molestation. And so it suits with the apostle's scope, which is to embolden believers against troubles and persecutions for Christ's sake. Here was the first instance of the distinction of men, Cain and Abel, brothers born of the same womb; nay, which is more, supposed to be twins of the same birth; yet one the seed of the woman, and the other the seed of the serpent. Therefore Abel is fitly propounded as the first pattern of faith; as Cain was the patriarch of unbelievers, as Tertullian calls him. And the apostle says, Jude 11, 'They have gone in the way of Cain.' This was an early instance of the enmity between the seeds, and the first pledge of the spite and malice which carnal men do now manifest against the children of God because of the old hatred. Adam was the first sinner, but Cain the first murderer. Therefore the apostle doth well begin with Abel, who was the first-fruits of the faithful; in him the envy and malignity of

the world began to taste the blood of martyrs, and ever since it is glutted with it.

2. Because Abel was the first person that was never in a possibility to be saved by any other way than that of faith. Adam had other means propounded to him at first in the covenant of works, and therefore he is passed by, and Abel is fitly represented as the first evangelical believer.

3. After the fall, Moses speaks nothing notable of Adam. Though he was received to grace, yet God did not put that honour upon him which he did upon some of his posterity. And because of his great unthankfulness, he having received so much, therefore he is passed by, and not propounded to the church as one of the glorious witnesses and examples of faith. Observe from hence the scandalous falls of God's children are of dangerous consequence. Though the wound be cured, yet there are some scars remain; and though free grace makes them vessels of mercy, yet it doth not use and employ them as vessels of honour. There are more than probabilities of Adam's faith, yet it is not famous in the church. The apostle beginneth with Abel.

4. Because Abel was a special type of Jesus Christ. He was a type of him in his temporal calling: Gen. iv. 2, 'Abel was a keeper of sheep.' *πρωτοπόμην*—the first shepherd; so Jesus Christ is *ἀρχιποίμην*—the chief shepherd of our souls; Heb. xiii. 10, 'The great shepherd of the sheep.' And so also he was a type of him in his righteousness and innocency. It is notable that Abel is seldom spoken of in scripture, but he is honoured with this appellation, 'righteous Abel.' Moses is spoken of for meekness, Phinehas for zeal, but Abel for righteousness: Mat. xxiii. 35, 'From the blood of righteous Abel,' &c. And this the apostle might intend in part when he saith in the text, 'By which he obtained witness that he was righteous;' that is, he is spoken of in the scriptures and in the church of God as righteous; and herein he was a type of Christ: 1 John ii. 1, 'Jesus Christ the righteous.' Then again, in his death, Abel came to sacrifice, and solemnly to remember Christ, and that provoked Cain's envy. The offering of the lamb did not only signify the shedding of Christ's blood, but Abel himself is made a type of the death of Jesus Christ. Abel is slain by the envy of Cain; so was Jesus Christ by the envy of the priests and his magignant Jewish brethren: Mat. xxvii. 18, 'He knew that for envy they had delivered him.' Envy slew Abel and betrayed Christ. There was only this difference between the blood of Christ and the blood of Abel: the blood of Abel called to God for vengeance upon the murderer, and the blood of Christ for mercy even upon his persecutors—mercy for unthankful men. Therefore the apostle saith, Heb. xii. 24, the blood of Christ 'speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' Abel's blood crieth thus to the Lord, Vengeance! vengeance! vengeance upon murderous Cain! Christ's blood cries, Pardon! pardon! Father, be appeased, be merciful to these poor sinners! Thus you see from the very cradle of the world there were presignifications of Christ, not only in things, but in persons. The sacrifice and sacrificer both represented Christ, who was both priest and offering: Abel's lamb signified Christ, the 'Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.' Now to show that God would not be appeased with any irrational offering, Abel himself was to be sacrificed, as well as his sacrifice; Jesus Christ the priest himself

is to be slain. God did teach the old church by persons as well as things, to signify not only the satisfaction of Christ, but the person of Christ, 'Who by the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.' Heb. ix. 14.

We have seen the reasons why the apostle beginneth with Abel; let us hear what is said of him—'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.'

In which words these things are considerable—(1.) Abel's action; (2.) The consequents, or fruits of it.

1. Abel's action—*He offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain.* In that you have three circumstances—

[1.] The principle or root of it—*By faith.*

[2.] The nature of it—*He offered sacrifice.*

[3.] The comparative excellency—*πλείονα θυσίαν παρὰ Κάιν*; that is, *He offered a better sacrifice than that which Cain offered.*

2. You have the consequents of the whole work; they are two—

[1.] There is a testimony.

[2.] A special privilege.

(1.) A testimony, the inward testimony of his person—*By it he obtained witness that he was righteous.* The outward testimony of this performance—*God testifying of his gift.*

(2.) The special privilege by it—*He, being dead, yet speaketh.*

I shall begin with the explication of the necessary circumstances of Abel's action, and inquire—(1.) What was the occasion of this sacrifice? (2.) What was the warrant of this sacrifice? (3.) Wherein lies the excellency of it above that of Cain? (4.) What kind of faith this is that the apostle intends, when he saith, 'By faith he offered,' &c.

*First.* What was the special occasion of this sacrifice? That may be gathered out of the phrase used: Gen. iv. 3, 'And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.' In process of time, or as it is in the margin, at the end of days; in the original it is, *בִּקְצֵה וּמִים*—at the end of the year, or revolution of days. The Hebrews are wont to reckon their time by days, as being the more natural distinction. Years are more artificial, and depend upon the institution of man; and therefore is the term day so often used for time in scripture. Now God hath taught Adam by revelation, and he his son by instruction, that men should at the year's end, in a solemn manner, sacrifice with thanks to God, when they had gathered in the fruits of the earth. This tradition was afterwards made a written law: Exod. xxii. 29, 'Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors; the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.' It was an order then newly enforced, though it had been observed from the beginning of the world; so Exod. xxiii. 16, 'And the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.' The very heathens themselves did by tradition derive and propagate this custom one to another, for among other things they retained it, even in their darkest ignorance. I remember, Aristotle in his 'Ethnics' (lib. viii., chap. 8.) hath such a passage as this, *Αἱ γὰρ ἀρχαῖαι θυσίαι καὶ σύνοδοι φαίνονται γένεσθαι*

μετὰ τὰς τῶν καρπῶν συγκομίδας—That all the ancient meetings and sacrifices were wont to be after the gathering in of the first-fruits, that they might distribute the due portion of the increase of their fields to the gods; so that at the end of days, when the year was run round, and the vintage and harvest-time was past, they were to come in token of thankfulness, and present the first-fruits unto the Lord. In short, these solemn sacrifices at the end of days had a double end and use.

1. To be a figure of the expiation promised to Adam in Christ.

2. To be a solemn acknowledgment of their homage and thankfulness to God.

[1.] The general use of these sacrifices was to remember the seed of the woman, or Messiah to come, as the solemn propitiatory sacrifice of the church. And indeed there was a notable resemblance between those offerings and Jesus Christ: Abel offered a lamb; and Christ is 'the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world,' John i. 29. And because of these early sacrifices, therefore is that expression used, Rev. xiii. 8, 'The Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world;' that is, slain in types, sacrifices, and presignifications. And he also is the first-fruits: Ps. lxxxix. 27, 'I will make him to be my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth,' saith God, speaking of Christ. Col. i. 15, 'He is the first-born of every creature;' and the first-begotten: Heb. i. 6, 'Again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world.' Christ is called the first-born and the first-begotten, partly in regard of the eternity of his person—it was without beginning, before the world was—and partly because of the excellency of his person, he being more glorious than angels or men. Though God had other children by creation besides Christ, yet he is the first-born. What shall we gather from hence?

*Doct.* That in all our addresses to God we must solemnly remember and honour Christ.

In the feast of the first-fruits they were to have an eye to the Messiah that was to come, though he were but darkly revealed. God will have men to 'honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John v. 23. We must do duties to God, so as we may honour Christ in them. It may be you will ask, How do we honour Christ in doing of duties?

(1.) When you look for your acceptance in Christ, as Abel comes with a lamb in faith. Adam hid himself, and durst not come into the presence of God till he had received the first promise and intimation of Christ. And truly guilt cannot approach majesty armed with wrath and power without a mediator. The patriarchs were to profess homage, but by sacrifices typing Christ: Ephes. iii. 12, 'In him we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him.' Oh, you cannot come with confidence unless you come with a mediator in the arms of faith! Thus must all do that would be accepted of God. When shall we honour Christ in our addresses to God, and lift up a confidence proportionable to his merit? at least come not in your own names.

(2.) This is to honour Christ in duties, when you look for your assistance from the Spirit of Christ. The Lord hath promised to shed abroad his Spirit upon his ascension. You honour God in Christ when

you worship God through Christ: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' You draw nigh to God with more encouragement by expecting the supplies of the Spirit.

(3.) When the aim of the worship is to set up and advance the mediator. This was the solemn drift of the patriarchs, and the general intention of all their sacrifices—to look to the promised seed; and therefore the parts of their worship did exactly resemble the mediatory actions of Christ. In all the worship of the gospel, in your thoughts you must not only advance God, but lift up the mediator. When the apostle compares the worship of the christian with that of the Gentiles, he saith, 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6, 'There are gods many, and lords many, (many mediators) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ,' &c. This is the right frame of a christian's heart in all his addresses: he looks up to one Lord as the fountain of mercy, and the ultimate object of worship, and one mediator. We must look to him as the conveyance and golden-pipe of mercy, by whom all blessings descend to us, and through him all our prayers ascend to God. This is to honour the mediator; to make Christ the means, and God the object and last end.

[2.] The special use of this worship was to profess their homage and their thankfulness to God. They were to come as God's tenants, and pay him their rent. Therefore God puts words into the Israelites' mouths: Deut. xxvi, 10, 'I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me.' The note from hence is,

*Doct.* That in the times of our increase and plenty we must solemnly acknowledge God.

The best way to secure the farm, and keep it in our possession, is to acknowledge the great landlord of the whole world—Lord, I have been a poor creature, and thou hast blest me wonderfully. There is a rent of praise and a thank-offering due to God. As Jacob acknowledgeth God thus, Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now am I become two bands.' Thus we should come with a rent of praise, and with a thanksgiving to the Lord. But alas! how few think of this? We offer to him our lusts, but do not come with our thanksgiving to God. *Qui majores terras possident, minores census solvunt*—Those that have received most blessings from God forget the great landlord of the world. We are *Canista*, as Luther calls such of Cain's sect, because we do grudge God a little when he hath given us abundance: 1 Cor. xvi. 2, 'Upon the first day of the week let every man lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.' These offer according to their calling; Cain comes as a husbandman, and Abel as a keeper of the sheep. Consider, the first fruits sanctified and blessed the whole lump: Rom. xi. 16, 'For if the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy.' When you give God his portion, you can the better take comfort in what is left.

*Secondly,* The second question is, What was the warrant of this worship? Was it devised according to their own will, or was it commanded by God? The reason of the inquiry is because the papists

say that before the law the patriarchs did, without any command, out of their private good intention, offer sacrifice to God; and they prove it, because the gentiles that were not acquainted with the institutions of the church used the same way of worship. But this opinion seemeth little probable,—

1. Because this is above the light of corrupt nature to prescribe an acceptable worship to God. Corrupt nature will tell us indeed that God is to be worshipped; but for the manner, God himself must prescribe it; for the gentiles might take up the way of sacrifice by tradition, or by perverse imitation, through the instigation of the devil, who would be worshipped the same way God was.

2. It was by some appointment; for no worship is acceptable to him but that which is of his appointment. You know the solemn profession of God against will-worship in scripture—‘Who hath required this at your hands?’ Isa. i. 12. God will always be his own carver, and not leave his worship to the allotment of corrupt nature. He appointeth what he will accept.

3. There could have been else no faith nor obedience in it, if the institution had been wholly humane; there is no faith without some promise of divine grace, no obedience without some command. And Cain would not have been culpable for any defect in the worship, if it had been left to his own will; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

4. The wonderful agreement that is between this first act of solemn worship and the solemn constitutions of the Jewish church, doth wonderfully evince it (as we shall prove by and by), that there was some rule and divine institution according to which this worship was to be regulated, which, probably, God revealed to Adam, and he taught it, as he did other parts of religion, to his children: therefore it was done by virtue of an institution. Abel looked to the command of God, and promise of God, that so he might do it in faith and obedience.

The note from this—

*Doct.* That whatever is done in worship must be done out of conscience, and with respect to the institution.

*Quest.* But you will say, What is it to do a thing by virtue of an institution? For answer—

[1.] I shall show you what an institution is. Every word of institution consists of two parts—the word of command, and the word of promise. To instance in any duty of worship: in hearing the word, Isa. lv. 3, ‘Hear, and your souls shall live;’ in the sacrament—‘Do this;’ there is the word of command; then ‘This is my body and blood;’ there is the word of promise. In baptism: Acts ii. 38, ‘Be baptized, every one of you;’ there is the word of command; ‘For the remission of sins;’ there is the word of promise. God doth not require duty merely out of sovereignty, but in mercy. In the law it is sometimes a motive—Do thus and thus, for I am the Lord; God’s sovereignty is pleaded. In other places—Do thus, and this shall be your life; there is the promise; and this will do you good. It is the condescension of God to require no duty but for your profit—‘You shall not seek my face in vain.’ Duty is not a task, but a means; he en-

courageth, when he might transact all things by way of charge and imperial command. God that requireth worship, doth also reward it; precepts and promises go hand in hand. Christianity is famous for pure precepts and excellent rewards. God's services will not be uncomfortable; for all his institutions are made up of a word of command and a word of promise.

[2.] What is it to do a duty in respect to the institution? I answer, it is to do it in faith and obedience: faith respects the word of promise, obedience the word of command. Customary approaches bring God no honour and glory; therefore first the command must be the reason of the duty. Then the promise must be the encouragement, the *ratio formalis*—the formal reason of all duty and obedience, is God's command; and the *rationemotiva*, the moving and persuasive reason, is our own profit and God's promise. Obedience to the command is my homage, and faith one of the purest respects I can yield to God.

*Ques.* But now how shall I know when I do duty in faith and obedience? I answer—

(1.) You come in obedience when the command is the main motive and reason upon your spirit to put you upon the duty. It is enough to a christian to say, 'This is the will of God,' 1 Thes. v. 18. The bare sight of God's will is enough. It is custom to do as others do, but religion to do what God commands, because God hath commanded: Exod. xii. 26, 27, 'It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover.' Ask your heart, Why do I pray and hear? The Lord our God hath commanded it. Now this will be evident to you by your continuing in duties, though the success be not presently visible. The soul is of Peter's temper: Luke v. 4, 5, saith Christ, 'Let down your net for a draught.' Alas! 'Master (saith Peter) we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing; howbeit at thy word I will let down the net.' So the soul encourageth itself, I have had no sensible communion with God, yet I must perform my duty; I will do what God hath commanded, let God do what he will; success is God's act, duty mine. Then you come in obedience to the performance of any holy service.

(2.) Would you know when you come in faith? when you look to the word of promise? You may know that by the earnest expectation and consideration of the soul. Those that come customarily do not look to the end of the service, nor why God hath appointed it. It is said, Ps. xxxii. 9, 'Be ye not as the horse and mule, which have no understanding;' that is, to go on without consideration. Man is to work for an end, to design somewhat, especially in duties of worship, which are the most serious and important affairs of our whole lives. Therefore what do you look for in your worship? Many look to the work wrought, but not to the end. God's institutions are under a blessing; and there must be an actual waiting, or you do not come in faith. And you will know this by the importunateness of your souls in pressing God with his word. Ah, Lord! thou hast made a promise to those that wait upon thee that thou wilt bless them; now 'remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,' Ps. cxix. 49. By this you may try your hearts.

*Thirdly*, The third question is, Wherein lies the difference between the two sacrifices? Some place it only in the acceptation of God as if the sense were, Abel offered *gratiorem*, a more acceptable sacrifice, better in God's esteem; but in the original it is *πλεיוνα*, more sacrifice; *uberiorem*, saith Erasmus, a larger, a more plenteous, *majoris pretii*, a more excellent and a more befitting sacrifice. It was better, not only in God's esteem, but in its own worth and value.

Briefly, there is a threefold difference between Abel's and Cain's sacrifice.

1. In the faith of Abel. Abel's principle was faith, Cain's distrust. The one came in faith, looking to the promised seed, and so the duty was effectual for his comfort and encouragement, he was accepted with God; the other came to it as to a dead ceremony and task against his will, a superficial rite of no use and comfort. That which is done in faith pleaseth God, otherwise it is but an idle rite and naked ceremony. God looks for habitual faith; but in all that proceed to a justified state he looks for actual faith, without which our sacrifices are but an abomination to him; Prov. xxi. 27. 'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination,' how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind. Though a wicked man bring it with the most advantage, with good intentions, yet it is an abomination; much more if he bring it with a carnal aim and a grudging spirit and evil mind, as Cain did. But of this hereafter.

2. The second difference lay in the willing mind of Abel. Abel came with all his heart, and in a free manner, to perform worship to God; and he brought the best, the fattest, and costliest sacrifice he could, as far as the bounds of God's institution would give him leave. But Cain came with a sullen, covetous, unthankful, and fleshly spirit; he thought whatever he brought was good enough for God. Cain was envious to God before he was envious to his brother; he offered with a grudging mind whatever came first to hand, but kept the first-fruits to himself. Cain looked upon his sacrifice as a task rather than a duty; his fruits were brought to God as a mulct and fine rather than an offering, as if an act of worship had been an act of penance, and religion was his punishment. Note from hence—the worth of duties lies much in the willing mind of those that perform them.

[1.] There must be the mind. God doth not require ours, but us. Abel brought his lamb, and himself too; but Cain offered not himself, he brought only his offering. God would have us, when we come to him, to bring ourselves; though he need us not, yet we have need of him. The Lord complains that they did not bring themselves: Jer. xxix. 13, 'Ye shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart.' This is right Cain's trick, to bring God our gift, and not ourselves.

[2.] The mind must be willing and free. Probably that which did put Cain upon duty was the awe of his parents, or the rack of his own conscience; therefore he would do something to satisfy the custom. He would bring of the fruits, and there was all, but was unmindful of what God had done for him, and distrustful how God would reward him. Many are of Cain's spirit; we think all is loss that is laid out upon God, and therefore do not come readily: Ps. exix. 108, 'Accept,

I beseech thee, the free-will offering of my mouth, O Lord.' All your duties should be free-will offerings. A christian should have no other constraint upon him but love: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' The devil rules the world by enforcement and a servile awe, and so captivates the blind nations; but God will rule by the sceptre of love. God would have his people a willing people. Their heart shall be their own law. In all our addresses to God we should come to him upon the wings of joy and holy delight.

3. The third difference is in the matter offered. It is said of Cain's offering, Gen. iv. 3, 'That he brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.' The Holy Ghost purposely omits the description of the offering. Being hastily taken, and unthankfully brought, it is mentioned without any additional expression to set off the worth of them; it should have been the first and the fairest. But for Abel, see how distinct the Spirit of God is in setting forth his offering: ver. 4, 'And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof;' not only the firstlings, that the rest might be sanctified, but he brought the best, the chiefest, the fattest. All these were afterwards appropriated to God: Lev. iii. 16, 17, 'All the fat is the Lord's.' Now observe from hence—

*Doct.* That when we serve God, we must serve him faithfully, with our best.

It is a high dishonour and contempt to God when we bring him a contemptible offering, and think anything is good enough for God: Mal. i. 14, 'Cursed is the deceiver, that hath a male in his flock, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great king,' &c. When we do not offer God the flower and spirit of our souls, we reflect a dishonour upon God. Our duties are so to be ordered that they may argue a proportionable reverence and dread of God. Alexander would be painted by none but Apelles, and carved by none but Lysippus. Domitian would not have his statue made but in gold or silver. God, the great king, will be served with the best of our affections. When we care not what we offer to God, how will he accept us? How shall he esteem that which we do not esteem ourselves? Cain's offering was not so much an oblation as a refusal, a casting off; a rejection of that which was not fit to be reserved for himself, he gives it to God. It must needs displease God, since it could not please himself: in short, God must have the best of our time, and the best of our parts.

[1.] God must have the best of our time. Consider, we can afford many sacrilegious hours to our lusts, and can scarce afford God a little time without grudging. Is not there too much of Cain's spirit in this? We adjourn and put off the work of religion to the aches of old age: when we have scarce any vigour, any strength of affections left, oh! then we will worship God. We devote to Satan the flower of our lively youth, and fresh age, and adjourn to God the rottenness and dregs of our old age: Eccles. xii. 1, 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' Why?—because the prints of God's creating power are then more fresh in our natures, and we have a fairer experience of God's creating goodness than in age. Then is the fittest season to estimate

the benefits of our creation. Old age are the days in which we have no pleasure; these are our fresh, choicest days, full of contentment.

[2.] With your best parts. You come to worship God not only with your bodies, but your souls, with the refined strength of your reason and thoughts: Ps cviii. 1, 'I will sing and give praise even with my glory.' If David had anything he called his glory, God should have it.

*Application to the sacrament.* You have heard of Cain and Abel, in what they agreed, and in what they differed. They agreed in the general action—both drew near to God, and worshipped; in the general nature of that action—they both brought an offering; in the general kind of that offering, which was of that which belonged to each of them; Cain, a tiller of the ground, brought of the fruit of the ground; Abel, a keeper of sheep, brought of his flock, Gen. iv. 3, 4. They differed thus—one offered in faith, the other not: they differed in the matter of sacrifice—Abel brought the first and fattest; of Cain it is only said he brought an offering: they differed in acceptance. Now this sheweth you—

1. What you are to do in the Lord's supper.

2. What to expect.

1. What you are to do. Offer to God in the most becoming manner what will become the majesty of God, the love of Christ, your faith in him and love to him. If you have anything better than another, let God have it. But you will say, What is this to the Lord's supper, where we do not come to offer, but to receive; not to offer sacrifice but to receive a sacrament; not to feast God, but to be feasted by him?

*Ans.* [1.] There is a difference between sacraments and sacrifice, but they have a mutual relation one to the other. A sacrament implieth a sacrifice. The only sacrifice to please God was that of Christ, who offered up himself through the eternal Spirit to God. Christ offered the sacrifice to please God; and being appeased by Christ, he offereth his gifts to us; as Esau, when reconciled to Jacob, offered him gifts, Gen. xxxiii. 15.

[2.] Though we do not offer a sacrifice, yet we remember a sacrifice offered for us; and therefore it teacheth us how to be rightly conversant about such a duty. The use of the sacrifices was—(1.) To exercise brokenness of heart: Ps. li. 17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken heart.' I deserved to die, tormented by the wrath of God. (2.) To testify faith in the satisfaction and sacrifice of the messiah that was to come, and to seek reconciliation with God by him, Lev. i. 3. (3.) To express their hearty thankfulness to God, and desire to please him and walk with him in a course of true obedience: Ps. l. 5, 'Gather my saints together unto me; those which have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' Now, if we would come as Abel, and not as Cain, thus must we do: broken-hearted sinners must remember Christ, and apply him to the comfort of their souls, and make use of this duty to that end.

[3.] Though it be no sin-offering, yet it is a thank-offering. This in the text was in part so. There are eucharistical as well as ilas-tical sacrifices, as most of the sacrifices under the law: Heb. xiii. 15,

‘By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, even the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.’ Hereby you bind yourselves to obedience and thankfulness : Rom. xii. 1, ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.’

2. What we are to expect—a testimony that we are righteous—some witness from God of the acceptance of our persons and gifts, not extraordinary by fire from heaven, but by the Holy Ghost : Mat. iii. 11, ‘He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.’ When the Holy Ghost came down on the apostles, ‘there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them,’ Acts ii. 3. This spirit we expect : Rom. viii. 16, ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.’ And in token that he is pleased with us in Christ, he feedeth us from his own table.

### SERMON XIII.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts : and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.—HEB. xi. 4.*

IN order to the further opening this text, I shall handle three points—

1. That carnal men may join with the people of God in external duties of worship.

2. Though they do join, yet in the performance of them there is a sensible and manifest difference.

3. This different performance ariseth from the influence and efficacy of faith.

*Doct.* 1. That carnal men may join with the people of God in external duties of worship.

We see in the first worship upon record there is a Cain and an Abel ; so in Christ’s parable : Luke xviii. 10, ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray ; the one a pharisee, and the other a publican.’ And our Lord saith, Mat. xxvi. 41, ‘Two women shall be grinding at the mill ; the one shall be taken, and the other left ;’ meaning, the one shall be taken by Christ into heaven, and the other left for devils to be carried into hell. It is wonderfully strange that God should make such a distinction ; but much more strange that two persons shall be praying at the throne of grace, the one taken, and the other left. The reasons of this point, why carnal men do join in external duties of worship, may be reduced to three heads—

1. Natural conscience will put men upon worship.

2. Custom will direct to the worship then in use and fashion.

3. Carnal impulses will add force and vigour to the performances. Take all together, and then you have full account of a natural man’s devotion.

*First*, Natural conscience will put men upon worship. There are some few principles that are escaped out of the ruins of the fall ; as Job's messengers, 'I only am escaped alone to tell thee,' Job i. 16. There is a little common light left to tell us that there is a God, and, by consequence, that this God must be worshipped by the creature. Therefore mere natural conscience may suggest worship, and check for the omission of it ; especially when we are serious, and natural light is clear and undisturbed, and men give their consciences leave to speak out. The very heathens were sensible of the necessity of worship, and often speak of beginning all enterprises with God, and say men must be praying to God if they would have a blessing upon their affairs. The apostle saith, Rom. ii. 14, the heathens had 'the work of the law written upon their hearts;' that is, the external part of obedience, the outward part of worship, and avoiding gross sins. And the conscience of every natural man is like that of the heathens, only somewhat more enlightened by living in the church. But until they are regenerate they have nothing but the light of nature to guide them, though improved by custom, education and literal instruction ; and whatever they do, they do it out of the dictate of natural conscience. Natural men are loth to be wholly without worship. Conscience, like the stomach, must be filled, and have something to pacify it, lest it should bark at us, and reproach us all the day long. Men must put on the garb of religion, or their own conscience will not let them be quiet. Thoughts will excuse or accuse, though blindly, and with much imperfection ; and though carnal men are slight in their duties, yet duty there must be.

*Secondly*, Custom will put us upon the worship then in use and practice. Natural conscience will tell us that God is to be worshipped ; but how, it learneth from custom and education : so Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 'They come unto thee as the people come;' that is according to the manner of religion then in fashion, according to the devotion of the times. And therefore carnal men go on coldly in the run and tract of accustomed and practised duties. *Non exploratis rationibus traditionis*, saith Cyprian : they take up duties upon trust, and they look not so much to the reason and nature of worship, as to the custom and practice of it. Cain went up with Abel 'in process of time,' or at the year's end, the stated time of worship ; so do men pray, hear, keep the sabbath according to their light, and when the laws of their country and the awe of their education challenge these duties at their hands : Ephes. ii. 2, 'Ye walked according to the course of this world (*κατ' αἰῶνα*, according to the time ; the apostle means in gentile worship, as well as in the vanity of their conversations—'according to the doings, or trade, of Israel,' 2 Chron. xvii. 4. So the Geneva translation and the Hebrew word signifieth.) Men do according to the common trade and rate of duty. All a natural man's religion is but cold conformity to what others practise ; and their worship riseth higher and higher according to the rate of their company and education. That custom hath a main influence upon their acts of devotion and religion is clear, because they do not so much look to the nature of ordinances as to what hath been practised in and about them, and do not regard the reason and occasion of duties so much as use and custom. This is clear by the instance of that case so solemnly propounded : Zech. i. 3,

'Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?' Mark the reason and impulse; for the understanding of which you must know that the Jews in the fifth month kept a day for the temple; for you shall see, 2 Kings xxv. 8, 9, the destruction of the temple happened at that time, therefore every seventh day in the fifth month they kept an anniversary fast in remembrance of the temple; but now they were returned from their captivity, and the temple re-edified, and God's service restored, and yet they make it a solemn case whether they should do it, because they had done it these many years. Men are loth to quit a custom in religion, though the reason of it be gone; for they look more to the practice of men than the nature of the ordinance. As some of our ceremonies were first practised upon special occasion in the primitive church, though others came in afterwards by superstition and corruption, yet when the reason is gone, men would continue the rite, and are loth to quit their old custom, and think worship is suppressed with a vain rite because this is the main principle which puts them upon work, practice, and custom.

*Thirdly*, Carnal impulses will add force and vigour to the performance. The ordinances of God may conduce to some end that suiteth with corrupt nature, and upon that account and reason men will be earnest and busy.

There are two carnal ends upon which men act in duties of religion—vainglory and secular advantage.

1. Vainglory. Men join with the people of God in actions of worship that they may have occasion to discover their parts with the more applause. The apostle speaks of some that 'preached the gospel out of envy,' Phil. i. 15; to rival the apostle in his esteem, that they might set up their own worth. And that is the reason why the apostle would not have novices or young men called to the office of public teaching: 1 Tim. iii. 6, 'Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil,' that is, lest, being unmortified, they should debauch the ordinances of God to the service of their own pride and ambitious affectation. That vainglory is a main principle to put men upon praying, preaching, conference, or any duty wherein there is some exercise of gifts, is clear, because in public duties that are open, and liable to the observance of others, men put forth themselves with the greatest vigour, quickness, and strength: whereas in private addresses to God they are more slight and careless. A christian is best tried and exercised in private and secret intercourses between God and his soul; where they spread their own case before God, there they enjoy most communion with God, therefore there they find most quickening and enlargement. A man cannot so well taste his spirit, and discern the working of it in public addresses, because other men's concerns and necessities are taken up in prayer, and he cannot be so affected as in his own case. Besides when the address is directly to God, he should have our best, for certainly he bids most for our affections. What is the applause of men to the inward approbation of God, sealed up to us by the testimony of the Spirit? What is vainglory to eternal glory?

2. Another carnal principle is secular aims and advantages. It is the great wisdom of God to mingle our concerns with his own; else few would mind religion, and exercise their gifts for the benefit of

the church. Carnal fuel keeps in the fire of most men's devotions. I say God hath so coupled our interest with his own, that in duties most are swayed with a carnal bias and secular respect, and they go of their own errand, out of a mere carnal respect, to gratify their private interest, when they pretend most to do God's business; as those that 'followed Christ for the loaves,' John vi. 26. *Quandoquidem panis Christi jam pinguis factus est*, &c.—because Christ's bread is buttered with worldly conveniences, religion hath many to follow it; there are esteem, honour, countenance, maintenance that follow duties of religion, therefore they are merely done with respect to those low and base ends. Duties of the first table are not costly, and most apt to be counterfeited. Christ speaks of some 'that made long prayers to devour widows' houses,' Mat. xxiii. 14. The meaning is, that they might be thought godly and conscientious, and so be intrusted with the estates of widows and orphans, or draw contributions. Many times in holy duties invocation of the name of God is made to serve the concernment of the shop, and religion is pretended to countenance base aims. This is the great difference between a carnal and godly man: the one performs all his civil duties with religious aims; the other performs all his religious duties with secular aims. Self is the main motive of their respects to God; and as they act in their own strength, so to their own ends.

*Use 1.* It serves to inform us that the bare performance of the duties of religion is no gracious evidence. Cain may sacrifice as well as Abel. A christian is rather tried by his graces than by his duties; and yet this is the usual fallacy, the paralogism and false reason that we put upon our own consciences. We secure ourselves upon no other grounds but this, because we are conversant in holy duties. All the claim and title most men have to heaven is only some external acts of duty; they pray, and hear, and keep the sabbath, as the people used to do: James i. 21, 'Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.' The word is—*παραλογιζόμενοι*, 'putting a false reasoning upon yourselves. We reason thus, He that hears the word shall be everlastingly happy: but I am a hearer of the word. Oh! saith the apostle, 'be not hearers only.' And though the premisses come last in sight, yet we hold fast the conclusion, and think ourselves to be in a sure estate; and this is all the ground of our confidence, an act of duty. Mat. vii. 24, the foolish builder represents those that lay the ground of their confidence in bare attendance on religious duties. Foolish men will raise a high Babel of confidence upon the weakest foundation that may be; they are apt to rest upon unwarrantable evidences; they think they must needs be saved because they hear the word and pray in the name of Christ. Do but search what are your evidences and foundations upon which you build. Some live only by guess, and devout aims and conjectures, and never consider upon what terms they stand with God; others content themselves with very slight evidences, and think their hearts are good merely because they practise some external duties. Thou prayest, so many a pharisee; thou worshippest God in the time of the solemn returns of duty, so did Cain; and therefore build not upon these things. But because this is a conceit deeply rooted in our nature, I shall lay down a few convictive propositions.

1. The bare performance of any outward duty is not enough to endear

you to God. God doth not look to the outward acts, but to the frame of the spirit. You may cheat conscience and deceive man by these outward acts of duty, but God is not mocked. When he comes to weigh the action, he doth not consider the fair pretence, but the disposition of the heart: Prov. xvi. 2, 'The Lord weigheth the spirits;' he looks that the aim should be as good as the action, and the principle every way as good as the performance. If we did but go to the balance of the sanctuary and weigh our spirits, we should not be so carnally confident as usually we are. Heathens did regard *ἔργον νόμου*, Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written in their hearts.'

2. A man may miscarry though he be employed in the highest ministries and duties of religion. You shall see among other things that are pleaded in the day of judgment this is one: Mat. vii. 23, 'We have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils;' consider, a man may do great service in the church, and yet come short of heaven; cast out devils, and yet be cast out among devils; a man may not only be a hearer, but a preacher of the word; they may prophesy in Christ's name, and yet he will not own them. O the sad case of such! Like the way-marks set up in high-ways, that direct others to travel, but do not stir themselves; after they have taught others, they themselves are cast-aways: or like those that made Noah's ark to save others, and were drowned themselves in the water: or like the moon which gives light to others, but it hath none rooted in its own body; they may do much service for Christ, yet be in a bad condition.

3. The heart may be somewhat exercised in duty, and yet it is no gracious evidence. There may be an exercise of memory, wit, and invention in and about the service of God, yet all this while the heart not right. Christians are not measured by their gifts, but by their graces. Gifts are for the body, the church; therefore they may be bestowed sometimes upon carnal men, and poured out in a large measure on them: 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.' Parts make but an empty sound. That is not the more excellent way.

4. There may be some exercise of affection, and yet men may miscarry; as there may be an exercise of joy in duties, and grief in the defect of duties.

[1.] There may be some kind of joy in duties. The stony ground 'received the word with joy,' Mat. xiii. 20. Men, out of a carnal respect, may delight in the ordinances of God. A judicious man may delight in judicious preaching, and take pleasure in the gifts of the minister and the gracefulness of his utterance, when there is no grace in the heart: Ezek. xxxiii. 32, 'Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument. They take delight in the tunable cadency of expressions, but yet 'they hear thy words, and do them not.' Men may delight in the carnal part of ordinances when there is no true, real, and spiritual delight in the soul. There is a higher delight than all this, which seems spiritual, but is not, when a man delights and finds contentment in the exercise of his own gifts rather than in communion with God. There is a secret complacency, a tickling of the heart at the conceit of our own worth, in

the carriage of a duty, when we come off roundly, when parts have their free course and career; and this not only in public, where we have an advantage to discover our parts with applause, but many times in private intercourses between God and our souls, to which no eye is conscious. When a man is conceited of his gifts and abilities, he may delight in the exercise of them. Whatever we have, the worth of it is known in the exercise; especially gifts, for they are of the nature of those things that are *πρὸς ἄλλο*, not for enjoyment, but use. Therefore a man that hath a high conceit of his gifts for praying, preaching, and conference may take a carnal delight in the exercise of them. Nature takes delight in the exercise of its own gifts; as when parts are vigorous, the tongue can speak much and well, invention is quick and fresh. A man feedeth his own pride by the excellency of speech.

[2.] There may be some grief for the defects of duty which yet is not right: as when the heart is troubled for outward defects rather than inward, for weakness and brokenness of expression rather than deadness of spirit, and we look more to the liveliness and freshness of parts than of graces. It is true God should be served with all we have, with the vigour of parts as well as the exercise of grace; and therefore it is just matter of grief to a child of God when he cannot have his senses exercised, and nature is not ready to serve grace. But I say when we are only troubled for outward defects, for deficiency or lameness of parts and do not look at the exercise of grace, the heart is not right with God. There may be a great deal of hardness of heart and flatness of affections when parts are quick and fresh, but then the heart is not troubled; as a man may be copious in confession, and declaim against sin with much ornament and passionateness of speech, and yet he is not touched, though he findeth no acts of spiritual shame and remorse. Should we but confess half so much to man against ourselves as we do against God, and should we implead ourselves at the bar of men as we do at the bar of God, there would be greater exercise of remorse. But we are not ashamed when we represent our case before God. And if a man should be ashamed of the filthiness of his life, it should be rather in confession before God than man; for man is but his guilty fellow-creature. On the contrary, the heart may be truly affected when the language is troubled and broken, and there may be much vehemency of spirit when we cannot find words to give it vent to God. We read Moses cried to God, and yet of no words he spake, *Exod. viii. 12*. And the Spirit's assistance is not to give us words, but he helps our infirmities with sighs and groans, *Rom. viii. 26*. There is a language in sighs and groans; they make the best melody in the ears of God, even when the speech is troubled and broken.

5. It is not enough to make conscience of the duties that we perform. Natural men may engage in the acts of worship upon the mere enforcement of natural conscience; as the mariners in their distress 'called every one upon his God,' *Jonah i. 5*: it is but a carnal principle and impulse. Now because it is a hard matter to distinguish the workings of natural conscience from the workings of grace, I shall give you some notes. When we work out of natural conscience, it may be discerned several ways.

[1.] It usually smites for total omissions, not for spiritual neglects and perfunctory performances. There will be restless accusations in the heart if a man totally omit duty; but the conscience doth not smite for customariness of spirit in praying and hearing.

[2.] Natural conscience works chiefly by the means of slavish fear, by the terror and awe that it impresseth upon the spirit. Faith works by love, but natural conscience works by fear; and so the working of it may be known, because it is altogether from the threatenings in the word, as faith doth from the promises and mercies of God: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God,' &c. Natural conscience works from hell, and from our own disquiet. Faith carrieth a man out of himself, and casts all his actions and affections into the mould of the word; but carnal men are forced to it by the rack of their own thoughts, and considerations taken from hell and torment. It is true we must believe the threatenings of the word as well as the promises; but love hath the greatest stroke in all their duties: 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.' That was one reason which did engage him to faithfulness in preaching the word; compare it with ver. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.'

[3.] Natural conscience doth not do duties out of gratitude or thankfulness, but the great gospel-principle is gratitude. If there were no law to bind a regenerate man, yet he would not be ungrateful to God; but nature is rather prone to a sin-offering than a thank-offering. When our consciences are troubled, that we may lick ourselves whole again, then carnal men would perform duties, but not out of thankfulness to God. Under the law, when they came with their burnt-offerings, they were to offer to God a thank-offering, Lev. vi. 12. God will have thankfulness attend all our obedience; but nature only performs duties when we are troubled.

[4.] Natural conscience convinceth us of the duty, but not of the goodness of the duty; it shows us the need, but not the worth of worship; therefore there is a rising of heart, and a great deal of prejudice against that we perform. It makes a man to do duties, because he dares not do otherwise. Still the service of God is a burden and a weariness: they look upon God as an austere and hard master, Mat. xxv. 24. They think God is too strict, too exact, and deals with them upon justice; but where love and grace is the principle, there 'the commandments are not grievous,' 1 John v. 3; but we act with a great deal of delight and complacency in them.

[5.] Natural conscience works but at times, when convictions are strongest; it makes us mind duty in a sick qualm. When terror flashes in the face of a natural man, then he will apply himself to God. Usually a natural conscience doth use duties just as we take strong waters, not for a constant drink,—then they would mar the stomach,—but only to help us at a pang; so when we are in trouble, then nature chiefly puts us upon duty, then we are most enlarged and quickened: Hos. v. 15, 'In their affliction they will seek me early;' when distress is laid upon them: Jer. ii. 27, 'In the time of their trouble they will cry, Lord! save us.' All the duties of natural men are forced out of them, like water out of a still, by a sense of wrath; they come not so freely as from a sense of love.

*Use 2.* If it be so, that carnal men may join with the people of God in duties of worship, here is direction : in all your duties put your hearts to this question, Wherein do I excel a hypocrite? So far a natural man may go. As Christ said, Mat. v. 47, 'Do not even the publicans the same?' When thou art praying and hearing, and thy heart doth not go out with such delight and complacency to God, say, May not a carnal man do this? A christian should do duties in a distinguishing manner, that there should be a sensible difference between them and others.

*Ques.* But you will say, wherein lies the essential difference between the performances of carnal men and the children of God? This must be the work of the next doctrine.

## SERMON XIV.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh—HEB. xi. 4.*

*Doct. 2.* That there is a sensible difference between the godly and the wicked in their several duties and performances.

1. Why it is so?

2. What is the difference?

*First,* Why the children of God act in a different manner than the wicked?

*Ans.* They have another nature, and other assistance.

1. They have another nature than wicked men. Water can rise no higher than its fountain; acts are according to their causes; nature can but produce a natural act. The children of God have the spirit of grace bestowed upon them : Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication.' First of grace, then of supplication; therefore their addresses come out of a principle of grace. A new work requires a new nature. As Christ spake in the matter of fasting : Mat. ix. 12, 'New wine must not be put into old bottles;' new wine and old bottles will never suit. Duties well done will make natural men either weary of their natural estate, or their natural estate will make them quite weary of their duty.

2. They have other assistance. The children of God have a mighty Spirit to help them : Jude 20, 'Praying in the Holy Ghost.' They pray not merely by the strength of parts, but by the Spirit. Natural men have only the rigour of natural parts, and some general assistance, whereby their gifts are heightened for the use of the church and good of the body, but they have not the special operation of the Holy Ghost; therefore, let them do what they can, they can never get up their worship to that height and latitude unto which godly men are raised. Look as in Elijah's time, 1 Kings xviii. 38, there was a contest between him and Baal's priests, the fire came down and devoured Elijah's

sacrifice. But Baal's priests might fetch blood from themselves, but not fire from heaven; so carnal men may force nature, beat themselves, cut their flesh, but their sacrifice will not burn; there is no holy flame by which their hearts are heightened and carried out as christians; they act in their own strength, and to their own ends, therefore there must need be a difference.

*Secondly*, Wherein lies the difference between the worship of the godly and the worship of carnal men that live in the church? I answer, In three things mainly—in the principle, in the manner, and in the end.

1. In the principle. Natural men do nothing out of the constraints of love, but out of the enforcement of conscience; duty is not their delight, but burden. Cain's sacrifice was tendered rather like a fine, than an offering; so are all their services. There are several sorts of principles of worship: some are altogether false and rotten, some tolerable, some good, and some are excellent.

[1.] Some are altogether false and rotten; as custom, and the statutes of men. Thus it is with wicked men, there is more of conformity than devotion; their worship is not so much an act of religion as of man observance. Men do as they learn of their fathers, or as authority commands, or as others expect from them.

[2.] Some principles are more tolerable; as enforcement of conscience, fear of eternal torment, natural desire of welfare and salvation. Men must pray, and keep up some worship, else they are afraid they shall be damned. Alas! this is but a natural act of self-love. Our salvation is never regularly desired but with subordination to God's glory. Or else they do it out of hope of temporal mercies. Men pray that God may bless them in their calling; constant observation of worship brings in a blessing, therefore they pray out of such a low end: Hosea vii. 14, 'They howl upon their beds,' saith the prophet, 'for corn, wine, and oil.' This is but a brutish cry: beasts will howl for things they stand in need of; so men may pray for outward conveniences without any grace. Consider, God's worship must not have an end beneath itself. We act preposterously, and not according to the laws of reason, when the means are more noble than the end, and worship is prostituted to such a base end as merely to serve our outward conveniences; when self is the end of prayer, it is not worship, but self-seeking. All gracious actions are to have a reference and ordination to God, therefore the spiritual life is called 'a living to God,' Gal. ii. 10; much more acts of worship, which are more raised operations of the spiritual life; there the addresses are more directly to God, and therefore must not be prostituted to a common use.

[3.] There are some good and sound principles, though in the lower form of good things; that is, when duties are done out of an enlightened conscience, and with respect to the command, and the general rewards and compensations of religion. It is true, acts thus done, upon these principles, are rightly done, because they are done in faith and obedience, which is that which constitutes and makes up the essence of a religious act; and usually these are the first dispositions of the soul after grace is first received. Therefore the apostle saith, 'He that cometh'—*προσερχόμενος*, or is coming on—to God, his main work is to 'believe

that God is, and that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Heb. xi. 6. He is to act his faith upon the reward God hath promised, and obedience upon the duty he hath required.

[4.] There are more excellent and raised principles of worship; and that is when duties are done out of a grateful remembrance of God's mercy to us in Christ, to testify our thankfulness to God: Luke i. 74, 'That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear;' or else when they are done out of a pure love to God, because we delight in his presence. Job xxvii. 10 makes that the note of a hypocrite, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' A vile carnal man, natural conscience will make him call upon God in his straits; but doth he this out of delight? or else from the excellency and sweetness of the work of obedience? as, Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy law is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it,' when a man can love pure and holy duties because they are pure and holy, and for that very reason. Though there were no heaven nor hell, yet a child of God finds such a privilege in worship, and such a sweetness in communion with God, that he cannot omit it. What delight can be more sweet and ravishing to their souls than communion with God? God usually carrieth men on from one sort of principles to another: first from those that are sinful to those that are tolerable; then to those that are good; then to those that are rare and excellent. First he brings them on from custom to conscience; then from conscience to obedience; then from obedience to delight, to see the beauty of his ordinances and sweetness of his ways.

2. There is a difference in the manner how these duties are to be performed; this is to be regarded as well as the matter. A man may sin in doing good, but he can never sin in doing well. A man may sin though the matter be lawful, for the manner is all: Luke viii. 18, 'Take heed how you hear,' saith Christ; not only *that* you hear, but *how* you hear. A man must not only make conscience of the very act of worship, but of the manner how he performs it. There are several differences between the children of God and others in the manner of worship; it must be done humbly, reverently, affectionately.

[1.] It must be done humbly. It is not worship without it; they have a deep sense of their own vileness. In scripture the saints of the Most High in all their addresses to God, have always low thoughts of themselves; as the centurion: Mat. viii. 8, 'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof;' and the great example of faith, Abraham—'C Lord, I am but dust and ashes,' Gen. xviii. 27. When we come to converse with God, it will put us in remembrance of our distance. Rev. v. 8, 'The elders fell down before the Lamb.' There will be a comparing of ourselves with God. Alas! what is our drop to his ocean? What is a candle before the sun? The children of God shrink into nothing, whether you respect the benefit they receive, or the glory of God's presence in worship. Gen. xvii. 3, when God came to tender his covenant to Abraham, 'he fell upon his face,' in humble adoration of God, because of the richness of his bounty. So when you consider the glory and majesty of God, you must humbly adore in the presence of God.

[2.] You must come with reverence: Eccles. v. 1, 'Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.' When you go to worship, consider what you are about to do. We had need to awaken our drowsy and careless spirits, that we may have fresh and awful thoughts of God in worship. Exod. iii. 5, 'Put off thy shoes from thy feet;' lay aside the commonness of your spirit, and the ordinary frame of your heart. God complains of some that were careless, and brought the sick and the lame! Mal. i. 14, 'Cursed be the deceiver, that hath a male in his flock, and voweth, and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great king, saith the Lord of Hosts.' Wicked men's approaches are rude and unhallowed, because they do not consider what a great king God is; therefore they will bring less to their great king than to an ordinary governor. We are more slight in our addresses to God than to an ordinary king. Wicked men, that are given up to vain superstition, may seem to be reverent in their gestures, and have more of the garb of religion; but the main thing they have not,—fresh and awful thoughts of God; they do not come as into the presence of a great king.

[3.] It must be with affection; God must be served with the heart. There are two things notable in the affections, —vehemency and complacency.

[1.] Vehemency: Ps. lxxiii. 8, 'My soul follows hard after thee.' A man should not faint when he comes to seek God; our motion should not be weak, but an earnest travail of the spirit to find God. Wicked men's prayers are but paper-and-ink devotions; they do not lay out their hearts and affections before God. At best, their prayers are but a little spiritless talk and prattle, and tongue-babbling. The Lord looks after the reaching forth of the soul: James v. 16, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;' *δέησις ἐνεργουμένη*—we translate it 'effectual fervent;' the word signifies prayer possessed of the Spirit. Prayer must be full of life and vigour. And ver. 17, it is said, 'Elijah prayed earnestly.' In the original it is, *προσευχῇ προσήύξατο*, he prayed in prayer. It was not only tongue, but heart prayer; the spirit prayed while the mouth was praying. The Spirit assists in groans rather than words, those inward reachings forth of the soul after God.

(2.) Your duties must be managed with complacency and delight: Ps. lxxxiv. 10, 'One day in thy courts is better than a thousand' elsewhere.' The Lord will have the exercise of your joy. Now, that a man may delight in the worship of God, there seems to be two things necessary: spiritual esteem, that we may look upon it as a privilege that there is more delight in it than in the house of mirth; and a child-like confidence, that we may have some hopes towards God, otherwise duty will be a sad burden. Carnal affections beget weariness; and carnal doubts beget fear and trouble. We have to do with God the fountain of blessing, and with our God. None complain of duties so much as they that have least cause. Men that are most perfunctory in God's service find it most irksome; as those that brought the sick and the lame came puffing and blowing to the temple as if they were tired, and cried, 'What a weariness is it!' Mal. i. 13. Partly because they have no spiritual esteem, and do not know how to value communion with God, what it is for a creature to have such near approach to him. Partly because they have no child-like confidence. Worship

returns their fears upon them, and puts them to a new penance, and brings their sorrow to their remembrance; therefore they cannot act with any complacency. Isa. lviii. 13, the prophet bids us 'call the sabbath a delight.' When we rest in the bosom of God all day, there are actual emanations of grace and comfort.

3. There is a difference in regard of the end. Now there is a general and a particular end of worship.

[1.] A general end, and that is twofold; to glorify God and to enjoy God; the one is the work of duty, and the other is the reward of duty. (1.) The great end of duty is to glorify God. Grace heightens all our natural actions to a supernatural intention: 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' Eating and drinking; therefore especially must duties of worship, and those solemn operations of the new nature. Duties of worship and exercises of grace must be to the glory of God. God is said 'to inhabit the praises of Israel,' Ps. xxii. 3; meaning the temple, the place of worship where God was chiefly honoured and praised. Duties of worship are chiefly for the honour of God. Now carnal men have other ends; either they use duty in design as hypocrites; or with a natural end, as to satisfy natural conscience. With a design, which is hypocrisy. Religion is one of the best commodities in his way of trade and commerce; therefore carnal men make ordinances to lacquey upon their private ends; they pray and preach for esteem and gain to set off themselves; they use the holy things of God for some base ends of their own: 2 Cor. ii. 7, 'We are not of those that corrupt the word of God, *καπηλεύοντες*.' This is the true Simony, to huck out the gospel, and sell our holy things. Hypocrites look upon religion as a device fitted for their turns—*Quantas nobis comparavit divitias*, or else carnal men use worship for a natural end, which is the worship of a natural conscience, and is prostituted to self-respect. A natural conscience is hearty and real in its worship, but not spiritual, because it merely aims at self, some temporal commodity, or eternal salvation, as a mere hire. O Christians! look to your ends. Many look that the matter be good, that they can raise themselves into any quickness and smartness of affection; but the end is all: Col. iii. 23, 'Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.' Let God's glory be at the end. (2.) The second end of worship is to enjoy God. Many mind duties as a task, and as the mere homage of the creature, and look not upon it as a means of communion, by which God will let out himself to us. This must be your aim, to use duty to further your joy in the Lord. Duty is expressed by 'drawing nigh to God,' Heb. x. 22. You must renew in every exercise your access to God by him. Now carnal men are content with the duty instead of God and satisfy themselves with the work wrought, though there be no intercourse between God and their souls. Therefore a godly man looks at this, what of God he hath found; how he hath come to Christ as to a living stone. You must not be content with the duty instead of God.

[2.] There is a particular aim, and that is always suited to the particular part of worship, and that is a right intention. It is a sign you do not come customarily when you come to seek that for which God hath instituted that special worship. As in the word, the end of that

is to submit ourselves to Christ as our teacher or to promote our life or the liveliness of our souls ; therefore when you come to be taught by Christ, you come aright to hear the word. And in prayer the particular end is that we may make use of Jesus Christ as our advocate to God the Father, and may solemnly act our graces in opening our case to God. So in the sacrament, when you come to Christ as the master of the feast, to refresh your souls with the renewed sense of his bounty ; as Christ said to those that went to hear John, Mat. xi. 8, ‘ What went you out into the wilderness to see ? ’ so, for what reason did you put yourselves upon such worship ? Well then, see that you offer a sacrifice more excellent than carnal men ; look to your principle, manner, and end.

*Use.* To press you to see that you offer a sacrifice more excellent than common men. Here I shall speak to three cases, concerning the principle, the manner, and the end of duty.

1. For the principle, Whether or no it be not a mere natural act to eye the reward, and in what manner it is lawful ?

2. For the manner, Whether the children of God may not be surprised sometimes with perfunctory deadness, and wicked men may not by some high impulses be raised to some extraordinary quickness and zeal in duties of worship ?

3. For the end, Whether the children of God may not reflect sometimes upon a carnal end in the duties of worship, and how far this is a note of insincerity ?

*Case 1.* For the principle, Whether or no it be not a mere natural act to perform duty with an eye to punishments and rewards ? The reason of the inquiry is because I pressed before, that duties, for the principle of them, should be acts of faith, love, and obedience, and not merely done out of the enforcement of conscience ; and many press men to acts of religion upon conceits abstracted from all respects to rewards or punishments.

I shall answer this case— (1.) By laying down several spiritual observations ; (2.) By stating the question.

The spiritual observations are these—

1. To act in holy duties with respect to terrors and punishments is a far lower principle than to act with an eye to the recompense of reward. Why ? because it comes nearer to the rack and enforcement of natural conscience. Hope is a better principle than fear. Bare reason will show that fallen man is liable to judgment, and natural credulity doth more easily suit with the threatenings than the promise ; for guilt sitting heavy upon the conscience makes the soul to be more presagious of that which is evil than of that which is good ; and the punishment of sin is far more credible than the reward of grace. The heathens that had committed sin knew themselves to be worthy of death ; so the apostle, Rom. i. 32. And we see by common experience those doctrines that concern the conviction of sin, make a greater impression upon the soul than gospel promises.

2. I observe, that the consideration of threatenings and punishments are more proper for the avoiding of sin than for the practising of duty ; for as nature doth more hearken to threatenings, so nature is more sensible of sins of commission than of omission. Duty is an act of life, and tendeth to life ; and therefore the proper respect that draws on the

soul to duty is the reward, and the proper dissuasive from sin is the threatening and punishment: Rom. viii. 13. 'If you live after the flesh, you shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' When the apostle would dissuade them from sin, he lays death before them; when he would draw them to the practice of holiness, then he propounds encouragements of life and peace.

3. That fear which is culpable is rather an impression than a voluntary act of the creature. It is not a fear begotten by the exercise of our faith or thoughts upon the threatening of the word; but a slavish terror is enforced upon the soul by the spirit of bondage and the evidence of a guilty conscience. When the children of God do make use of terrors, they act their own thoughts upon them; as Paul: 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' The apostle in his own thoughts graciously considered the severity of the process Jesus Christ would use at the day of judgment. But now the thoughts of the curse in wicked men are but involuntary impressions; they care not for duty, and they would not willingly fear the threatening. *Non peccare metuunt, sed ardere*, saith Austin, they are not afraid to sin and offend God, but they are afraid to be damned. There is impressed upon them, against their will, a fear of damnation, so that they act out of a mere constraint of terror; when they dare not do otherwise, then 'they come with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord,' Hos. v. 6. That they do not willingly fear the threatening is plain, because they are so apt to take all advantages to enlarge themselves, and to get free of this awe; for their desire is not so much to please God as to dissolve the bonds of conscience, and allay their own private fears.

4. When natural men look after the rewards and recompenses of religion, they have wrong notions and apprehensions both of heaven and duty: of heaven as the end, and of duty as the means. (1.) Of heaven; they have nothing but loose, sudden, indistinct desires of happiness. Nature poiseth us to an eternal good, for our own ease and pleasure; therefore natural men may have loose desires of happiness: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' and John vi. 34, 'Lord, evermore give us of this bread.' They look upon heaven as a place of ease and pleasure, and therefore conceive some loose sudden wishes. There needs some grace to desire that which is truly the heaven of christians, which is to enjoy God in an eternal and gracious communion: this will require some exercise of faith, and some spiritual esteem. (2.) They have wrong thoughts of duty; they look upon it as a work by which they must earn the wages of heaven. A natural spirit can never be evangelical. Therefore the sure notes of undue reflections upon the recompenses and punishments which God hath propounded are these two—merit and slavish fear. When natural men look upon terror, the spirit is altogether servile, and vexed with such scruples as do not become the liberty of the gospel or haunted with such thoughts as do not become the tenour of the gospel. Saith Christ, Luke xvii. 10, 'When ye have done all, say, We are unprofitable servants.' Though we look to the reward, yet we should not look for it as a salary from a master, but as a gift from a father. It is mercenary to act for hire and wages, and establish merit in our private thoughts.

(5) The acts of the creature are never gracious but when they are ultimately terminated on God. When natural men act in the duties of religion, self is always both in the beginning, and end, and middle of the work; they act from self-love, in self-strength, and with self-respects. But in a godly man all his acts terminate on God; he makes God the fountain, the object, and the end of all his duties, and so his acts come to be gracious. But now for the applying of promises: there is a great deal of difference between seeking self in God and seeking self in the creature. A hypocrite always looks to self, but it is in the world; he looks more to credit or profit than to heaven or hell. Self-love, which is an innocent disposition in nature, is improved by grace, for when we seek our welfare in God, that is right; for this is one of the ends of religion—to enjoy God, as well as to glorify God.

(6.) The children of God are sometimes stirred and cheerfully drawn out in duties of religion, by the lower rewards and conveniences of the present life, and that without sin. Obedience is their principle, but the concurrence of outward encouragements may carry them on with more facility and alacrity; as, for instance, a diligent servant goes about his master's business readily, but with more gladness when he meets with fair weather and good speed. So we must primarily look at the will of our master, and discharge our work, whatever our entertainment be; but if God give us the advantage of profit and credit, and a good name, we must be more cheerful in his service. A wicked man looks altogether to those outward respects; he is forward when his own interest and God's are twisted together; he may be then carried out with zealous earnestness, but the unsoundness of his heart is herein seen, in that he prefers self before God. When self is severed from the commandments of God, he lets them alone; but the children of God have learned to pass 'through honour and dishonour,' 2 Cor. vi. 8; they still keep on in the way of duty, whatever entertainment they find in the world. Outward conveniences are very useful to encourage us in our way, and to make our duties more dear and sweet to us. Look, as ciphers added to figures increase the sum, so these things that are as ciphers in comparison of graces, yet if they are found in the way of obedience, they increase the sum: Eccles. xi. 7, 'Wisdom is good with an inheritance.' It is good without, but then there are more obligations. The main principle is obedience, and this is but their accidental encouragement.

*Quest.* These observations premised, I come to state the question, How far it may be excused from a mere act of self-love for a christian to reflect upon the rewards and punishments of religion? Here I shall show—

1. You may make use of them.

2. In what manner.

[1.] You may make use of them. There may be a religious use of punishments and rewards in the matter of duty by natural reason. Punishments are the objects of fear, and rewards the objects of desire and hope, and the faculties may be exercised about their proper object without sin. But there is an exercise, not only of nature, but of grace. It was an argument of Paul's faith when he reflected upon the day of judgment, 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we

persuade men.' It was an argument of Moses's faith 'to have an eye to the recompense of reward,' Heb. xi. 26. It is some glory to God when we can believe his word, when we trust in him as one wise to observe, and able and willing to recompense, whatever we do for him. Besides, as there is an act of faith in it, so there is an act of spiritual esteem: it is a sign there is grace, when we can prefer the recompenses of God before present advantages and the allurements of men. And it is an act of spiritual fear to value the threatenings of God before the terrors of men. And it is an act of faith to expect and wait for the accomplishment of these things. It is a prime article to believe 'that God is a rewarder,' Heb. i. 6; and it needs a spiritual eye to see the riches of our high-calling; therefore the apostle desires that God would open their eyes, that 'ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,' Eph. i. 17; that they might be acquainted with the mysteries of the gospel and the rewards of obedience, to keep them still in sight, that upon the encouragement of them we may discharge our duty.

[2.] How, and in what manner you may use them right; for rewards are but encouragements of obedience, not the formal reasons of it. Gratitude, love of God and his honour, these must be the chief incentives, and have the preferment above all self-respect in our obedience. The formal reason of every duty must be obedience to God; but the encouragements are the promises and recompenses.

(1.) You may use them to encourage and quicken a backward heart. We look upon duty through carnal prejudices, and count it a sore exaction, and so draw back; in such a case we may safely use God's arguments as encouragements. God propoundeth them to us in the word, and pleads with us upon this advantage, and seeks to whip us into obedience by the spur of threatenings and hopes. God pleads with his people, Jer. ii. 31, 'Have I been a land of darkness to you? have I been a wilderness?' Is there no blessing grows there? no sun-shine? All the argumentative part of the word is taken from the recompenses and threatenings. Surely it is not good to be wise above the scriptures; we may use that which the scripture useth. Thus the apostle shows he presseth onward upon this advantage: Phil. iii. 14, 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ;' the glorious recompenses and high prizes God had set before him at the end of the journey, this made him make progress in the way of religion.

(2.) In the spiritual conflict, to baffle and defeat a temptation. So you may use these rewards and punishments; for herein you do but declare the high esteem you have of your hopes, more than the bait that is presented in the temptation. Let us cast our hopes in another scale: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'We look not to the things that are seen, but to the things which are not seen,' &c. When things seen come to stand in competition with our high hopes, it is not only lawful but necessary to reflect upon the recompenses. We expect great things from God; he hath promised things unseen. So the apostle, when likely to be discouraged by the inconveniences of this life: Rom. viii. 18, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' Moses counterbalanceth

‘the pleasures of Egypt, with the recompense of reward,’ Heb. xi. 2-6 ; and Jesus Christ counterbalanceth the shame of the cross with the glory of his exaltation : Heb. xii. 2, ‘Who, for the glory that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.’ What is carnal ease to heavenly pleasure? the fulfilling of a carnal desire to the filling up of the soul with God? This is nothing but a holy design to outweigh a temptation by putting the glory of our hopes in the other scale; by opposing the joys of heaven to the pleasures of sin; and the sweetness of eternal communion with God to the gratifications of the flesh.

(3.) To renew the solemn remembrance of your hopes with thankfulness that your heart may the more admire the riches of free grace. By this means the great gospel principle will be the better strengthened, which is gratitude and thankfulness. Now we may be the more thankful, and more drawn out in the admiration of grace. Oh, how should we esteem the Lord’s service! He might enforce duty upon us, but he is pleased to quicken us by the reward. Oh, that he should reward such worthless services, and honour our obedience with such recompenses and privileges! This is a right reflection when our thoughts are carried out to the reward, as rather admiring God’s bounty than respecting our own benefit. Gratitude is by this means strengthened, and hath the greater force upon the soul. Gratitude doth not only look to mercies in hand, but also look for mercies in hope. The bird of paradise can sing in winter; faith can give thanks for our hopes before enjoyment. You may say, as Ps. xiii. 19, ‘Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.’ There is not only goodness laid out, and thankfulness for that, but for goodness laid up in hope, those excellences and glorious rewards God hath provided for us; this should put us upon admiring grace.

## SERMON XV.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh—HEB. XI. 4.*

*Case. 2.* The second case respects the manner of duties: they must be done with vehemency and complacency. Now here arise two cases:—

1. Whether the children of God may not be surprised sometimes with perfunctory deadness? Can their souls go out to God always with holy fervour and holy ardensies?

2. Whether wicked men may not by high impulses be raised into extraordinary quickness in duties of worship? and whence this comes?

*First,* Whether the children of God may not be surprised sometimes with perfunctory deadness? &c. I answer—

1. It may be so indeed. Sometimes their affections are like the

faint hands of Moses, that flag and hang down : Gal. v. 17, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, so that they cannot do the things they would.' So Paul complains, Rom. vii. 18, 'How to perform that which is good, I find not ;' he could not *κατεργάζεσθαι*, go through with his work ; like a sick man, that cannot do what he would.

2. Though there may such deadness fall upon them, yet still there is a willing bent of the heart towards God. Graces that live may not always be lively : there is a living faith and a lively faith ; and there may be deadness in the children of God, though there be not an utter death. Look, as our saviour found in his own experience when he was to suffer for us, just so it is with us when we come to perform duty. In Christ the manhood sank by a just aversation at the greatness of his sufferings ; therefore, Mat. xxvi. 41, 'The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak ;' the flesh—that is, the manhood—is not able to bear such a brunt, though the spirit had freely given it up. So the inward man goes out to God freely, though there be the outward reluctance of the carnal man : Rom. vii. 22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' Though there were strugglings, yet the bent of his heart was toward God. This will appear, because the children of God in such indispositions are not idle, but seek ; they are seriously displeased with the distempers and uncomfortableness of their souls, as appears by their strugglings with God and striving with themselves. By their strugglings with God : Ps. cxix. 28, 'Strengthen thou me according to thy word ;' and ver. 32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge mine heart.' When they have felt their straits and deadness, they would fain be set free ; and so, by their striving with themselves, weariness and deadness may seize upon the heart in prayer, but then a christian bestirs himself. Always you shall find when the children of God are calling upon God they are calling upon themselves ; there are resuscitations and awakenings of their drowsy souls. Therefore it is said, Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee' There must not only be a calling upon God, but a stirring up ourselves : Ps. lvii. 8, saith David, 'Awake up, my glory ; awake, psaltery and harp : I myself will awake early.' It is not a sign of no grace to be troubled with indispositions ; but it is a sign of no grace to rest in them.

*Secondly*, May not wicked men by high impulses be raised into extraordinary quickness in duties of worship ? and whence comes this ?

*Ans.* This may be, and there are many causes of it in a hypocrite. It may come from the constraints of carnal ends : delight may carry us on freely in the outward part of worship ; joy is the strength of the soul. We are more ready in that which we delight in. In superstitious men it comes sometimes from fanatic delusions and transportations. False experience may whet the wit, though the heart be not made the more humble or holy. And sometimes, in carnal men in distress, it may come from unsound fervour of carnal affections, and they may seek their earthly comforts with a great deal of earnestness. The motions of lust are always violent and rapid ; and a carnal spring may send forth a high tide of affection. You know it is said, Hos. vii. 14, 'They howl upon their beds for their corn, wine, and oil ;' their

prayers may be sharpened to howling when they are pleading for the concerns of the belly. But most usually it doth arise from the quickness and vivacity of nature. In youth, where there hath not been a great waste of spirits, usually there is a kind of natural vehemency. And some men we see are of temper fierce and earnest; and they may seem very affectionate and loud in language, vehement in expression, and all this out of the eagerness of the bodily spirits, and mere heat and contention of nature; but all this while they have no spiritual affections. As I have read of Graccus, that was so earnest in speech that one was wont to come to him and sound a retreat to his spirit, *ut revocaret eum a nimia contentione dicendi*—that he might call him from too great a contention of speech. It is with many men now as with a bell, which is carried by its own sway. Now it is a dangerous folly to mistake everything for grace. I confess there is a great deal of use of this vivacity of nature, it serves to deliver and set off vehement affections; but lungs and sides must not be mistaken for grace, and the agitations of the bodily spirits for the impressions of the Holy Ghost. Men may work themselves into a great heat and vehemency by the mere stirring of their bodily humours; and it is easy for men of an affectionate temper to put on a passion, though their hearts be not affected, as corrupt lawyers can plead on either side with a like earnestness. We cheat ourselves with common operations. Parts can furnish the tongue with matter, and an eager spirit can supply the room of christian affections. As a man by overmuch contention of speech may seem to be mightily transported and raised, in declaiming against sin, when in the meantime he hath no true indignation against it, and so is but ‘like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,’ 1 Cor. xiii. 1. There are men that cannot contain themselves in prayer when they are but a little heated and agitated, and yet have no raisedness of affection, no earnest pursuits and reachings-forth after God in their souls; it is the travail of the body only, and not the travail of the soul. David supposeth that there may be crying to God with the tongue when the heart regards iniquity; Ps. lxxvi. 18, ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.’ There may be a forcing of nature into expressions when no serious indignation is kindled in the heart against sin, and an aversion of heart to holiness. St Austin made zealous prayers that God would mortify his lusts; but his heart would always object, *Noli modo*, &c.—Lord, do not hear me just now; I am afraid lest God should hear me. At least their hearts do not pray in prayer, notwithstanding this outward vehemency of their tongue.

*Ques.* But you will say, How shall we discern this false vehemency from that which is true, and that which is holy fervour and going out of the spirit towards God? It may be tried by the irreverence of your souls in prayer, and carelessness of your souls after prayer.

1. By the irreverence of soul in prayer. When there is not a due consideration of the nature and presence of God, certainly it is a natural transportation; when men are drawn out to a great heat of affection yet no reverence of God. In a distempered heat in prayer or preaching men are apt to forget themselves; they do not consider to whom or before whom they speak, therefore they are ‘rash to utter anything with their mouth,’ Eccles. v. 1, 2. Men may be hasty to utter words,

though there be no due affection and reverence in the spirit. A true earnestness of spirit makes us remember God the more, because we are enjoying communion with God ; but a false earnestness is counted but babbling. Mat. vi. 7, our Saviour speaks of those 'that thought to be heard for their much speaking.' Carnal worshippers place much in this, in their vehement pronouncing ; as Baal's priests, Elijah bids them 'cry aloud,' 1 Kings xviii. 27 ; so they place much in the mere extension of their voice, and crying aloud.

2. It may be discerned by the carelessness of their souls after prayer ; when men are vehement in worship, and never look after the effects of worship. Usually men throw away their prayers, as children shoot away their arrows, and never look after them. True vehemency will stir up a like earnestness in the expectations and endeavours of the soul : Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak.' There will be hearkening after the success of such earnest prayers that have been poured out with height of affection. Now to pray against sin and not strive against it, and not to look after the return of it, shows a false heart, and that it was but a feigned and personated heat, like acting of a part upon a stage, till the task of prayer was over. Desire is a vigorous bent of the soul ; it is an active affection, that will put men upon endeavours ; and you will be stirring, waiting, seeing how your prayers are accomplished ; otherwise it is but a passion put on for a time. When a man prays vehemently for grace, and then goes out and sins against his prayers, how can those prayers be right ? It is but an empty declamation, especially if men confute their own prayers with their lives ; like those that sacrificed to Esculapius, and prayed for health, but kept on their riotous feasts.

*Case 3.* The third case is concerning the end of duties, Whether or no the children of God may not reflect sometimes upon a carnal end in duties of worship ? And how far is it a note of insincerity ?

I answer in several propositions—

1. The best trial of a christian is in his duties of worship. If at any time, there he may discern the effects and operations of the new nature, and the actings of grace in his own soul ; for there sins are most checked, there he comes more solemnly to exercise his grace, there his addresses are immediately to God. It argues much of unmortifiedness to have carnal reflections when we are conversing with God. It is God's complaint, Jer. xxiii. 11, 'Both the prophet and priest are profane ; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord.' To conceive those fleshly motions in God's house is a matter of high aggravation ; for here we come to set up grace in authority most solemnly, and act it in the highest way of operation towards God.

2. As a christian is tried in his duties, so our duties are tried by our designs and aims. It is not the excellency of the outward address, it is not the vehemency of the inward affection, but the integrity of the end and aim towards God. Practice may be overruled by custom ; excellency of speech may be drawn forth upon carnal impulsions ; affections may be made violent by lust : but the genuine birth of the spirit is the end and aim we propose to ourselves. And therefore a child of God can appear to God's omniscieny for his love to him. Human infirmities may make us fail in all other parts of duty, but

grace will set the end right, which is usually proportioned to the frame of the heart. As the heart is, so is the end. This is the great differencing circumstance: Prov. xvi. 2, 'The Lord weighs the spirits, *quo animo* ; with what end and aim an action is done. Christ saith, 'The light of the body is the eye,' Mat. vi. 22. A single aim and intent towards God is the best discovery of our sincerity in religious duties.

3. Yet notwithstanding the carnal part will be interposing and vexing the spirit with carnal aims, as the daughters of Heth vexed Rebecca, Gen. xxvii. 46. In the best duties we ever perform we plough with an ox and an ass. When we come to do good, evil will be present: Rom. vii. 21, 'I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.' And as evil, so also evil aims; I know no difference. Corruption may cast in vain-glorious glances, or covetous thoughts and reflections upon external advantages, as well as blasphemies and sins of another nature.

4. Though the carnal nature may vex the new nature with those carnal reflections, yet there is a sensible difference still between them and others, because grace hath the strongest influence. And though there be carnal reflections, yet there are not carnal principles: these are but collateral and supervenient glances, not the main motives and chief reasons of their worship, which are obedience and love to God. It is hypocrisy to act in design, but this they do not; though carnal aims run in their minds too much, yet when they do, they are resisted there. As when Abraham had divided the sacrifices, 'the fowls came down; but Abraham drove them away,' Gen. xv. 11; so when we come to pour out our spirits in duties of religion, the fowls may come, carnal thoughts may rush into our minds; but they do not rest there, the soul drives them away. The constant bent and aim of the spirit is to serve God and enjoy communion with God, though these carnal reflections may encumber their souls. Therefore a christian is to try himself by the mainspring of his soul—what is the weight, the poise within to worship; for a christian hath a double principle, flesh and spirit, but not a double heart; a hypocrite hath a double heart; he doth but put on a pretence of worship, and useth it in design. It is true, we cannot come into the presence of God without sin, yet a child of God will come without guile. He cannot bring a pure heart absolutely clean, but he brings a true heart, Heb. x. 22; the desire of his soul is towards God; and the chief reason that puts him upon worship is to glorify and enjoy God.

*Doct. 3.* This sensible difference between the duties of the godly and the wicked is occasioned by the influence and efficacy of faith.

Here I shall state—(1.) What this faith of Abel was; (2.) I shall handle the general case.

*First,* What this faith of Abel was.

1. There was a faith of his being accepted with God when his service was suited to the institution. He believed that God would by some visible testimony manifest his acceptance. Such a promise was intimated to them, as appears by God's expostulation with Cain: Gen. iv. 7, 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?' As if God should have said, Did I promise to accept any other service but what was conformed to my appointments? There was a belief of God's essence and attributes, and a consequent love to him, willing to give God the best.

2. It was a faith in the general rewards and recompenses of religion. Abel looked to the good things to come, and so his hopes had an influence upon his practice; Cain's heart was altogether chained to earthly things, therefore he looks upon that as lost which was spent in sacrifice. This may also be probably collected out of Gen. iv. 8, 'And Cain talked with (or said to) Abel his brother.' Here is mention of some speech of Cain to Abel, but it is not expressly set down what the discourse was. Indeed in the Hebrew text there is a pause extraordinary, implying some further matter to be added. The Septuagint adds, 'And he said to Abel, Let us go out together into the field.' The Targum of Jerusalem reads it thus, 'And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go out into the field. And it came to pass when they were in the field, Cain said to his brother, There is no judge, no judgment, no other world, no reward for the just, no vengeance for the wicked; neither did God make the world in mercy, nor in mercy was thy sacrifice accepted.' All which when Abel had denied, in the height of that discourse, Cain rose up and killed him. From whence we may collect that the faith that had an influence upon his sacrifice was faith in the general rewards and compensations of religion.

3. It was a faith in the Messiah to come. The first-born of God was typed out in those first-fruits, and therefore is Christ called 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' Rev. xiii. 8; that is, in those offerings and sacrifices. And this is the apostle's drift in this place; they had a promise, 'That the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head;' and in those darker times Abel had a faith in this promise, and this faith bettered his offerings. All the patriarchs obtained that renown they had in the churches of Christ by faith in the Messiah. Out of that expectation he brought a well-beseeming sacrifice to God. In these times of the gospel all is more clear and open, and therefore God requires more from us; the persuasions of faith are greater, therefore the operations of faith must be greater too.

*Secondly*, For the reasons of the point, Why faith makes this difference between worship and worship, that it makes the duties and worship of believers to be so different from that of carnal men?

1. I answer, because it discerneth by a clearer light and apprehension. Faith is the eye of the soul. A beast liveth by sense, a man by reason, and a christian by faith. By sense a beast discerneth what is convenient and inconvenient to their manner of life; reason guides ordinary men in their choice and course of affairs; but faith is the light of a christian in the whole business of this life, but chiefly in his worship. Now the discerning work of faith is conversant both about God as the object of worship, and about the work itself; in short, to represent the truth of God's being and the worth of God's service.

[1.] To represent to us the truth of God's being: faith 'seeth him that is invisible,' Heb. xi. 27. Every natural man is an inward atheist, because he wants the light of faith; he cannot see God, therefore he does but serve God as he would serve an idol; all their worship is customary, and done in obedience and conformity to the common practice. As the scoffer said of the worship of God, *Eamus ad communem errorem*—Let us go to the common error and mistake. Certainly their hearts are not touched with the sense of God's being; and therefore the first and general act of faith in and about duties of worship is wanting.

which is to keep the heart awful by a clear sight and apprehension of God: Heb. xi. 6, 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is.' The great work of faith, and that which is the foundation of all, is to help us to proper thoughts and conceptions of God—a thing which wicked men can never attain to; for though they are able to discourse of God's attributes, though they have a naked model and idea of the truth of religion, yet in worship they know not how to raise their hearts into a due apprehension of God. But as the heathens abused their *γνώστων Θεοῦ*, and their practical thoughts in worship were gross carnal imaginations, Rom. i. 22; so do these, they never have fresh and awful thoughts of God. Now this troubles the children of God when faith is drowsy, and they are not able to form proper and becoming thoughts of God in their worship and invocation; so that this first thing is of great advantage and putteth a difference between worship and worship. Faith keeps God in the view of the soul.

[2.] Faith discerns the worth of his service. When we look upon duty with a carnal eye, the soul is prejudiced, and we consider it as a sour task and rigid exaction, and so the soul drives on very heavily. Now faith convinceth of the worth of divine service, and representeth more of privilege than of burden in it. In the eye of faith, service is an honour and duty a privilege: Ps. lxxiii. 28, 'It is good for me to draw near God.' Mark, it is not only meet or just, but good. Faith sees a great deal of excellency and sweetness and privilege in it: and so it makes reason and the sanctified judgment to issue forth a practical decree, 'It is good,' which sways and determines all the operations of the soul. The first inquiry of the creature is, What is lawful? then, What is possible? then, What is profitable? Do not leave these questions to the decision of human reason, then you will quickly be discouraged; but put the controversy into the hands of faith, and that will judge it is good, sweet, and easy: Ps. xix. 10, 'Thy testimonies are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than the honey and honey-comb.' A carnal man may understand the nature and necessity of duty, but he is not convinced of the worth of it. Faith is an affective light; it determines all practical cases on religion's side, and leaves a spiritual esteem upon the soul: Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 'Oh! how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord!' Oh! when shall these be the workings of our spirits? Faith seeth that duty is a reward to itself, that here the noblest faculties are exercised in the noblest work; and therefore if there were no other reward, if there were no heaven, they find such pleasure in the duty that it were allurements enough of itself; as a martyr, when he came to die, said he was sorry that being to receive so much wages, he had done so little work. This makes the soul bend all its strength and all its power in seeking of God. The children of God do duties in another manner, because they look upon God and duty with other eyes.

2. Faith receives a mighty aid and supply from the Spirit of God, Faith plants the soul into Christ, and so receives influence from him; it is the great band of union between us and Christ, and the hand whereby we receive all the supplies of Jesus Christ. Christ lives in us by his Spirit, and we live in him by faith. Until faith come, there can be no vital influence. Wicked men's gifts may be elevated; God

may work as *author naturæ*, the author of nature, though not as *fons gratiæ*, the fountain of grace. Therefore it must needs make a difference. What is the vigour of parts to the efficacy of the spirit? Faith draws Christ into the duty, and his Spirit bears a part of the burden: Rom. viii. 26, 'The Spirit' — *συναντιλαμβάνεται* — 'helpeth our infirmities.' We tug, and the Spirit helpeth also. This then is the work of faith, to receive the supplies of grace. An actual faith hath the promise of an actual assistance; and when God's power is glorified, then it is exercised: Ps. lxxxi. 10, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' Look, as little birds open their mouths, and then the great one feeds them; faith is nothing but an opening of the soul upon God, then Jesus Christ gives in a supply of grace.

3. As it receives a mighty aid, so it works by a forcible principle, and that is by love; for 'Faith works by love,' Gal. v. 6. We live by faith, and we work by love. Where faith is, there is love; and where love is, there is work. Affection follows persuasion, and operation follows affection. First there is a persuasion of the love of God, then thankful returns of affection to God, and they are manifested by holy operations for the glory of God. Faith filleth the soul with the apprehensions of God's love, and then maketh use of the sweetness of it, to urge the soul to duty. There is a twofold advantage we have in love: it will be active and self-denying. (1.) Active: it puts the soul upon work; it is a laborious grace, and the spring of all action; therefore labour and love are often joined together in scripture: Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love;' 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Remembering your work of faith and labour of love.' Love will put us upon work for God. Jacob endured much toil for Rachel, because he loved her. Christ gageth Peter upon this point: John xxi. 15, 'Simon Peter, lovest thou me? feed my sheep.' The church of Ephesus, when 'she lost her first love,' she 'left her first-fruits,' Rev. ii. 4. If love be not faint and languid, the soul will be kept open and liberal for God. Love will carry a man through, and poiseth the soul to those holy duties which are tedious and irksome to flesh and blood. (2.) It acteth with self-denial and complacency against carnal ease and present advantage, though it be tedious, and put us upon inconveniences in the world. Inward duties are against carnal affections, outward duties are against carnal interests; yet love will carry them through with delight and complacency: 1 John v. 3, 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' It takes off the natural irksomeness which is in the heart. Love makes a great change in the heart. While the heart is naturally corrupt, sin is a delight, and the commandment is a burden; but when the love of God is let into the heart, corruption is counted the yoke, and duty is counted the delight and pleasure of the soul. The children of God, we hear them complaining, not of the law, but of their own corruption: Rom. vii. 14, 'The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.' Natural men are always quarrelling with their convictions, their conflict is against the light that shines in their mind; but spiritual men are always conflicting with their lusts; and their groans arise from another principle—not because the law requires duty, but because they cannot perform it, by reason of those reluctations that

are in their evil natures. Love will carry them to duty that is against the hair and bent of nature. It went much against the heart of Hamor and Shechem to be circumcised, and that rite was odious among the gentiles; yet it is said, Gen. xxxiv. 19, 'That the young man deferred not to do it, because he had a delight in Jacob's daughter.' So though duty be never so much against the bent of nature and the course of worldly advantages, yet duty will be sweet to them, for love will carry them through for the delight they have in Christ: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' Though he draws trouble upon himself, yet love carries the soul away against all reluctations.

4. It discourseth and pleads with the soul with strong reasons and enforcements. Faith is a notable orator to plead for God; it pleads partly from the mercies, and partly from the promises of God.

[1.] From the mercies of God, both special and common. (1.) God's special love in Jesus Christ. The arguments of faith are dipped in Christ's blood, therefore they have the greater strength and force in the soul: Gal. ii. 20, 'I live by the faith of the Son of God;' and the argument of faith is there intimated by the apostle, 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.' When the soul is backward, faith will say, He freely gave himself for me, shall I not do something for thee that hast left so much glory for me? That hast pardoned so many sins, conveyed so many blessed privileges, estated me in such large hopes, shall I think anything too dear for him? When Christ was to suffer upon the cross, he did not say, This is hard work, and it will cost me dear; I must endure contempt, bitter agonies, and foul ignominy, and be exercised with the wrath of God. No, but he said, 'I come to do thy will, O God;' Heb. x. 7; Father, I come to satisfy thy justice; sinners, I come to save your souls: Isa. liii. 11, 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.' That word implies both the cost and the gain; it would cost him much agony of spirit, and the gain is implied. He shall see that which he hath travailed for; he shall see a company of children he hath gained to himself. When Christ saw all this, he said, It is enough; so I may rescue these poor souls, I am contented with the temptations of the wilderness, the sorrows of the garden, the ignominy of the cross, the wrath of my Father, the suspension of the comforts of my godhead. Faith comes and represents this to the soul; then the believer cannot say nay: he is overcome, and brought with cheerfulness into God's presence. There is no oratory like that of faith. (2.) Then it argues from common mercies. As Abel, God had blessed his increase, therefore at the year's end he comes to return the fat and fairest to God. Faith reasons with the soul, Wilt thou not honour the God of thy mercies? Thou livest in him, and movest in him, and hast thy being from him; what wilt thou do for God? Faith gives in a bill of blessings—Lo! thus God hath done for thee; he hath given thee life, estate, all kind of comforts; and what honour and service hath been done to God for all this? As that king said, Esther vi. 3, 'What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?' The apostle urgeth their common enjoyments: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.' The Lord hath enlarged his hand of

bounty ; he hath clothed thee, fed thee, and opened the treasures of the sea and land to give thee provisions ; what hast thou done for God ? Nature abhors unthankfulness. Holy David, 2 Sam. vii. 2, his heart reasons within him, ‘ I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains ; ’ as if he had said, Here the Lord hath built me a stately house, but what have I done for the ark of God ? When you survey the great plenty and bounty of God, it is a wonder you have not such inward discourses in your souls. Carnal men are the more secure and careless of the worship of God for their outward enjoyments ; as the sun moveth slowest when it is highest in the zodiac ; but the zeal of God’s children is heightened, and their thankfulness is quickened.

[2.] Faith reasons from the promises of God, which are the common-places and topics of faith from which it gathers arguments. Now the promises that faith urgeth are promises of assistance, acceptance, and reward. Faith seeth assistance in the power of God, acceptance in the grace of God, reward in the bounty and kindness of God.

(1.) It reasons from the promises of assistance. We hate that which we cannot perform. Men love an easy religion, and such as is within the compass of their own strength and power ; therefore the apostle shows one of the reasons why carnal men are so prejudiced against the law of God, because they have no power to fulfil it : Rom. viii. 7, ‘ The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ Wickedness takes the advantage of weakness, and so the soul is prejudiced. Help engageth to actions ; when we know we have no strength, and the burden is heavy, we let it alone. The great excuse of the creature is for want of power. Now faith reasons from the promises of divine assistance, Alas ! thou art a weak creature, it is true, but God will enable thee : 2 Cor. iii. 5, ‘ Our sufficiency is of God ; ’ thou mayest be strong in God when thou art weak in thyself : 2 Cor. xii. 10, ‘ For when I am weak, then am I strong.’ An empty bucket may be the sooner filled. To what end hath God laid help upon Christ ? The soul saith, I can do nothing ; but faith replies, ‘ In the strength of Christ I can do all things,’ Phil. iv. 13. Did you ever know a command that requires grace without a promise that God would give grace ? Do not entertain jealousies of God without cause. God doth not require work and deny assistance ; he doth not desire brick and deny straw. Wait on God, and he will strengthen thee : Ps. xxvii. 14, ‘ Wait on the Lord ; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart.’ Faith encourageth the soul to wait upon God.

(2.) It reasons from the promises of acceptance. Doubts weaken the soul, and jealousy makes the heart faint and the hands feeble, and the soul is burdened in holy duties, and drives on heavily. Distrust will say, Will the Lord regard such a sinner as I am ? accept such green figs ? regard such weak and spiritless services of such an unworthy creature ? Now faith argues, Do you endeavour, God will accept you : 2 Cor. viii. 12, ‘ If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.’ Faith shows how willing Jesus Christ is to accept the service and pardon the defects of his people : Cant. v. 1, ‘ I have eaten my honey-

comb with my honey.' Faith reasons, Thou art afraid to come to God, but to what end serves a mediator? Eph. iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.' Faith shows the mediator to the soul and thus argues—Upon whom do you pitch your hopes of success and acceptance? on the worthiness of your own work, or on the worthiness of Christ the mediator? Faith pointeth at Christ, Look, soul, there is an angel with a golden censer stands at the altar; he is ready to perfume the sacrifice. Though your prayers, as they come from you, are unsavoury breath in the nostrils of God, yet there is a mediator to perfume those services; they do not go immediately to God, but pass through a mediator into the hands of God: Rev. viii. 3, 4, 'And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came up with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.'

(3.) Faith argues from the promises of reward. When the soul is backward, you do not work for nothing, or for that which is nothing worth; there is a reward: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' And they are called, 2 Peter i. 4, 'Exceeding great and precious promises.' In the original it is, τὰ μέγιστα—the greatest things. Now faith saith, If the world can bid more than thy Saviour hath done, choose it. Look, here is the greatest things; if you suffer loss, if your carnal interest be endamaged, it will be abundantly made up in Christ. Faith brings all to the balance, and weighs every discouragement. As the apostle seems to stand with a pair of scales, and cast in present inconveniences and future recompenses: Rom. viii. 18, 'I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' I reckon and find this is too light to be compared to my joy. Faith shows there is no recompense to the joys of heaven, and no inconveniences to the torments of hell. Thus you see the reasonings of faith upon all these grounds, that it is impossible but there should be a difference between the service of believers and of carnal men.

*Application.*—To press you to exercise faith in all your duties of religion. James ii. 23, it is said, 'Abraham's faith wrought with his works.' Let us consider God and duty. Here arise some cases—

1. Concerning the discerning work of faith, How shall we do to see him that is invisible? or to conceive of God in prayer, so as to find an awe of him upon our spirits?

2. Concerning the receiving part of faith, How shall we do to interest ourselves in the assistance of Jesus Christ, and borrow help from heaven, when we are employed in duties of worship?

3. Concerning the reasoning work of faith, how far is assurance necessary? How shall we set faith on arguing when our evidences are dark?

*Case 1.* Concerning the discerning work of faith, How we shall do to see him that is invisible, and rightly to conceive of God in prayer

so far as to find an awe upon our spirits. It is a great trouble to God's children, that they are not able to form proper apprehensions and conceits of God in their approaches to him. Moses' curiosity did in part arise from this ground: Exod. xxxiii. 18, 'Lord, show me thy glory.' And the disciples were troubled that they were not able to conceive distinctly of the Father: John xiv. 8, 'Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' I know they intended a corporal sight; however, it argues a weakness in the soul that they know not how to conceive of God as they ought to do.

I shall answer this case in several directions—

1. You must renew and revive the act of your faith in God's essence and presence.

2. You must conceive of him aright, according as he hath revealed himself.

3. There must be such a representation of God as to make the spirit awful, not servile.

4. You must in prayer form proper notions of God, according to those requests that we put up to him.

5. Frame fit notions concerning the trinity.

*See these heads fully handled, ver. 6.*

## SERMON XVI.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh—HEB. xi. 4.*

CASE. 2. For the receiving part of faith, How shall we do to interest ourselves in the assistance of Jesus Christ?

1. We must lie at God's feet in a sense of our own weakness; as Jehoshaphat said in another case, 2 Chron. xx. 12, 'Lord, we have no might.' So, when you come to engage upon any duties, acknowledge your weakness: 2 Cor. iii. 5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God,'—he speaks of the management of the work of the ministry.

2. You must plead God's promises, wherein he hath engaged to help you in holy duties. You must come and throw him his handwriting, show him his promises; as Tamar dealt with Judah, when she showed him the ring and staff—'Whose are these?' Gen. xxxviii. 25. Urge God with his promises in a humble plea of faith: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope;' Lord, is not this thine own promise? and didst thou not by this draw out and invite my hope? Not as if God needed the mementoes of his creatures; but it is the only rational way to make our confidence arise. Look, as by wrestling we gain a heat to ourselves; so we, wrestling with God by prayer, revive the grounds of our hope,—show him his own institution, that there may be greater confidence in our own souls.

3. Cast yourselves upon the performance of duty in the expectation of his help. It is true God is not bound to give the arbitrary assistances of his Spirit; he doth all things according to his pleasure. But though God be not bound, you are bound; you must engage in duty whatsoever the success be. Say then, I will do what God hath commanded, let God do what he please. There is much of faith in this. The work of faith is to bring us to a cheerful engagement. By this means God's power is glorified, that he is able to help you; and God's mercy is glorified, you leave the business with him, and trust to his mercy. And his sovereignty is much glorified when you can lie at his foot, and leave him to the working of his own grace; as David: Ps. lxxi. 16, 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God;' that is, to the duty of praise; Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' The Lord chides his children for this, because they would neglect duty out of their own discouragement. Thus, Jer. i. 7, when God sent him in a message—'Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatever I command thee thou shalt speak;' and Exod. iv. 10-12, when Moses would excuse himself—'I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. The Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? . . . Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and will teach thee what thou shalt say.' Weakness must never be urged to exclude duty; when there is a clear command, we should cast ourselves upon the duty, and refer the help to God's good pleasure.

*Case 3.* The third case respects the reasoning work of faith, How far is assurance necessary, that so faith may have some strength and encouragement, that we may be persuaded into acts of obedience by these arguments of faith? I answer—

1. We live by faith, and not by assurance. The first act of faith is vital, and unites and implants into Christ: Heb. iii. 14, 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' If you can but maintain the first act of faith, this is enough to make you partakers of Christ, when you can roll and cast the soul upon Christ.

2. Assurance is very comfortable, and we have a great loss, when we are upon terms of uncertainty. It is far better to say, Christ died for me, than barely to say, Christ died for sinners; then the arguments of faith are more sharpened, and fall with a more direct stroke upon the soul, when once you can plead, all this he hath done for me, and this is for my sake.

3. We may reason from the general acts of Christ's love, when we are not able particularly to apply them. And that gratitude is very pure when I can bless God for Christ without reflection upon my own private benefit, for putting salvation into so possible a way. This is enough to urge the soul to duties of obedience: Titus ii. 11, 12, 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' That general salvation that the grace of God hath brought into the world ministers holy arguments and discourses to the soul, whereby we may resist lusts and overcome temptations—'He came into the world to

save sinners, whereof I am chief,' saith Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. Here is some kind of application in this, when we take hold of the promises on the dark side; when we can reason as Paul—'It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,' Christ died for sinners.

Now I come to handle the consequents of Abel's faith.

1. The first is a testimony—*By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.*

2. The second a special privilege—*By it he, being dead, yet speaketh.*

*First*, The testimony, and that is double—(1.) Of his person, 'That he was righteous;' (2.) Of his performance, 'God testifying of his gifts.' The one proves the other: he proves his person was accepted of God, because God gave testimony concerning the acceptance of his gifts. By which, by what? In the original it is *δι' ἧς*. Some apply it to faith—by which faith he obtained witness; others apply it to sacrifice, by which sacrifice he obtained witness.

There are arguments on both sides. Most probably it must be referred to faith—'By faith he obtained witness that he was righteous.'

1. Because the apostle had laid down the general proposition; ver. 2, that 'by faith the elders obtained a good report;' and now he comes to make it good by special instances, for by it Abel 'obtained witness that he was righteous.'

2. If it be referred to offering sacrifice, the apostle would rather have said *δι' οὗ*, by which act of his, in offering sacrifice. However, in a sound sense, it may be referred to either. His righteousness may be referred to his faith, and the testimony of his righteousness to his sacrifice, which was but the witness of his faith. It is one thing to be righteous, and another thing to obtain witness that we are righteous. By faith Abel was a righteous person *in foro cali*, accepted in the Messiah in the court of God; but by his better sacrifice, as a fruit of faith, he obtained the testimony of his righteousness *in foro conscientiae*, in his own feeling, and *in foro ecclesiae*, in the solemn approbation of the church.

He obtained witness that he was righteous, *ἐμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος*, he had a good report of his righteousness. It is the same word with *ἐμαρτυρήθησαν*, ver. 2. How did he obtain this witness? I answer, Either in the word of God: Gen. iv. 4, 'The Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering' (and everywhere he is spoken of as a holy and righteous man; it is his solemn title, 'righteous Abel,' Mat. xxiii. 35); or else it may be meant of the respect God bore to his person and sacrifice, for so the apostle himself proveth it—'God testifying of his gifts,' viz., by some outward and visible demonstration of acceptance, to which now is equivalent the inward witness of the Holy Ghost; for when graces have their full work and exercise, God there gives in the light and comfort of them. For a more full clearing of this passage, you must know this sacrifice was an act for the election and consecration of one of the two brethren as the head of the blessed seed and race. I say, the trial now was which of them God would choose, in whose family the line of the church and the blessed generation was to be continued. As afterwards Moses puts Korah upon the like trial, when

he had a contention with Aaron about the succession and line of the priesthood: Num. xvi. 6, 7, 'This do: Take you censers, Korah, and all his company: and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to-morrow: and it shall be, that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy'—whom God will decide by special testimony and designation from heaven, he shall be holy and set apart. Upon such an occasion as this is were the two brothers before God at this time, as appeareth partly from God's answer to Cain, when Cain took it ill that his younger brother should be preferred before him: ver. 7, 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him;' meaning thus, if he had rightly offered, he should have been accepted with God, and have had pre-eminence, and been head of the blessed line and race. As also it appears by what is said, Gen. iv. 25, when Eve had her third son born, and she calls his name Seth, 'For God,' saith she, 'hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew;' not only another son, but another seed; Cain being, to their knowledge, rejected by God, she had greater joy from the birth of this son, because now there was one raised up to continue the holy seed. And it is not of small consideration that carnal hypocrites are said by the apostle, Jude 11, 'to walk in the way of Cain;' for he is the patriarch of unbelievers, as Abel was to be the head of the believing state. This was the occasion of this solemn sacrifice, whom God would accept as holy and righteous, and as head of the blessed line. Now this was the type and sign of the general acceptance of all believers in Jesus Christ; so that upon the whole we may pronounce that by faith he was righteous and accepted with God, and that by faith acting in his sacrifice he received witness that he was righteous, accepted, and chosen by God. By faith he was righteous, that is, by faith in the promised seed. He was not righteous by his own worth and merit; partly because it is the apostle's scope to show that the righteousness of all ages did reside in Christ, which was apprehended by the faith of the patriarchs which made them famous in the churches; and partly because his own personal merit and righteousness is actually disclaimed by his sacrifice; for it was a sacrifice of propitiation, disclaiming of his own righteousness, and a solemn protestation of his hopes of acceptance in the promised seed.

'God testifying of his gifts.' How so? The apostle points to what was said: Gen. iv. 4, 5, 'The Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect.' How was this known? It must be known by some visible token, for thereupon Cain was angry with Abel, and in his envy and wrath slew his brother; therefore there must be some token of the different acceptance of God. Now what was this visible token? Divers conceit divers things. One saith that the smoke of Cain's sacrifice was beaten downwards towards the earth, which was a testimony of God's detestation, and the smoke of Abel's sacrifice went up to heaven, as it were into the nostrils of God; but this is a groundless conceit, that cannot be established by the least probability of conjecture. Others think that it was by some apparition of an angel, or some different appearance of God to them; but this also is asserted without warrant or probable reason. Therefore it is most probable that this visible

sign that God gave as a token of the accepting of his offering was this—viz., the consuming of Abel's sacrifice to ashes by fire coming down from heaven. What is in the Hebrew יישי God respected Abel, is rendered by others ἐνέπρῳπισεν, God regarded Abel, and set his sacrifice on fire. And indeed there is much ground for this opinion, for this is the usual sign in the word of God of favourable acceptance. Let me name a few places to you: there is a prayer, Ps. xx. 3, 'The Lord accept thy burnt-sacrifice.' In the margin it is, 'The Lord turn thy burnt-offering to ashes, because the devouring of the sacrifice was a sign from heaven of God's acceptance. So when God accepted Aaron's sacrifice, Lev. ix. 24, it is said, 'There came a fire out from the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat; which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.' When Solomon was accepted, 2 Chron. vii. 1, it is said, that 'fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifice;' this was a solemn token. When Elijah and Baal's priests would put it to trial who was the true God, 1 Kings xviii. 38, 'The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice.' This was a token God would give to Gideon, Judges vi. 21, 'There arose fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes.' Manaoh, when Samson was to be born as the deliverer of the church, Judges xiii. 20, 'The flame went up towards heaven from off the altar; and the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar.' And 1 Chron. xxi. 26, when David offered solemn sacrifice to God, it is said, 'God answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering.' This was the usual sign of acceptance. Fire upon the sacrifice was a token of God's favour; but fire upon the sacrificers was a token of God's curse and wrath. When Aaron's two sons had displeased the Lord 'fire came down from the Lord, and devoured them,' Lev. x. 2. So that out of subsequent experiences we may gather what kind of testimony it was. And indeed herein also, as in the sacrifice, there was some type of Christ; for he who is our sacrifice of propitiation was to be offered upon the altar of the cross; as he was to be roasted in the flames of his own love, so in the fire of divine wrath. Out of the whole you see the privileges were then more sensible. The head of the elect family God would decide; and the testimony is sensible, for fire came and devoured the sacrifice, which is now supplied us by the suggestion of the Holy Ghost.

I draw three points from the words thus opened—

1. That by faith we are justified and made righteous. It is said, '*By which* he obtained witness.'

2. That upon the solemn operation of faith in holy duties we obtain witness that we are thus righteous, and are accepted with God.

3. That the works only of such righteous persons are accepted with God.

First Abel's person is accepted in Christ by faith, and the apostle infers that, because God accepted his gifts.

*Doct. 1.* By faith we are justified, made righteous, and accepted with God.

Justification by faith is one of the most cardinal articles of religion; and here it is confirmed by the instance of Abel, one of the ancientest

experiences of the church. Therefore I shall not pass it over without some regard.

Three things I shall inquire into—(1.) How we are justified by faith; (2.) Why faith is deputed to this service of all other graces; (3.) What kind of faith it is that justifieth.

First, How we are justified by faith?

*Ans.* 1. Negatively: (1.) Not by faith as a joint cause with works; (2.) Not by faith as an act and grace in us; (3.) Not by faith as it receives the Spirit's witness.

1. Not by faith as a joint cause with works; as the papists say that we are justified by faith, as it receives a merit and value by works. This were to part stakes between God and the creature, and to confound the covenants, which are altogether inconsistent, as the apostle reasoneth, Rom. xi. 6, 'If by grace, then it is no more of work; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.'

2. Faith doth not justify as it is an act of grace in us, but relatively and instrumentally; not as it works by love, but as it apprehends Christ; not as if the act of believing were instead of perfect obedience to the law, but only with reference to the object as it lays hold of Jesus Christ, because of its necessary concurrence as the instrument and condition of the covenant. There are different expressions in scripture; sometimes God is said to justify, and Christ is said to justify, and faith is said to justify, but with a different respect.

[1.] God is said to justify, and that two ways; partly as the first moving cause. The rise of all is God the Father's mercy in ordaining Christ: Rom. iii. 24, 'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' By the antecedent and free electing love and mercy of the Father, as the first moving cause. Partly, as the supreme judge: Rom. viii. 33, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth;' that is, how shall the executioner lay anything to my charge? God is there spoken of as the supreme judge. So Rom. iii. 26, 'The Father is said to justify him which believeth in Jesus;' 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,' &c. In the order of the persons he sustaineth the person of the highest judge, and all things are authoritatively ordered by him.

[2.] Christ is said to justify; as Isa. liii. 11, 'By his knowledge shall righteous servant justify many;' that is, Jesus Christ, as God's righteous servant of his eternal decrees. Now Christ justifies, partly by meriting that righteousness for us which will serve for justification. It is he that hath procured it by his obedience and death, and suffering in our stead; and therefore he is said to introduce 'an everlasting righteousness,' Dan. ix. 24. His obedience is the matter of our justification, being 'the the Lord our righteousness,' Jer. xxiii. 6. And partly by interceding for us, that we may be interested in this righteousness, that the Spirit may work faith in us.

[3.] Faith is said to justify, because without it we cannot apprehend the righteousness of Christ; as the hand may be said to feed and nourish the body, but the nutritive virtue is not in the hand, but in the meat. And therefore when faith is said to justify, it is meant, as it

receives the righteousness of Christ, and with reference to its object. There is nothing more usual than to apply that to the instrument that is proper to the object; and usually in the expressions of the word it is complicated and folded up together with its object. Faith in Christ, faith in his blood—it receives all its merit and value from thence. As also the righteousness of faith is spoken of as contradistinct from the righteousness which is in ourselves; therefore it cannot be understood of faith itself, but of the righteousness of Christ: Rom. x. 3, ‘They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God;’ and, Phil. iii. 9, ‘And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.’ Yea, there are distinct places which call it ‘God’s righteousness,’ in opposition to any act of man and make faith only to be the instrument to receive it: Rom. i. 17, ‘The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;’ that is, in opposition to the act of man, procured and merited by a person, that is, God, and accepted by God: Rom. iii. 21, 22, ‘The righteousness of God, which out of the law is manifested,’ &c; ‘even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.’ We are not said to be justified *propter fidem* but *per fidem*.

3. Again, faith doth not justify in the sense of the Antinomians, as a receiving witness of the Spirit’s testimony. They say there is the sealing and receiving witness, and make the sealing witness to be the Spirit of God, and the receiving witness to be faith. They take faith to be nothing else but assurance; but that is a thing that follows upon faith. We may be justified, though we have not received this solemn testimony and witness by the Holy Ghost. Assurance is spoken of as a thing consequent to faith: Eph. i. 13, ‘After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;’ first faith, then sealing. The Spirit’s testimony is nothing but the certification of grace already wrought, and is subsequent to the testimony of the renewed conscience: Rom. viii. 16, ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.’ The Holy Ghost doth not seal to a blank. First there must be faith, then the Spirit of God puts on his seal.

*Ans. 2.* Positively, faith only justifies as an instrument which God hath deputed to the apprehension and application of Christ’s righteousness. The whole order and process is this: by effectual calling God begets faith; by faith there is union wrought with Christ; by being united to Christ there is possession of all of Christ; upon this possession God looks upon us as righteous; God looking upon us as righteous, pronounceth the sentence of justification; which sentence is double, an acquitting us from our sins, and accepting of us in Christ—we are absolved from all sin and death by a free and full pardon, and that is done chiefly by the passive obedience of Christ—and we are accepted as righteous to eternal life, and that is the fruit of his active obedience, or of his fulfilling the law for us.

1. By effectual calling God begets faith. The immediate end of effectual calling is to work faith. We are called to holiness and called

to glory; these are expressions everywhere in the scriptures; but the immediate fruit of calling is faith: 2 Thes. ii. 14, 'Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'Whereunto,' meaning faith, mentioned in the words before; there is the first end of calling to close with Christ; then the last end, that we may be glorified. The voice of all the calls and invitations of the word is, Come unto me, and come unto Christ.

2. By faith there is union wrought with Christ. Faith is the bond of the spiritual union. We are said to live in him by faith: Gal. ii. 20, 'The life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.' And he is said to dwell in us by faith: Eph. iii. 17, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' Now union there must be, for Christ's garments do only cover the members of his own body.

3. Being united to Christ, we are possessed of all that is in Christ, so far as is consistent with our capacity of receiving, and God's ordination and appointment in giving. Union gives us interest in the personal merits and righteousness of Christ, and the benefit of his mediatory actions; they are ours to all effects and purposes, as if we ourselves had satisfied and obeyed the law. Why? because it is not in a person severed from us; it is in our head, in one to whom we are united by a strait bond of union, and therefore they are reputed as ours. It is true, we are not mediators and redeemers as Christ, because that is not consistent with our estate, nor with the will of God; but it consists with the will of God, that we shall be made righteous with his righteousness: 1 Cor. i. 30, it is the Father's pleasure, 'In him are ye in Christ Jesus;' that is, by virtue of our union, God hath willed this; 'who of God is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;' 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' There is as real a donation and as effectual an application of Christ's righteousness to us, as there was of our sins to Christ. And as by virtue of the latter it pleased the Father to deal with Christ as a sinner; so by virtue of the former it pleased the Father so to deal with us, and to accept of us as righteous. Look, as we may be by the ordination of God made guilty of Adam's sin, though we be not in his public capacity of being a public person and representer of all mankind; so we may be made righteous with Christ's active obedience, though we are not mediators and redeemers, for that was his particular capacity and relation fixed in his person. In short, being united to Christ, we are interested in all his actions as if they were ours; for when we are one with him in the spirit, then we are considered by God as one with him in law. The judicial union always follows the mystical. As the payment of the debt surely is imputed and reckoned to the debtor; so Jesus Christ being our surety, Heb vii. 22, his righteousness is imputed to us. Therefore by union we are said, Gal. iii. 27, 'to put on Christ,' with all his personal merits and righteousness.

4. Upon this God looks upon us as righteous. For mark, though justification be a judicial act, yet it is not a naked sentence of pardon without any ground or reason; it hath a real ground and foundation,—the donation and application of Christ's righteousness to believers. Therefore when God looks upon a sinner as a sinner, he will never

acquit him; but it is founded upon the donation of a true and perfect righteousness, proved by Christ, and communicated to believers upon God the Father's ordination and appointment; for the apostle saith, Rom. iii. 26, 'God will be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.' When a person is made thus righteous, then God is just in justifying him. God will pronounce none just but those that by faith are thus interested in the satisfaction of Christ. There is first a true donation and effectual application of Christ's righteousness, then is the sentence passed in the court of God.

5. The sentence of God is twofold—(1.) He absolves us from all sin and death, and he doth that by a free and full pardon; (2.) He accepts us as righteous to eternal life. The parts of our justification are privative and positive: John iii. 16, 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' The one is done by Christ's passive obedience and the other by Christ's active obedience.

[1.] For the former part; the form of that is laid down, Job xxxiii. 24, there is the formal sentence of God the Father, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.' Let that soul live, and deliver him from hell and death. Look, as when Abraham found the ram, he let Isaac go; so God, receiving a ransom, a satisfaction to his justice by the sufferings of Christ, the sinner is absolved—'Deliver him.' And indeed this is that we may plead when our consciences return upon us and implead us, that we are one in law with Christ, his ransom is our ransom: Gal. ii. 20, 'I am crucified with Christ;' that is, I have satisfied the law in Christ. Faith must look to the surety, and see justice satisfied, and all for me: Col. ii. 14, 'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.'

[2.] The second part of the sentence is accepting of us as righteous unto eternal life; for Christ hath not only satisfied the old covenant by his death, but ratified the new by his solemn obedience; not only taken away the reign of sin, but also established the reign of grace; therefore the apostle saith, Rom. v. 21, 'As sin hath reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.' Now the form of acceptance to life we have in those words, Mat. xxv. 34, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' It will be most comfortable when we shall hear this out of Christ's own mouth at the last day.

Secondly, The reasons why faith is deputed to this service.

1. Because it is the most receptive grace. Other graces are more operative, but faith is most receptive, so fitly suiting the needy condition of the creature. It is the empty hand of the soul to take in the fullness of Christ. Since the fall man is needy and indigent, and lives by borrowing; therefore those graces are most serviceable that are most receptive. Love gives, but faith takes and borrows. We are beggars now rather than workers; therefore the honour is put upon faith rather than love.

2. Because it is most loyal and true to God. It looks for all from him, and ascribes all to him. This is the reason the apostle giveth why faith is made to be the condition of the new covenant: Rom. iii. 27, 'To

exclude boasting ; ' that the creature may look for all from God. God would humble proud creatures ; whatever they have, it is but borrowed.

3. To make the way the more sure : Rom. iv. 16, ' Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace ; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.' Things are not so floating and uncertain as when built upon works. We have a sure foundation in Jesus Christ, and a sure tenure by covenant : 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, ' He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.' And we have a sure holdfast by faith : Heb. vii. 19, ' Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.'

Thirdly, The third question is, what this faith is that justifieth ? It is not a general assent, or loose acknowledgment of the articles of religion. The apostle shows that the devils may assent to the truth of the word, and brings the primitive and fundamental truth of all for the confirmation of it, that there is one God. There is a faith which (to distinguish it from all others) is called justifying, described thus—It is a grace wrought in our hearts by the Spirit of God, by which the soul doth rest and cast itself upon Christ, tendered to us in the offer of God for pardon and acceptance. I shall not stand examining every part of this definition, but shall endeavour to discover the nature of faith in the acts of it. There are some things implied, and other things more express and formal in faith.

1. That which is implied in faith is knowledge and feeling.

[1.] There must be a distinct knowledge : Isa. liii. 11, ' By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ; ' and therefore the faith that justified the sinner pre-supposeth knowledge. The first creature that God made was light ; and so it is in the new creation, the first thing is light. God bringeth into the soul in conversion a stock of truth as well as a frame of grace. Heathens that are wholly ignorant of Christ cannot be justified by him, nor christians that only know him at random, and by a general tradition, for this begets but a loose hope. And though none so confident as ignorant men, which make a full account, that they shall go to heaven, yet when they are anything serious, we find all their confidence to amount to no more than a bare conjecture, or a blind and rash presumption. And usually, the more ignorant the more presuming ; they cherish a blind hope. As Paul saith, Rom. vii. 9, ' I was alive without the law once ; ' that is, in his own persuasion and account. It is a long time ere men can get knowledge enough to be out of conceit with themselves, and to discern their own delusions. The blind world doth not look after justification by Christ, but only liveth by guess and devout aims ; some loose hopes they have conceived, out of common tradition and good meanings, by which they secure themselves in their fond presumption. There must be some competent and distinct knowledge of the mysteries of salvation, that we may not foster a blind and mistaken hope.

[2.] There must be upon this knowledge some feeling and experience, which the apostle means when he calleth it, Heb. vi. 5, ' Taste of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come ; ' some common efficacy and virtue of the spirit. There is a form of knowledge as well as a form of godliness : Rom. ii. 20, ' Which hast the form of

knowledge, and of the truth in the law ;' some unactive light and speculative contemplation, a naked model of truth, such as scholars have in the brain, or men may gain by parts and attendance on the word. But there must be some feeling and experience, which we usually call conviction ; and to consider it only as it concerns our present purpose, it respects two things—a sense of our misery, and our own inability to overcome it. Man is a secure creature, therefore there must be a sense of misery ; and man is a proud creature, therefore there must be a sense of our own insufficiency.

(1.) A sense of our misery by sin, and of God's curse due to us. This justifying faith supposeth ; for why should a man look to be justified till he be condemned ? Who would care for balm that is not wounded ? for a pardon that is not accused in his own conscience ? Man is a lazy creature, and will not apply himself to the work and care of religion, till he be spurred on and driven to it by his own need. Christ saith, Mat. ix. 12, ' They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.' Men are at ease and heart-whole, and till they are possessed with a deep sense of their own misery they do not care for Christ. The stung Israelites looked up to the brazen serpent ; and those that were ' pricked in heart cried, What shall we do ?' Acts ii. 37. Men slight mercy till they need it, and are careless of the great salvation till God affect them with the sight of their own sins and his wrath. Israel in Egypt was not easily weaned from the flesh-pots till their burdens were doubled ; so till wrath presseth to anguish, till it sits heavy upon the conscience, we do not groan for a deliverer : Jer. xv. 17, ' I sat alone because of thy hand, for thou hast filled me with indignation.' This makes us to sit alone, and ponder seriously upon the matter. It is true, the degree is various and different : this sense of misery worketh in some as far as horror ; in all it worketh so far as to make them anxious and solicitous about a saviour, and about our everlasting condition. In short, Jesus Christ doth not seek us till we be lost, and we do not seek him till we be lost.

(2.) There must be a sense of our own inability to help ourselves. Man is not only apt to be secure, but self-confident ; and therefore till the soul seeth nothing within itself and nothing without itself but Christ, who is the only way, we shall never go to him. Man is a proud creature, loth to be beholden. A borrowed garment, though of silk, doth not suit with proud nature so well as a russet-coat of our own. So this full satisfaction of Christ, proud man regards it not ; we go about to establish our own righteousness. Legal dejection is always accompanied with pride and self-love. The sinner is cast down, but not humbled ; doth not come and lie at the feet of Christ, that he may be beholden to him for mercy ; therefore there must be somewhat more than a sight of misery. Look, as the Corinthians did not care for Paul because they thought they were full of gifts : 1 Cor. iv. 8, ' Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us ;' no more do men for Christ, as long as they have anything of their own. This is the reason why Paul accounts not only his pharisaical righteousness, but his best works loss, Phil. iii. 8, because it hindered him from looking after the righteousness of Christ. We would be sufficient to ourselves, happy within ourselves. Justifying faith implies that man hath given up all

his own confidences; for why should we lean upon another when we have a sufficiency in ourselves? Flesh and blood would have its own righteousness; and as long as we can keep conscience quiet by external acts of duty, by any care and resolution of ours, we will never seek after the righteousness of Christ. It is never well till conscience be brought to say as Peter, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.' John vi. 68. We must confess that all our own works are nothing: Christ only it is that can cure and help us. This is that which is implied.

## SERMON XVII.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.—HEB. xi. 4.*

2. THAT which is the express and formal in justifying faith is a resting upon Christ, or a closing with Christ.

Now because here are many acts and degrees, I shall endeavour to open it to you, and that I cannot do better than in the terms of scripture. It is usual in scripture to express the tendency of the soul towards Christ by words that are proper to outward motion. There are four notions used in scripture—(1.) Coming to Christ; (2.) Running to Christ; (3.) Seeking of Christ; and (4.) Receiving of Christ. All these must be explained with analogy and proportion to external motions. Coming to Christ notes the purpose and resolution of the soul; running to Christ notes the earnest desire of the soul to enjoy him; seeking of Christ notes the diligence of the soul in the use of means: and receiving of Christ notes the welcoming of Christ into the soul with complacency, rest, and delight.

[1.] There is coming to Christ, which notes our first act of faith, our resolution and purpose to close with him. It implieth the lowest act and degree of saving faith. While the soul is in the way, it is said to be coming to Christ, resolved in his heart to be contented with nothing but Christ; therefore it is expressed always by such names as imply a present motion: Phil. iii. 12, 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already made perfect, but I follow after,' &c; John vi. 35, 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger,' &c.—ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he that is coming to me: it implies a motion in its tendency, when we are in the way. As the prodigal determined in himself, 'I will arise, and go to my father,' Luke xv. 18; when the soul, according to the offer of God, resolves to cast itself upon Christ for mercy and salvation. Now if this resolution be full and serious, it gives a just right and title to Christ; for, John vi. 37, Christ saith, 'He that cometh to me,'—though he doth but do that,—'I will in nowise cast him out,' it gives you a title. So when the prodigal said, 'I will arise, and go to my father,' presently it is said 'The father ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,' ver. 20,

As soon as there was a purpose, he was entertained and embraced by God. So David, Ps. xxxii. 5, when he issued forth a practical decree, 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' This gives you safety and a right to Christ, though the other acts may yield you more comfort: Heb. iii. 14, 'We are made partakers of Christ,'—that is, we have a right to Christ and all his merits,—'if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' that is, the first act of faith; if we can but maintain that, it gives us a right to Christ, if we hold but our resolution to cleave to Christ, notwithstanding disadvantages. Coming implies a resolved adventure upon the invitation of God; the soul will cast itself upon Christ, and see what God will do for it, which yields you safety, though not comfort; when we resolve to cast ourselves upon his grace, whatever come on it; and though we cannot lay claim to his righteousness, yet we will wait and rest upon him, whatever comes of it.

[2.] Running to Christ; that notes not only the tendency of the motion, but the fervour and earnestness of desire. The soul cannot be quiet till it be with Christ: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, and we will run after thee.' When God had put forth the attractive force of his grace upon the soul, then the motions of the soul are fervent and earnest: Isa. lv. 5, 'The nations that know not thee shall'—not only come, but—'run to thee.' The soul that thirsteth after Christ with such a desire as will not be satisfied without an enjoyment—this is faith; therefore it is called 'a hungering and thirsting after righteousness,' Mat. v. 6. Hunger and thirst are those appetitions of nature which are most implacable, that cannot endure check. *Venter non habet aures*—the belly hath no ears; and hunger and thirst will not be allayed with words and counsel. So the soul will be satisfied with nothing but Christ. It edgeth the purpose with desire; our souls will not be quiet without him. It is resembled to the panting of the chased hart: Ps. xlii. 1, 'As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' The soul thirsteth after the righteousness of Christ, and the comforts and refreshments of his grace. The hart of itself is a thirsty creature, especially when it is chased. The Septuagint hath it ἡ ἑλαφος, the she-hart. Passions in females are most vehement. Therefore the earnest longing and desire of the soul for Christ is expressed by the panting and breathing of the chased she-hart after the waters. And Cant. ii. 5, it is expressed by being 'sick of love.' Vehement affections, when satisfaction is denied, cause languor and faintness in the body; so the soul vehemently longs and is sick for the love of Christ. Sometimes it is expressed by earnest expectation: Ps. cxxx. 6, 'My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; and the psalmist redoubleth it—'I say, more than they that watch for the morning.' Look, as the weary sentinel that is wet and stiff with the dews of the night watcheth for the approach of the morning, so doth the poor soul wait for the dawning of grace and first appearances of God's love.

[3.] Seeking of Christ: Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found;' and Ps. xxvii. 8, 'Seek ye my face.' Seeking implies diligence in the use of means. Vigorous desires cannot be idle; where there hath been running, there will be also seeking: Cant. iii. 2, 'I

will arise now, and go about the city, in the streets and broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth.' The spouse sought her beloved throughout the city. Jerusalem is a figure of the church; and in the ordinances of God christians go through the city from one ordinance to another, from meditation to prayer, from prayer to meditation, from both to the word, that still they may hear of their beloved. The earnest desire of the soul will bewray itself by the holy use of means to meet with Christ. Seeking doth not only imply a bare waiting, but a waiting in the use of means to find him whom their souls love. They are tracing his foot-steps by the shepherd's tents, and pursuing him throughout the whole city.

[4.] Receiving of Christ; this is when faith is grown, and full ripe: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power'—*ἐξουσίαν*, the right and honour—to become the sons of God.' Receiving is a considerate act of the soul by which we take Christ out of God's hand, and apply him to ourselves. And this suiteth with the formal nature of faith and the offer of God: in the covenant God offereth him, and we take him by the hand of faith; in the promises of the gospel God makes a deed of gift; and so in the Lord's supper, when we come to be infeoffed in the covenant 'Take, eat, this is my body,' 1 Cor. xi. 24. And here we come to take and receive him. Now this receiving implies an appropriation and more particular application of Christ to our use; and though it doth not go so high as assurance or an adjudging of Christ to be ours, yet there is a laying hold of Christ held out in the word of promise, and a desire to draw all things to application. Now concerning these acts of faith take these rules—

(1.) When you cannot comfort yourselves in one act of faith, you must make use of another; as, for instance, it is impossible the soul should be always running, always upon the bent of vigorous and strong desires; but do you come to him? That gives you a right to Christ, if there be a settled resolution and purpose of the soul to cleave and rest upon him and no other for acceptance with God. So you cannot take comfort in receiving of Christ; a secret suspicion draws back the hand of faith; ay, but do you seek him? You may take comfort in that. The terms are diversified in scripture lest any of them singly should trouble believers.

(2.) All the acts of justifying faith respect the person of Christ: it is coming to Christ, running to Christ, seeking of Christ, and receiving of Christ. Faith is not merely assent; in the scripture notion it is affiance. Usually men content themselves with a naked persuasion or inactive assent. The act of faith must be immediately terminated upon the person of Christ. Christ's righteousness is not obtained by an assent to the truth of any promise merely, or any proposition in the word, but by a union with Jesus Christ. We must be united before we can be possessed of his righteousness. We are not united to any promise, but to Christ. Look, as the imputation of Adam's sin is charged upon us by our union to him, so is the imputation of Christ's righteousness when we are united to him, when we take and receive him. It is not merely because you are of this opinion that Christ came to die for sinners, but there must be the hand of faith to take Christ out of the hand of God the Father, and receive him and embrace

him. There must not only be an assent in the judgment, but a consent in the heart to cleave to Christ. Christ commended Peter for his confession in saying, 'He was the son of God,' Mat. xvi. 16. And the devil confessed as much—'Jesus, thou son of God, and thou holy one of God,' Mark i. 24. Saith Austin, *Hoc dicebat Petrus, ut Christum amplecteretur; hoc dicebant dæmones, ut Christus ab iis recederet*—Peter assented to that truth, that Jesus was the son of God, but how? that he might embrace Christ; the devils assented to this truth, that Christ might depart from them.

(3.) True faith will never rest in any lower act, it is always renewing its own acts, and perfecting and ripening itself, that from weak beginnings it may grow up into some confidence before God. It ripens purposes into desires, desires into waiting, waiting into seeking, seeking into receiving, and receiving into the fulness of assurance, always struggling with doubts and fears; as John wrote his epistle to this end, that those which had believed might grow up to greater steadfastness in faith: 1 John v. 13, 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that we may believe on the name of the son of God.' As he that had faith in the Gospel is complaining of the relics of unbelief: Mark ix. 24, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' False graces do not wrestle with that which is contrary, nor aim at growth; but living graces will be always drawing onward to perfection.

(4.) The less of comfort we receive in the exercise of faith, the more there should be of duty. Christians look too much on sensible consolation; but when by faith they can't sensibly apply the comfort of the gospel, they should be more exercised in the duties of it. Two things are always necessary in faith, and are undoubted evidences of your gracious estate: an esteem of Christ and diligence in duty.

(1st.) An esteem of Christ. When you cannot have sensible consolation, keep up your esteem. Though they cannot say Christ is theirs, yet they can say Christ is precious to them: 1 Peter ii. 7, 'To them that believe he is precious.' Therefore the apostle saith, Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm, unto the end.' In the original it is *καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος*, if we can glory in the hopes of christianity whatsoever they cost us. The apostle means, when men can make an open profession that they have a good bargain in Christ, and can glory in their hope, whatever it cost them in the world. Esteem is far more than sensible comfort, and a better evidence.

(2dly) Diligence in the use of means. It is said, Prov. viii. 34, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.' Though you are not able to apply Christ with comfort, yet you will watch at his gates for your dole of comfort. So, Isa. xxvi. 8, the church professeth this, 'In the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name.' There is more of resolution, though less of consolation. When there is nothing but angry frowns from God, no sensible tokens of his love, yet an obstinate faith will not be discouraged.

*Use.* If all the righteousness which saints expect reside in Christ,

and we only receive it by faith, then it serves to press us to look after this righteousness. Take these arguments to quicken you—

1. What will you do without it? All our graces are imperfect and mixed with sin: your natures are full of sin, and your services are full of weakness. God can endure no imperfection, because of the holiness of his nature; and God will not release his law, because of the severity of his justice: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant.' He doth not say, Lord, enter not into judgment with unbelievers, but with thy servants,—those that study to approve their hearts to him. There is no obtaining of the blessing, but in the garments of our elder brother. The creature's fig-leaves will never cover a naked soul from the sight of God. We can scarce keep up a fair show before a discerning man, and what shall we do before the pure eyes of God's glory?

2. Consider, there is a full righteousness in Christ—'We are complete in him,' Col. ii. 10. Whatever there is in sin, there is more in Christ; for the sin of our nature there is the absolute integrity of the human nature of Christ; and for the sin of our lives there is Christ's perfect obedience, who did what was required, and suffered what was deserved. Justice can make no further demands. The law is fulfilled both in the commination and precept; all is done in our surety. Here is an infinite treasure that will serve you all: 1 John ii. 28, 'And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' When Jesus Christ shall come in majesty and glory, if we have Christ's righteousness, we may endure Christ's judgment.

3. Consider the readiness of God to give you this righteousness. This was the very purpose and design of God the Father: Rom. iii. 25, 'Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;' John vi. 27, 'Him hath God the Father sealed.' He hath appointed Christ for this very end. It is not a thing of our devising, but of God's appointment. We read of an emperor that had a great emerald made in the manner of a looking-glass, in which he was wont to look upon horrid aspects that by reflection upon the glass might be pleasing to him, that there he might see the bloody contest with delight. This God the Father hath done; he hath set forth Jesus Christ, that so in him we might be acceptable and pleasing in his sight.

4. It is as really ours when it is given as if we had merited in our own persons. God's judicial acts are not grounded upon a fiction, but upon a truth. Look upon the relation as you are espoused and betrothed to him. *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*—a wife shares in all the honours of her husband; so we are possessed of what is in Christ. The debtor is acquitted by the payment of the surety. The members share in the honour of the head. Look, as Christ satisfied for your sins as if he had committed them, so thou art accepted for his righteousness as if thou hadst satisfied: 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He was made sin for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' It is good to consider how really Christ was handled; so real will our acceptance be with God. Christ lay under the wrath of the Father; his sufferings were not a fiction, no more are thy privileges.

5. Consider the excellency of this righteousness in two respects.

(1.) It is better than that we had in Adam in innocency ; that would have been but the righteousness of man, but this is the righteousness of God ; as Rom. iii. 22, it is called 'the righteousness of God which is by faith.' We are now in a nearer relation to the Lord than in Adam, being united to God by Christ. Adam was but God's servant, but we are made his sons and children ; the union and relation is nearer. The prodigal after his return hath the best robes, Luke xv. 22. Nay, in some sense our case is better than that of angels : angels are confirmed by Christ, but it is in their own righteousness ; but the righteousness of Christ is ours. (2.) You are as righteous as the most righteous saints are ; as David that was a man after God's own heart, Abraham that was the friend of God, men that had such access and familiarity with God : Rom. iii. 23, 'The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ; for there is no difference.' None of the saints have cleaner linen, nor are decked with a better vesture. In sanctification there are degrees, and a great deal of difference ; but not in justification. As in the manna none had over, none under, all alike proportion and measure ; so in the righteousness of Christ all have a like measure : 2 Peter i. 1, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of Christ.' It is a righteousness of the same nature and property ; the foundation of it being in Christ, it is all one. It is said, Acts xi. 17, the gentiles had obtained 'a like gift with us ;' that is, the same gift that the apostles had. Luther had an apt comparison to set out this : a giant holds a jewel in his hand, and a child may hold the same jewel ; but the giant holds it with a stronger hand ; so, though there be different degrees of faith, yet herein it is all alike precious ; it is the same righteousness of Christ.

6. Consider the fruits and benefits of this righteousness.

[1.] Access to God. We may minister before the Lord in our priestly garments, we may worship in the holy place when Christ hath put his robes upon us. When Joshua the high priest was before the Lord, he was there in his filthy garments, Zech. iii. 5 ; but he was clothed with change of raiment to minister before the Lord. So we had filthy garments ; therefore the Lord comes and takes them away, and clothes us with clean garments : Eph. iii. 2, 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.' Our imperfections need not encourage us ; Christ's righteousness is not a covering that is too short. It is said, Rev. i. 13, Christ was clothed 'with a garment down to his feet.' Christ's righteousness is a long garment ; all our defects are removed out of the light of God's countenance. When Joseph was brought out of prison before Pharaoh, his raiment was changed ; so when we are to appear before God, the king of kings, certainly our raiment must be changed : Isa. lxiv. 6, 'Our righteousness is as filthy rags,' saith the church.' Now, that we might not appear before the great king with a bundle of rags, Christ hath dyed us a purple robe in his own blood, that our garments may be changed, and we may come with boldness.

[2.] We are freed from the guilt and punishment of sin, so that all afflictions have lost their curse and sting, and are become medicinal. We may have bitter dispensations many times, but they are not salted

with a curse. We may cry with Luther, Strike, Lord! strike! my sins are pardoned. When God hath laid up comfort in the heart beforehand, all our corrections lose their property, and they are federal dispensations; as David: Ps. cxix. 75, 'I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' When God thresheth us, it is but that our husk may come off. They are not acts of revenge to satisfy justice, but only to free us of a mischievous disease; and death is a friend, it is a remedy whereby we may be delivered into glory: 1 Cor. xv. 55, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

[3.] This will give us comfort in the hour of death. When the soul, smitten with the sense of sin, is drawn to the tribunal of God, oh then, the righteousness of Christ is a comfort. Chemnitius observeth, *Aliter de justificatione sentire homines, quando in disputationibus cum hominibus sui simillimis rixantur; aliter in meditationibus, quando corum Deo sistunt conscientiam.* Men dealing with men like themselves may cry up works; but when they plead their cause before God, then who can speak of his own righteousness? Then they tremblingly fly to the horns of the altar and to mercy. There is no screen to draw between us and wrath but Christ, no way to answer justice but in the satisfaction of Christ, no way to appear before holiness but by the obedience of Christ. Let one of those audacious volume writers come and say, Lord, cast them out of heaven that cannot approve themselves to thee by their own graces.

[4.] Then we are made heirs of eternal glory; therefore it is called justification unto life. A pardoned person is made a favourite: Rom. viii. 30, 'Whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Christ doth not only prevent the execution, but we are also saved. It is much to be delivered from wrath to come: Rom. v. 9, 'Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;' as if it were a lesser thing to glorify a saint than to justify a sinner. When God can accept of us out of his free grace, certainly he will give us heaven.

*Ques.* You will say, What shall I do? Here is nothing to do but to receive and take Christ out of the hands of God. We are not exhorted to justify ourselves as we are to sanctify ourselves. Justification is God's act; yet there must be something done to obtain it; not by way of causality, but by way of order. God doth not justify stocks and stones, but men; neither doth he justify mules and horses, and those that will kick again, but those that will submit to his righteousness. A sick man must yield to take physick, and a poor man must hold out his hand to receive an alms.

There are two general means—(1.) Disclaim your own righteousness; (2.) Apply yourselves to the righteousness of Christ.

First, Disclaim your own righteousness. In the new covenant he cometh most worthy that cometh most unworthy; Christ speaks a 'parable against those that trusted in themselves that they were righteous,' Luke xviii. 9. There one comes and pleads his works, as appealing to justice; the other comes and pleads his sins, as waiting for mercy. What is the issue of all? It is said, ver. 14, 'This man went away justified to his house rather than the other.' We must come sinners

into his presence ; the sinner is justified rather than the worker. We must come naked, that he might give us raiment. Take notice of Paul's solemn renunciation, Phil. iii. 7-9, 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.' He had more cause than any to have confidence in the flesh and glory in himself ; but all this was so far from being a gain, as they were a loss to him. He thought it was an advantage and a step to mercy, when it was a dangerous allurements to hypocrisy and self-confidence. He reckons up his moral excellences, his natural privileges, and his own righteousness ; but all this was so far a disadvantage to him as they kept him from being hungry and more earnest after the righteousness God offered to him in Christ.

Now because this is a hard matter, a man would fain maintain the dignity of works, and proud nature is loth to stoop and sue *in formâ pauperis* ; and men would rather oblige God than come as beggars and be beholden to him : Rom. x. 3, 'Going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.' It is a matter of great difficulty to captivate the pride and prejudices of reason ; therefore I shall lay down the more effectual considerations that are likely to draw us off from our own righteousness, and bring us to submit and yield to God's terms. I shall lay down five considerations—The exact purity of the law, the holiness of God, our proneness to sin, the strictness of the last day's account, and the danger of resting upon anything in ourselves.

1. Consider the exact purity of the law. Usually men are alive in their own hopes and conceits, because they do not look as they should into the law of God : Rom. vii. 9, 'I was alive without the law once.' While Paul looked upon the law through pharisaical spectacles, he thought he was perfect and alive,—that is, in a good condition before God ; 'but when the commandment came,'—that is, with full light and conviction,—'sin revived, and I died ;' Paul was struck dead, then it revived the sentence of death in himself. A short exposition of the law begets a large opinion of our own righteousness. We are all Pharisees by nature, and in the private glosses of our own thoughts, we regard no more of the law than external obedience, *ἔργον νόμου*, the mere work of the law, and therefore we are not driven to seek the righteousness of Christ. We see it plainly that common people hope to be saved by their good works and good meanings. The more ignorant men are, the greater confidence in themselves. That is the reason the apostle saith, Rom. x. 3, 'Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own.' Men do not consider what a righteousness becomes God's presence. Now when the law comes, it gives sin its due dimensions, and the sinner his due load and burden. Oh ! look then into the purity of the prohibition ; for the law condemns not only acts, but thoughts ; not only sins perfectly formed, but lusts ; it reacheth to the little foxes and Babylon's brats. And in duty it doth not only require the work wrought, but an exquisite frame of spirit, with the motions and opera-

tions of the soul ; all thy heart, all thy soul, all thy might. It is no matter though our meaning be good ; the law would have us bring our duties and acts of obedience not only to the touchstone, but to the balance ; it must hold exact weight, as well as be of a good kind.

2. Consider the holiness of God. The great business of justification is to give us a righteousness that will endure God's sight, that we may be able to stand before God ; hence those phrases. 'justified in his sight,' Ps. cxliii. 2, and Rom. iii. 20 ; and 'glorying before God,' Rom. iv. 2 ; and 'the answer of a good conscience towards God,' 1 Peter iii. 21. So that if we would look for a proper righteousness fit for justification, we are to draw the soul into God's sight, and to think of the pure eyes of his glory. Now it is said, Job xv. 15, 'The heavens are not clean in his sight,' that is, the holy ones in heaven, the angels that are confirmed in their own righteousness, they are not clean in the sight of God's holiness. They not only cover their feet, that is, that which is the meanest and lowest of the angelical nature, but their faces, that which is most glorious in their nature : they were ashamed of that which was best in their nature, as being abashed at the presence of God's holiness. Oh ! what will become of us vile worms ? 'What is man, that he should be clean ? And he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous ?' Job xv. 14. If the court of heaven be not clean in his presence, how shall we do for a righteousness that must endure the eyes of God's glory ?—'Who can stand before this holy God ?' 1 Sam. vi. 20. Alas ! in the state you are, you can no more expect that God should delight in you than you can delight in a toad, because of the contrariety of nature ; yet this is but a finite comparison. Now in vain is it to think God should act contrary to his nature, that ever holiness itself should delight in a sinner. Oh ! what shall I do to come before God's holiness ?

3. Consider our proneness to sin. Men that have low thoughts of the degeneration and corruption of nature have as low thoughts of the righteousness of Christ ; therefore consider how corruption is apt to bewray itself in duty, business, recreation, in all conditions and actions of life ; all is tainted : 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about,' Ps. xl. 12. And consider, whoever appears before God must be clothed with some righteousness. Now go to our duties,—'Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,' Isa. lxv. 5. The better part of our lives are spotted and defiled. Certainly those works that need pardon themselves can never justify us. *Mala mea purè, mala sunt et mea ; bona autem mea, nec purè bona sunt, nec mea*—our evil works, they are merely evil, and they are ours ; but our good works are neither ours ; nor are they purely good. Certainly a man cannot merit with that which doth not deserve acceptance.

4. Consider the strictness of the last day's account. Justification is principally intended for that time. Christ's righteousness was appointed for Christ's judgment : 1 John ii. 28, 'And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' This God aimed at, to establish such a righteousness that we might not be ashamed at Christ's coming : 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God ;' and Luke xxi. 36, you have the like expres-

sion, 'That ye may stand before the Son of man.' Now when every idle word shall be weighed in God's balance, what will you do then? Things will not be huddled up at that day, but conscience will be extended to the recognition of all the sins you have committed; and what will you do for a righteousness at that day, when the secret stores of your thoughts and the hidden things of the heart shall be made manifest: 1 Cor. iv. 5, 'Until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness; and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' Light words will weigh heavy in God's balance. The comfort of justification is never tried till the last judgment.

5. Consider the danger of resting upon anything in ourselves. Alas! when you go to mix the covenants, you quite undo your hopes in Christ; it is plain you hold by the former covenant. If you do but set up anything of self, it makes the promise of Christ of none effect. Here you are put to your choice by what covenant you will be judged; either the covenant of works, in which there is judgment without mercy, or by the law of liberty. If you set up yourself, you cast off the new covenant. Carnal confidence rendereth you obnoxious to the whole law: Gal. iii. 18. 'For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise.' If you hold by the former covenant, you are quite undone; you shall not have a drop of grace: Rom. xi. 6, 'If it be of works, it is no more grace.' You are bound to fulfil the whole law; if in any case you set up self, 'Christ shall profit you nothing,' Gal. v. 2. God will deal with you, either altogether by works, or altogether by Christ; these things cannot be mixed. When you seek to piece up the righteousness of Christ by any graces or duties of yours, by resting in yourselves, you destroy the whole. It must not be a patched righteousness; the piece of new cloth maketh the rent the worse.

END OF VOLUME XIII.

# SERMONS UPON HEBREWS XI.

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## SERMON XVIII.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.*—HEB. xi. 4.

*Secondly,* The second general means is to apply yourselves to the righteousness of Christ. There are many steps and progresses of the soul in this work—desire it, seek it, wait for it, take Christ upon any special offer, then upon the act of faith consider your privileges and make your claim; and that your claim may be warranted, there must be a care of holiness.

1. Desire it earnestly. Grace is wrought by knowledge, but it is first known by desire and spiritual esteem. Appetite follows life; so when God begins to infuse life in the soul, it is first discerned by desire: Mat. v. 5, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' How passionately doth Paul speak, Phil. iii. 9, 'That I might be found in him, not having mine own righteousness.' All things else he accounted dung, dog's-meat, loss rather than gain.

2. You must seek it. Lazy wishes are only the fruits of conviction. Men could wish they were interested in so great comfort. But now serious desires will put you upon endeavours: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof.' The great design and work of christians should be to get a part in Christ, in God's kingdom, and God's righteousness, as the way to it; seek it first, above all things, and above all pursuits. Men make it not their work, but their by-work, and regard it now and then in some pang of conscience. Oh, then for a garment to cover them, then for a righteousness to shelter them from wrath! but this should be the first thing; it is a worthy pursuit, and it will make amends for all the pains you are at in seeking it.

3. Wait for it. Grace is not at the creature's beck. Before ever God will show mercy, he will first declare his sovereignty: Isa. xxvi. 8, 'In the way of thy judgments have we waited for thee.' Though they meet with nothing but rough answers—though God seems to hide himself, yet in the midst of his judicial dispensations you should continue waiting. Nothing declares the creature's subjection to God so much as tarrying of his leisure; alas! otherwise it is a sign we ascribe

to ourselves, when we prescribe to God, when we would have him come in at our time and pleasure. Remember the righteousness of Christ is a great blessing, and God doth not owe it you ; God may give it to whom he will, and when he will. Impatience always shows there is some confidence in your own righteousness. You should say as the church doth : Lam. i. 16, ' My comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me ; ' ' but I have rebelled against him,' ver. 18. God suspends comfort, but it is not my due ; but I have rather merited the contrary. Thoughts of merit beget murmuring. When the soul is possessed of its own guilt, it will tarry the Lord's leisure. Consider, God hath waited long ere you came to this, to look up to him for the righteousness of Christ ; therefore you have good cause to wait upon him for his good pleasure.

4. When there is any special offer in the word, do not delay, but take Christ ; do not draw back the hand of faith. I know a guilty creature will be full of suspicions ; and the truth is, the grace of the gospel is so rich that we know not how to credit it. But when there is a fair offer, do not let suspicion take in the hand of faith, but receive Christ when he is tendered in the promises of the word. Sometimes God doth, as it were, call you by name : John x. 3, ' He calleth his own sheep by name ; ' he doth, as it were, point to you when he speaks to men in your case and condition. Oh ! consider, these are fair seasons of grace, and you must not let them slip : 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2, ' We beseech you that you receive not the grace of God in vain ; ' ' for I have heard thee in an acceptable time. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' There are certain beautiful seasons wherein God will be found, when you see yourselves to be as it were pointed at. Look, as wicked men neglect seasons of conviction, so do believers many times dispute away seasons of grace, those that are in the way of faith. Poor lost creatures are apt to be suspicious ; but when the offer of grace is full and express to your case, do not neglect it ; as Benhadad's servants watched for the word ' brother,' so should you be asking for these gospel seasons. Jesus Christ will sometimes give a glimpse of his countenance, and look through the lattice.

5. Upon the act of faith consider your privileges, and humbly make your claim. Whenever you have taken Christ upon those seasonable offers, consider what a great privilege you enjoy : John v. 24, ' He that believeth in me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' Christians are wanting in their improving their spiritual interest ; they are willing to prize Christ, but do not consider what they have in him. If you cannot feel sensible consolation, yet act spiritual reason and discourse. Consider, such an act gives interest in Christ ; why then should I not have Christ, and in Christ righteousness ? Isa. xlv. 24 : ' The church is brought in, speaking, ' Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, even to him shall men come.' This is glorying, or rejoicing in hope, Heb. iii. 6 ; that is, a reckoning upon our privilege, what we shall have and enjoy in Christ. Whosoever takes Christ, he puts him on ; then he is interested and invested with all that is Christ's : Gal. iii. 27, ' As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' By the internal baptism we have an interest not only in his person, but in his righteousness, life, spirit, dignities, and merits ;

it is good to amplify our thoughts according to the extent of our privileges.

6. That your claim may be warranted the more, there must be a care of holiness. Works are not the condition of justification, yet they are the evidence of it. Faith justifies, and works justify: James ii. 24, 'Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.' By the righteousness of faith we are acquitted from sin, and by the righteousness of works we are acquitted from guile and hypocrisy; therefore this is the evidence that will make all sure: 1 John iii. 21, 22, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God. And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments,' &c. This will increase the confidence of faith, when there is a train of graces. Though works have nothing to do in the court of heaven in matter of justification, yet they have a voice and testimony in the court of conscience. Seldom do we receive any solemn assurance but upon the evidence of sanctification. Faith gives us a title to Christ's righteousness, but works give an evidence of it. Our comfort indeed is founded upon Christ's righteousness and his satisfaction, but it is found in Christ's way; therefore consider how the promises are diversified: Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me,' saith Christ, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'; but then, ver. 29, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest for your souls.' The act of faith gives us an interest; but that we may have the comfort of it, we must abide under his discipline. This is God's course; first he pours in the oil of grace, then the oil of gladness, when our sanctification is evidenced unto us. The apostle gathereth it out of the type of Melchisedec: Heb. vii. 2, 'First being, by interpretation, king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem; that is, king of peace.' First he sanctifieth and disposeth the heart to righteousness, then gives peace of conscience and comfort; that is the order, he reconcileth us to God by his own righteousness, and then gives peace in our souls by working our hearts to a holy disposition.

Use 2. To condemn them that seek righteousness in themselves. Nature is prone to this, and none more apt than those that have least reason. Former duties do not discover weakness, and so are more apt to puff up. Give me leave a little to speak of this; partly because it is so natural to us, and partly because many decry resting in duties so far, that they decry the very performance of them, and instead of Papists turn Familists. This resting in our own righteousness is sometimes more gross and open, when men make it their plea; sometimes more secret and imperceptible; we may discover it by observing the disposition of the soul with reference to sins, mercies, duties, and comforts.

1. By observing the frame of the heart with reference to sin. Usually when men rest in duties, they make the performance of them to be the ground of an indulgence to sin, and take the more liberty to sin, out of a hope to make amends by their duties.

[1.] This indulgence is sometimes antedated before the performance, as when men allow themselves in present carnal practices by the purpose of an after-repentance. It is as if men should distemper the body by excess, and then think to mend all by giving themselves a vomit; or contract a sickness by drunkenness, hoping to cure all by physic.

*Tunc demum a peccatis desistam, cum baptizatus ero.* Conviction would not let men sin so freely if they did not make fair promises of reformation: this is making a Christ of your repentance and prayers. So some men moil in the world, and dream of a devout retirement hereafter; thus rich they will be, and then they will live privately, and mind religion.

[2.] Sometimes the indulgence is post-dated, which is most grossly done by them that perform duties with an aim either to excuse or to promote sin: Prov. xxi. 27, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?' as Balaam's altars were built, and sacrifices made with this intent, that he might curse Israel, Num. xxiii.; or more closely, by others who would redeem their negligence in one duty by the frequent performance of another, and please God by what doth not displease themselves; as the Jews hoped to repair their want of mercy by the multitude of their sacrifices. The Pharisees tithed mint and cummin to excuse themselves from the weighty things of the law, Mat. xxiii. 23. Conscience, like the stomach, will be craving; and a man must do something to keep it quiet, as by a moral course, or some formal acts of piety. By others it is done yet more closely, that grow vain and wanton after some solemn duty: Ezek. xxxiii. 13, 'If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity,' &c. Many times we find that the heart groweth loose, licentious, vain, wanton, and proud after solemn duties, which argueth a secret confidence in what we have done; thus Josiah's breach with God was 'after his preparing the temple,' 2 Chron. xxxv. 20.

2. With respect to mercies; and so observe the frame of your hearts in the want of mercies, or in the enjoyment of them.

[1.] In the want of mercies. Men expect blessings out of a conceit of some worth that is in themselves, and ascribe too much to their own duties. We all disclaim it; but it may be known by this, if we murmur when God doth not come in at our times and seasons. Those that prescribe to God do ascribe to themselves: Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?' Luke xviii. 11, 12, 'I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice in a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' Because we do not break out into such bold challenges, we think ourselves innocent; but murmuring argueth some thought of desert. Where nothing is due, we cannot complain if nothing be given. The plea of works may be plainly read in our discontents; if God be not a debtor, why do we then complain?

[2.] In the enjoyment of mercies, men secretly ascribe to themselves, as if God did see more in them than others: Deut. ix. 4, 'Speak not in thy heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land.' It rather manifests itself in thoughts than words. Now because these thoughts are not always impressed on conscience, men evade it; but here you will discern it again by some disdain at providence. Spiritual pride, or conceit of our own worth, entertaineth crosses with anger, and blessings with disdain; discontent or disdain will discover it to you: Mal. i. 2, 'I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?' By a gracious, humble

heart all mercies are received with admiration. Where sin is great nothing can be little, nothing is theirs but sin; therefore they wonder that anything should be theirs but punishment: Luke. i. 43, 'And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' so 2 Sam. vii. 18, 'Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' Not, Wherefore have we fasted? but whence is it? and what am I that God should do thus and thus for me? Do but compare Mat. vii. 22, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?'—they plead their gifts and employments in the church—with Mat. xxv. 38, 39, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?' The one wonder God should reject them, who had done him so much service; the other wonder Christ should take notice of such worthless services, though none perform duties with more care, none overlook them with more self-denial.

3. With respect to duties. Here also are two notes.

[1.] When men are not actually sensible of their own weakness, unprofitableness, and defects in duties. Men set a high value on their actions, and therefore reckon of the merit of them. The elder brother pleaded: Luke xv. 29, 'Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither at any time transgressed I thy commandment.' We rest upon that of which we are conceited. Formal men have least cause, and yet are most apt, to rest in duties, because they go on in a dead course, without feeling their defects, or being sensible of their needing the supplies of the Spirit; as painted fire needeth no fuel. But the children of God perform them with more feeling of their own weakness and wretchedness; and so their hearts are kept humble and thankful, both which check merit. Thankful: 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 'Of thine own have we given thee.' Humble, for there may be a show of thankfulness, and yet the heart may be conceited: Luke xviii. 11, 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men are;' but 'all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,' Isa. lxiv. 6. Now we must have actual distinct thoughts of this, or else it is impossible that such a proud creature as man should go out of himself. Christ requireth it in every duty: Luke xvii. 10, 'When ye shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants;' therefore you do not discern this secret vein of guilt by gross thoughts of merit, but by high thoughts of duty. When a man is not always sensible of the imperfections of his services, he is apt to build upon them. How do you come off from duty? You have more cause to be humble than to be lifted up; for what is God's be thankful, for what is your own be humbled, and pray, God be merciful to me!

[2.] When men are more careful of the work wrought than of the interest of the person; when we would have the person accepted for the work's sake rather than for Christ's sake, they lay the foundation of their comfort within themselves. Now this is not only by common people, who hope to be accepted for their prayers and their good meanings, but in those that are careless to get an interest in Christ: James

v. 16, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Most men look to the qualification of the duty, not of the person; but the person must be righteous, as well as the prayer fervent. It is not duty that worketh out your atonement with God; our acceptance with God doth not depend upon the worth and merit of works. Do not think duties will serve the turn: 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' The word *ἀδόκιμοι*, reprobate, is there taken in a mollified sense for those that are not in Christ; and therefore, before duties, your great care should be not only to raise the heart, but to examine the state.

4. With respect to peace and comfort, take these notes.

[1.] If you were never driven to change your copy and tenure. All Adam's posterity is under a covenant of works, and seek to be saved by doing. Those that never saw they rested in works, and were never driven to settle their comfort upon gospel terms, are in a dangerous case. The voice of nature is, What shall we do? and till we are frightened out of ourselves we never look farther. When the Israelites heard the thunderings, they were affrighted. Nature is put to flight: Heb. vi. 18, 'Who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us;' Phil. iii. 9, 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;' Gal. ii. 19, 'For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God.' A man goes not to chancery till he is cast at common law.

[2.] When conscience is awakened, if men fetch their comfort from their duties. The law leaveth men wounded and raw, and they lick themselves whole again by some offers of obedience. Carnal men are careful of worship only upon some gripes; they use their duties as men do strong waters in a pang; duties should be a thank-offering, and they make them a sin-offering—a sleeping sop to allay conscience. As when men have offended their superiors, for a while they become more pliant and obsequious. It is good in gripes of conscience to observe whence you fetch your comfort, and how it groweth upon you; the trial is most sensible: Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.' Though every child of God hath not peace of conscience, yet it would much undeceive our hearts if we did observe how we come to be satisfied with our estate, and from whence that peace which we have doth arise.

[3.] Upon what terms do you constantly maintain your life and peace with God; upon the foundation of works, or through the merits of Christ? I confess works are a good encouragement, by way of evidence and assurance; but still the foundation must be Christ: 1 Cor. iii. 11, 'For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' The believing soul will never be diverted and taken off from Christ, but will still cry, What would become of me were it not for free grace? Neh. ix. 31, 'Nevertheless, for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them and forsake them, for thou art a gracious and merciful God;' 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not thereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.' Christ must still lie as a bundle of myrrh with us: Cant. i.

13, 'A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.'

*Use 3.* Information; to direct us how to understand this great truth. For your better information, and because I will not perplex these discourses with disputes, I shall lay down several propositions; take them all together—

1. That to justify is to account or accept as righteous.

2. None are accounted or accepted as righteous but those that indeed are so.

3. Every righteousness will not serve the turn, but such as will satisfy God's justice.

4. God's justice will never be satisfied till the law be satisfied.

5. The law will never be satisfied but by active and passive obedience.

6. This satisfaction is only to be had in Christ.

7. There is no having this righteousness in Christ but by imputation.

8. There is no imputation but by union.

9. There is no union but by faith.

[1.] To justify is not to make righteous, but to account or accept as righteous. This is the use and force of the word in scripture: Rom. ii. 13, 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.' It cannot be taken for the infusion of righteousness, because the doers of the law are therefore righteous in themselves because they do the law; but the meaning is, are accounted just. It is opposed to condemnation and accusation, therefore it must be taken for accounting righteous; as Rom. viii. 33, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?' That which is opposed to accusation is justification; and that it is meant of an accepting in court is clear by Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified;' that is, in thy righteous and strict judgment none can be accepted as righteous.

[2.] None is accounted righteous before God but he that indeed is so; for otherwise the rule standeth good: Exodus xxxiv. 7, 'He will by no means clear the guilty.' It is part of God's name that he proclaimed before Moses: it must be such a righteousness as will endure God's sight; so that when God casts his eye upon it, he cannot choose but account you righteous, which cannot be by a fiction or an imaginary righteousness—'For the judgment of God is according to truth,' Rom. ii. 2, be it in mercy or in judgment. And it is a thing God hates in man: Prov. xvii. 15, 'To condemn the just, and justify the wicked, are both an abomination to the Lord.' Therefore there must be such a righteousness as, God looking upon it, he must needs account you righteous.

[3.] Every righteousness will not serve the turn, but such only as will satisfy God's justice, because by the work of redemption the Lord is to suffer no loss; the repute of his justice is still to be kept up, otherwise the notions of the deity would be violated. In the work of redemption he is not unrighteous; therefore the apostle is very zealous: Rom. iii. 4, 'Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged,' &c; God is necessarily just as well

as necessarily merciful. Now both attributes must shine with equal glory. If he did altogether spare, where were his justice? and if he did accept men upon ordinary terms, and did altogether save, where were his mercy? God's infinite wisdom hath determined the controversy, and the apostle gives us an account of it: Rom. iii. 24, 25, 'Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins;' and it is again repeated—'To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' God would not only glorify grace, but he would be just in justification; therefore, 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;' and again, chap. ii. 1, 'We have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.' God would not forgive sins, but so as that it might stand with his justice; for mercy and justice are to shine with an equal glory.

[4.] God's justice can never be satisfied till the law be satisfied. Why? because it is the outward rule of his justice, and the visible measure of his dealing with man; and therefore the satisfaction of his justice must be carried on according to the tenor and terms of the law; therefore was Christ made under the law. Now this was the great controversy how to save the authority, power, and worth of the law. Christ professeth he came to fulfil it: Mat. v. 17, 18, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil,' &c. And the apostle shows plainly the doctrine of justification doth not make void the law: Rom. iii. 31, 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law;' therefore legal and gospel righteousness differ, because the one is not inherent in us, the other is; and in the manner of receiving it.

[5.] The law can never be satisfied, as for fallen man, but by an active and passive obedience—that is, by suffering what is imposed, or by doing what is commanded by the law; for in the law there were two things, the precept and the sanction, the duty and the penalty. The law doth not only say, Do, and live; but, Sin, and die. To Adam it was proposed in the primitive form, Gen. ii. 17. Now the law must be fulfilled in the threatening and precept, that there may be a freedom from the curse, and a right to eternal life. And indeed Jesus Christ, by being made under the law, by sustaining the penalty and performing the obedience of it, hath done both: 1 Thes. i. 10, there is one part—'Even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come;' and Ephes. i. 6, there is the other part—'We are accepted in the beloved.' God freeth none from hell but those Christ suffered for; and accepts none to life but those Christ hath performed obedience for.

[6.] This satisfaction can be performed by none but Jesus Christ; for, alas! we could neither bear the penalty nor discharge the duty;—not bear the penalty, for we should have always been satisfying, always paying, but never could be said to have satisfied; and we could never discharge the duty of it, for the law is 'become weak through the flesh,' Rom. viii. 3; that is, as the case stands now with man fallen. Those works that need pardon themselves can never satisfy: Acts iv. 12,

‘Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.’

[7.] There is no having of this righteousness from Christ but by imputation. I know here some boggle and say, Imputation is nowhere found in scripture. I answer, We do not stand upon words and syllables; but this is most proper, and it may be well gathered, for Christ is said ‘to be made righteousness,’ 1 Cor. i. 30; righteousness is said ‘to be imputed without works,’ Rom. iv. 6: and ‘faith is imputed for righteousness,’ Rom. iv. 22. To clear the proposition, it must needs be by imputation—(1.) Because this righteousness must be *in justificato*, in the justified person. This righteousness, one way or other, must belong to the person justified, otherwise the Lord cannot look upon us as righteous. The man was cast out ‘that had not on him the wedding garment,’ Mat. xxii. 11–13. Now by infusion it cannot be, all inherent righteousness being imperfect; therefore it must be by imputation. (2.) Consider what imputation is. To impute is to reckon a thing to our score and account; and those things are said to be imputed to us which are accounted ours to all intents and purposes, as if they were our own. Now in this sense our sins were imputed to Christ, and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us. The apostle makes the parallel: 2 Cor. v. 21, ‘For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ Look, as Christ was so dealt with as if he had been a sinner, so we are as if we were righteous. Our iniquities were not infused into Christ, but imputed and laid upon him: Isa. liii. 6, ‘The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;’ so is his righteousness upon all them that believe. And the apostle useth another comparison; as Adam’s guilt is laid upon us, so is Christ’s righteousness;—‘As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,’ Rom. v. 19. In short, the apostle saith, 1 Cor. i. 30, that Christ is ‘made unto us of God righteousness;’ and the whole righteousness is imputed to satisfy the obligation of the law, and to repair Adam’s loss; for we were guilty of death, and we came short of glory: Gal. iv. 4–6. ‘When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,’ &c.

[8.] There is no imputation but by union. All interest is founded in union: Gal. iii. 27, ‘As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ;’ all his merits and satisfaction are theirs, as if performed in their own persons: 1 Cor. i. 30, ‘Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.’ We are interested in all, as we are in him; by being one with Christ we put him on.

[9.] There is no union but by faith; then God receives us into grace: Rom. x. 10, ‘With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.’ It is the ordination of God that this grace should unite us to Christ, and so give us a right to all that is in Christ; indeed it is the fittest grace to receive the fruits of union. I confess there is a moral union by love that gives comfort; but faith begins the mystical union, and so gives safety.

## SERMON XIX.

*By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts—HEB. xi. 4.*

Now I come to the second doctrine. *Δι' ἧς*, 'by which' may be referred to *θυσία* or *πίστις*; and I referred the righteousness to faith, and the testimony to the sacrifice. For the clearing of which you may remember, I observed that in this duty of sacrifice the two brethren did appeal to God, and put it to trial, whom the Lord would choose and design to be head of the blessed seed and race; and the Lord by fire from heaven, which was the then visible testimony of acceptance, determined the matter on Abel's side; besides, the apostle proveth that the solemn testimony of his righteousness was first given to him by God's witnessing of his gifts. Whence I observe—

*Doct. 2.* That upon the raised operations of faith with other graces in solemn duties, we usually receive the testimony of righteousness in Christ, or acceptance with God.

Abel's testimony was extraordinary, by fire from heaven; but still God is not wanting to witness concerning the services of his people: all is not left in the dark, and to the decision and revelation of the last day. Instead of those outward dispensations, we now receive an inward testimony of the Spirit, and upon the exercise of grace God giveth us this testimony. Now there are two special seasons of the exercise of grace on our part, and so of the manifestations of comfort on God's part; there is the season of afflictions and the season of duties; and in both God's people receive from him the solemn witness and seal of the Holy Ghost. In afflictions when we need comfort, and in duties when we seek comfort, we have the sweetest experiences of the testimony of the Spirit. Upon afflictions, you have it set down: Heb. xii. 11, 'Afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.' The sweet and last fruit and issue of it is peace of conscience; so Rom. v. 3-5, 'Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed;' upon what ground? 'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.' Affliction puts us upon the exercise of grace, and the exercise of grace occasioneth sweet experiences of God in our souls, by which hope is more and more kindled; and this is ratified by the confirmation of the Spirit.

But we are to speak of experiences in solemn duties, wherein God is wont to open himself to his people, and all jealousies and misunderstandings between him and his servants are cleared up; and there he breaks in upon them sensibly for the furtherance of their joy.

I shall prove this is God's wonted course—(1.) By the experiences of the saints; (2.) By the promises of God; (3.) By several arguments and reasons.

1. By the experiences of the saints. When the scriptures were written, God's ways were extraordinary, and therefore most of the instances are extraordinary; but however, we do not urge the manner, but the thing itself. The leading instance shall be that of Joshua the

high priest. When he was ministering before the Lord, it is said, Zech. iii. 3, 4, 'Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel; and he answered, and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him;' and God gave this testimony to him, 'I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' I know that visional type doth mainly respect the restoration of the church of the Jews, the church of the Jews being represented in Joshua, who was the chief-officer of the church; however, there is something moral in it. In the time of his ministration his filthy garments were taken away, which is the usual emblem of sin in scripture, and change of raiment is put on him, which is an emblem of the righteousness of Christ applied and put on by faith, as it is explained by the Spirit of God himself. So Cornelius, Acts x. 3, it is said an angel came about the ninth hour to assure him God had taken notice of his graces and duties: ver. 4, 'Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.' Note the circumstance of 'the ninth hour,' which was one of the hours of prayer: Acts iii. 1, 'Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour,' which this proselyte observes; and therefore about the ninth hour, in the middle of his prayers and devotions, an angel comes to him and assures him what acceptance he had found. So the prophet Daniel: chap. ix. 20, 21, 'And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin,' &c.; 'yea, whilst I was speaking in prayer, the angel Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening-oblation.' The Spirit of God placeth a great deal of emphasis upon this circumstance. At the very instant of prayer, when he was earnestly pleading with God, God answers his request, and an angel is despatched to come and certify to him his acceptance; God overtakes his duty by a speedy return of mercy. That way of assurance is extraordinary; but God's wonted course is many times to give in a solemn assurance of his favour in the very time of our prayers; so Acts iv. 31, 'When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' Mark, in the very time and act of their prayer there is a miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon them; the instances are singular and extraordinary, yet there is some analogy and proportion between them and ordinary cases. Though God's dispensations be now more spiritual, yet they are very sensible still; though we cannot expect voices, raptures, shakings, oracles, and angels, yet we may expect to hear the trumpet of the assemblies, which the psalmist expresses by the 'joyful sound,' Ps. lxxxix. 15; that is, the testimony of the Holy Ghost and spiritual experiences, as will appear more fully by the next head.

2. By the promises of God. God hath promised to meet his people with sensible comforts, to talk and confer with them in their duties; the very aim of all duties is more immediate communion with God. See God's promises to his old church, while grace was more sparingly dispensed: Exod. xxix. 42, 'At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, there will I meet with you, and speak there unto you.' It is meant of God's gracious and social presence with his people in duties

of worship ; there he will meet, and speak, and confer with them for their comfort and satisfaction : Isa. lviii. 9, 'Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I.' Mark, when complaints are heightened into cries, then God's answer will be more sensible ; when we come in an affectionate manner, not only call, but cry. Sometimes God plainly discovereth himself in the very time of the duty ; he meets with them in such and such ordinances, as if he should say, Poor soul, what would you have ? here am I to satisfy thee. He communeth, talketh with them, and tells them their sins are pardoned, and they are accepted in Christ : Ps. xxxvi. 7-9, 'Thou shalt abundantly satisfy them with the fatness of thine house, and make them to drink of the rivers of thy pleasures ;' there comforts are dispensed, there flow the rivers of spiritual pleasure and chaste delights of the gospel.

*Obj.* But you will say, This is not always so ; there are many wait upon God long, and feel no comfort. I answer, It is true. Such dispensations are free, they are not at the creature's beck : God will be master of his own mercies ; we have deserved nothing, and we cannot murmur if we receive nothing ; yet if ever they find spiritual consolation, it will be in God's house. This is the established means ; if ever you taste the fatness and sweetness of grace, it will be by waiting upon him there. Earnest and affectionate duties are seldom without comfort and profit. And again I answer, that delight, which is a duty, makes way for delight which is a dispensation : Cant. ii. 3, 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.' When you delight in God, then the Lord will give in sensible consolation. Delights are mutual and sensible ; God delights in us, and we in God. When we delight in him, in the word, in prayer, or in the supper, by way of return God sends us secret consolation : Isa. lxiv. 5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.' Those that delight in God's company, that do good with a willing heart, are bountifully entertained, sweetly refreshed, and sent away with a feast of loves. In our affectionate and spiritual duties, Christ will come and say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into thy master's joy !' The present returns and recompenses, when we come before the throne of grace, carry some proportion with the entertainment we shall find with God hereafter when we come to be seated upon the throne of glory. I say, in earnest prayer, though we can prescribe nothing, but this is his wonted course, his answer is sensible in his ordinances. Saith Luther, *Utinam eodem ardore*, &c.—Would to God that I could always pray with the like fervency and earnestness ! Why ? for I sensibly receive this answer, Thy desires are granted, *Fiat quod velis*—Be it unto thee as thou wilt. When we rejoice to converse with God in the ways of righteousness, then his dispensations of grace are full of sweetness.

3. The reasons why God observeth this course ; to exhibit and give out more sensible manifestations of his grace in the time of ordinances, when our graces are raised and drawn out to the height. The question consisteth of two parts.

[1.] Why grace or sanctification is necessary to the receiving of the testimony of the Spirit ?

[2.] Why upon the raised operations of grace God is wont to give it into his people?

First, Why grace is necessary by way of evidence, though not by way of merit and cause?

*Ans.* 1. Because this is the most sensible effect of God's spiritual bounty, for it is a work of God within us, and so more apt to give us an evidence. Election, that is in heaven, a secret which lies hid in the bosom of the Father; redemption, that is without us, upon the cross; justification is God's judiciary act, a sentence of the judge without us; but sanctification is a work upon our heart, therefore it is called the 'earnest of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. i. 22, and 'the first-fruits of the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 23. Grace is an earnest to show how sure, and the first-fruits to show how good heaven is; by grace God gives us a taste to show how sweet, and a pledge to show how sure all the privileges of christianity are made over to our souls.

2. Because it is the best way to prevent delusion; immediate revelation would be more uncertain and liable to suspicion, and we may lie down in sorrow, notwithstanding flashes of comfort. There is no way to discern the operation of the Spirit from counterfeit ravishments, but by sanctification and grace. There is a great deal of deceit in flashy joys, but this is a solid witness and evidence: 1 John iii. 19. 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him;' that is, without fear of presumption and hypocrisy, we may come and plead our interest before God. Acts of comfort are sweet and delightful when felt, but yet are but transient acts; they soon pass away, they come and go, they are acts of God's royalty and magnificence, and you know every day is not a feast-day, God doth not always feast us with sensible consolation; but grace is a solid and abiding evidence: 1 John ii. 27, 'The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you;' and 1 John iii. 8, 'His seed remaineth in him.' Lively acts of joy and comfort are but like those motions of the Spirit upon Samson; it is said the Spirit came upon him 'at times,' Judges xiii. 25, heightening of his strength and courage; so these come upon us but at times. Therefore standing evidences which are drawn from grace are far more certain than sensible consolation.

3. Because the Spirit's witness is seldom single, but given in conjunction with water and blood: 1 John v. 8, 'There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;' not only the blood of Christ, which witnesseth their redemption, but the water of sanctification, which witnesseth their interest in that redemption; and then the Spirit comes and seals it in the heart of a believer. The Spirit's testimony is made to be subsequent, and follows the testimony of our renewed conscience, Rom. viii. 16; for the Spirit's witness is nothing but his owning of grace in the heart, which is his own impress and seal, and assuring the soul. This is a stamp and fruit of mine; it is the ratifying of his own work to believers.

4. Because grace giveth most clearness, calmness, and serenity of mind, so that we are most able to judge of those experiences. Wherever there is purity, there is a witness, for it brings in light and comfort into the soul. Lusts are the clouds of the mind, which darken the judgment and distress the conscience; and therefore the apostle saith,

2 Peter i. 9, that when men neglect to grow in grace, 'they are blind, and cannot see afar off;' they have no spiritual discerning, and are not able to judge of spiritual matters. An impure soul is always in the dark, full of doubts and fears; certainly the more grace, the more confidence, for there is more clearness of discerning. Guilt begets a servile fear and awe. Shame and fear entered into the world with sin; it weakens confidence. Compare Gen. ii. 25, with Gen. iii. 10; in the former place it is said, 'The man and the woman were both naked, and were not ashamed;' why? because they were in a state of innocence; but in the other place, 'I was afraid, because I was naked.' As soon as sin came into the world there was fear upon the conscience of the guilty creature.

5. Because of the inseparable connection, that is, by the ordination and appointment of God, between grace and comfort: Eph. i. 13, 'In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.' In the original it is, τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ —Ye were sealed by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of promise. There are three articles; he seals as the Spirit of God, and as the Holy Spirit; he will not seal to a blank, but where there is holiness and grace wrought in the heart. The apostle proves this is the method of God out of the names of Melchisedec: Heb. vii. 2, 'First being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem; that is, king of peace.' First he bestows grace, and then gladness; first he disposeth the heart to righteousness, then works peace in the soul: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law;' they maintain and keep their comfort without interruption. Acts ix. 31. there is such another connection—'The churches walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost:'—the more grace, the greater comfort and satisfaction. This is the way which God hath appointed.

Secondly, Why these graces must be exercised in holy duties.

1. Because thereby God would endear duty to the creature, by making it the means of comfort. This is the best course to maintain the traffic and commerce that is between God and the creature. Look, as there is commerce between two distant places by trading, so between us and heaven, by exchange of duties and comforts; our prayers come up before him, God's blessings come down to us. Who can expect gold from the Indies, but those that trade there in ships? Who can expect these rich dispensations of God, but those that trade with him in holy service? It is true, every time we bring our wares to God we do not make such a good market, because God rather gives than sells, and he gives at pleasure, though usually there is some defect in us, but this is God's established course. Or look, as the earth and the air maintain a commerce one with another: the sea and land send up vapours and exhalations into the air, and the air sends down sweet showers and sweet dews for the refreshing of the earth; unless the earth sendeth up vapours, the air sendeth down nothing; and so, unless we come and converse with God in holy duties, there are no dews and refreshments that come down from above for the watering of a parched heart; and without the religious ascent of prayers and graces we have no influences from heaven. This is God's established order.

2. Because when our graces are exercised, then there is most rational likelihood that we shall receive this testimony from God. Consider it with respect to either witness that must concur to the settling your peace : for look, as under the law everything was to be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses, so it is in the great matters of our peace likewise. There is the Spirit and the renewed conscience, by which our peace is established ; and if we consider either, we shall find we are most likely to receive this testimony when grace is exercised. Look upon it—

[1.] On the Spirit's part. Those raised operations of grace are the special fruits of the Holy Ghost ; he not only works grace at first, but he gives actual help for the exercising of it ; and therefore when he hath moved and stirred us most, he is most like to seal. It is the constant method of the Spirit first to work grace, and then to seal it ; the more conspicuous the work, the more of this sealing may we expect.

[2.] It is more rational upon our part ; for the more our graces are exercised, the more they are in view of conscience. Grace exercised and drawn out into action is more apparent and sensible to the soul ; acts are more liable to feeling than habits. Fire in a flint is neither seen nor felt, but when knocked against a steel, then you may discern it ; so when we draw out that which lies hid in the soul, then conscience can take the more notice of it. Roots under ground in winter are not observed till they shoot forth in the spring ; the stream is seen when the fountain is hid ; the apples, leaves, blossoms, and buds are visible when the life and the sap is not seen ; so acts are taken notice of by conscience when useless habits lie out of sight ; or if they be drawn out by imperfect operations, when our motions are faint and weak, they are like the waters of Siloah that run slowly—a man can hardly discern whether it be living water or a standing pool. No wonder our comfort is so weak, when sanctification runs so slow, and is scarce to be discerned. By experience we find that raised operations bring comfort and peace with them ; we feel a great calmness and serenity in our consciences after some solemn duty, because conscience can sweetly reflect upon the exercises of grace, and quiet itself with the discharge of its own duty ; then there is a peace and contentment within the soul.

3. I prove it by the rule of proportion. Look, as great sins destroy our comfort, so also the raised exercise of graces in duty increase our comfort. Scandalous sins, like a blot upon our evidences, do obscure them, waste conscience, and eclipse our comfort ; and when we return to folly, we smart for it : Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'The Lord will speak peace to his people ; but let them not return to folly,' implying they hazard all their comfort when they give way to great corruptions : so on the contrary side, when we exercise our graces, they administer comfort. All that can be objected against this is, that there is no merit in duties as there is in sins ; but though duty do not merit comfort, yet it is the measure of it, for hereby the heart is prepared for peace, and usually according to the preparation of the heart ; so God comes in with the supplies of comfort : Ps. x. 17, 'Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.' When the heart is mightily drawn out in duty, answerable

are the returns of God's grace. Vessels thus prepared are of a larger size, and can receive more of the bounty of God: Jer. xxix. 13, 'Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' God's answers of grace are according to the excitations of grace.

4. Because it is the best way to bring us to improve comfort. That which cometh from God and in God's way leadeth us again to God. There is nothing which raiseth the soul to such a degree of reverence and to such a wonder of grace as the experiences of duty do; then the heart is full of joy and the mouth full of praise, and God hath all the honour: these are the lasting experiences that both endear God and endear the ways of God to us. (1.) They endear God: Ps. cxvi. 1, 2, 'I will love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication; because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' (2.) They endear the ways of God to us. Comforts received in the way of duty come double to us: Ps. cxix. 93, 'I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me;' I will never forget such a sermon and such an ordinance wherein I have received such quickenings and such sweet enlargements from the Lord. The myrrh which Christ had left upon the handle of the lock made the spouse more earnest after Christ. What made David pant after God? the sweet experiences of duty: Ps. lxiii. 2, 'To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' Look, as when the springs are low, a little water cast into a pump brings up a great deal more; so when God hath cast a few experiences into the soul, it breeds more affection, more love, and more joy. Now it is no wonder vain spirits question duties when God never ministered comfort to them that way; they are full of satanical illusions and fanatic joys and conceits of comfort in the neglect of ordinances, but they never received the solid comfort of ordinances.

*Use 1.* It serves to inform us what little reason they have to complain of the want of comfort that are not diligent in the exercise of grace. Usually we lie upon the bed of ease, and expect God should drop comfort into us out of the clouds: 2 Peter i. 5, compared with ver. 10; 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,' &c; then ver. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' We must be much in the exercise of grace before ever the Lord gives us comfort. Whatever he may do for some out of the prerogative of free grace we cannot tell; yet usually after much waiting and diligence, we receive this testimony from God. We find the Israelites in the wilderness were fed with manna from heaven, but the standing rule is—'In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread,' Gen. iii. 19; 'And he that will not work, let him not eat,' 2 Thes. iii. 10. Comfort is the recompense of industry and the encouragement of faith and obedience. If we should gain assurance by neglecting the means, we should soon lose it again; the Spirit would not speak so clearly as before. Comfort is a free dispensation, but always given in the use of means. The clock runs upon its own wheels; however, there must be weights hung on, and we must draw them up at the appointed times. So God's dispensations run upon their own wheels; they are free, but they have their proper weights; and unless we pull up the weights by faith and prayer, the clock of mercy will stand still; certainly it will speak no comfort

nor sound peace to our souls. A fond expectation it is to look for comfort, and yet to live in sin, or else content ourselves with the low and faint operations of grace. Alas! they that look for a full joy and yet walk in darkness, John will tell them plainly they lie, 1 John i. 6; and so men, distracted with the din and hurry of worldly cares and businesses, choke conscience, and so can never hear the voice of the Spirit. The children of God are to blame also; their sanctification is low; and scarce to be discerned, therefore no wonder their comfort is but low. Grace, if any way exercised, is seldom without a witness. Never expect comfort either in the neglect or decay of holiness; there will always be a doubting of the truth and a jarring between your consciences and desires.

*Use 2.* To press you to three things—to be much in duties, to draw out your graces to a high degree, and to observe your experiences.

1. To be much in duty. There are sweet comforts to be dispensed, there is marrow and fatness, and all you can desire; comforts that differ only from the joys of heaven in the degree and in the manner of fruition; rivers of pleasure that flow from God's house; therefore be frequent in holy duties. Solomon saith, Prov. xxvii. 18, 'He that keeps the fig-tree [shall eat the fruit thereof.]' Certainly God is not a hard master; if you keep close to Christ in duty, you shall taste of the fruit thereof; but alas! otherwise, if you neglect duties of religion, where will you have comfort? He that is a stranger to God is and must necessarily be a stranger to the joys of the Spirit: Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.' Usually we have peace and satisfaction after long acquaintance and familiarity with God, but those that are seldom or cold and customary in duties can never expect any solid joy.

2. To draw out your graces to some raised and high degree—'Then thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I,' Isa lviii. 9. It will be sweet to hear Christ say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' Look into the sphere of nature or sphere of grace, all excellent things are obtained with difficulty, and they will cost us much labour and sweat; so will all ravishing sweet comforts cost us much pains in the duties of religion: Acts xxvi. 7, it is said, 'The twelve tribes served God instantly day and night.' In the original it is *ἐν ἐκτενείᾳ*, with the utmost of their strength, with their extended abilities. You should seek God, and raise your graces to a vigorous degree and height; then the Lord will come in: Jer. xxix. 13, 'You shall seek me and find me, when you shall search for me with all your hearts.' Alas! many vainly accuse mercy when they themselves are idle, and do not seek God with all their hearts.

3. To observe experiences. It is good to listen to the softer whispers and suggestions of the Holy Ghost. Still be looking for God's answer and God's return; as the psalmist saith, Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people.' Ah! hearken and wait still, when God will drop out a word of peace and comfort, that you may be able to know the purposes of his grace. If the oracle be silent, beg the more: Ps. lxxxvi. 17, 'Show me a token for good.' So go to God for some comfortable experiences of his grace, especially after great sins, deep distress, and strong desire:

Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones that thou hast broken may rejoice;' his conscience was troubled, and he begs peace in his conscience.

*Use 3.* To put us on the trial, how shall we discern the testimony God giveth us in duties? I answer, Two ways: by impressions and by expressions, for God writeth and speaketh.

1. By impressions, which are left to be managed by our reason and discourse. By impressions I mean two things—

[1.] Those gracious experiences we have of quickening enlargement and actual excitation in the duty; these are tokens for good: Ps. x. 17, 'Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble, thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.' Fire from heaven was the visible testimony of old; that which answers it now is fire in the affections; there is a communion with God in grace, though not in comfort; the motions of your hearts towards God are discovered by the enlargement of your desires; unutterable groans are a fruit of the Spirit's presence as well as unutterable joys; he is not only called 'the Comforter,' John xiv. 26, but 'the spirit of grace and supplication,' Zech. xii. 10.

[2.] The frame of the spirit after duty. Peace, as well as joy, is a fruit of the Holy Ghost: Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' God giveth you a rest from the accusations from conscience, though not sensible consolations; as when a man cometh from a prince cheerful because of his hopes, though he hath not received an actual answer to his request. Suavities and joys are mere dispensations: 2 Cor. iii. 17, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' Many of his children God keepeth in the lower way, and usually, though they have less of comfort, they have more of grace; there is an impression of confidence and support is given, though not ravishment. By conversing with God christians learn to rejoice in their hopes, though they have not enjoyment: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' It is a great matter to have impressions of confidence and encouragement in waiting.

2. By expressions; when God doth, as it were, speak to us, and we are comfortably persuaded by the Spirit of God that we are accepted with him. Heretofore God spake to the ear audibly and by oracle: Gen. xv. 1, 'The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram,' &c; but now he speaks by his Spirit, not by voices and oracles; such things are the dotages of distempered persons. A voice there is: Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness,' &c.; David prayeth for it: Ps. xxxv. 3, 'Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation;' but this voice is inward and secret, not to our ears, but to our hearts: 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself;' Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' God speaks to us by our own thoughts, which may be discerned to be the voice of the Spirit by the certainty and sweetness of it. The Spirit's voice can hardly be discerned from the voice of renewed conscience, because it insinuateth itself with our discourse and reason: Rom. ix. 1, 'I speak the truth

in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' It can only be distinguished by its certainty and overpowering light: Lam. iii. 24, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul;' and the Spirit assureth us it is true. Now the Spirit's witness is sometimes more sensible, and accompanied with sweetness; but at all times certain, and accompanied with peace. The Spirit's witness concerning us must be understood with analogy to his witness concerning the word; sometimes it is more high and sensible; we cry, as the centurion, Mat. xxvii. 54, 'Truly this was the Son of God;' it is he, and it can be no other. At other times there is a more temperate confidence; so here conscience witnesseth we can be no other but the sons of God, and then it leaveth a marvellous sweetness upon the soul, and a reverence of grace. At other times confidence is more deliberate and temperate; and though there be not such a lively sweetness and strong consolation, that is, the effect of solemn duties, raised meditation, fervent prayer, and the like, yet there is serenity and calmness of mind, which is the same which I called peace of conscience before, but only that it is not built upon future hopes, but a present interest.

*Use 4.* To direct us how we should behave ourselves with reference to this matter.

1. If God giveth sustentation and support, we must be contented, though we feel no sweetness and sensible consolation. For—

[1.] God is not a debtor, and may do with his own what he pleaseth in dispensations of comfort, as well as dispensations of grace: Phil. ii. 13, 'For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' And—

[2.] We may want it without sin; it is a preferment, and we must tarry till the master of the feast do bid us sit higher. We sin if they be despised: Job xv. 11, 'Are the consolations of God small with thee?' not if they be enjoyed; it is not the want of comfort, but the contempt of it that is culpable. Such things as are mere dispensations and proposed as rewards are different from duties. To want grace, though it be God's gift, is a sin, because the creature is under an obligation; but not to want comfort, because that is merely given, not required.

2. When God speaketh comfort, you must hear; you grieve the Spirit by resisting his witness, as well as his work. It is the duty of the creature to listen: Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints;' it is irreverence and contempt when God speaketh, and we will not hear. A friend would take himself to be affronted at such a carriage; if we are to wait, certainly we are to hearken. Now because persons of much fancy and great affection are wont to be full of scruples, and to underrate their own spiritual estate, and to suspect all that maketh for their comfort, let me tell you when comfort ought not to be suspected.

[1.] If it come in God's way, in duty, and upon the raised operations of grace, which note will distinguish it from delusions. Comforts and ravishments in the neglect of ordinances, as in fanatical persons, are always deceitful. God hath promised to talk with his people at the sanctuary door, and to meet them that remember him in his ways: Isa. lxiv. 5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those

that remember thee in thy ways. And so it is also distinguished from that confidence that is in ignorant persons, which is nothing but a blind presumption, which would vanish if it did come to the light: John iii. 20, 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' If in prayer or deep meditation God giveth in strong consolation, never suspect it.

[2.] If it lead us to God. Carnal security and presumption never urgeth to thankfulness, nor to a rejoicing in God; they do not taste the sweetness of grace, and therefore have no reverence, no wonder at it: 1 Peter ii. 9, 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' Fanatical joys put men upon pride, and a contempt of ordinances; but in solid joys the soul is filled with reverence as well as sweetness: Ps. cxvi. 12, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?'

## SERMON XX.

*By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.*—HEB. xi. 4.

*Doct. 3.* That only the works of persons who are righteous are accepted with God.

It is clear from the apostle's argument—*He obtained witness that he was righteous. Why? God testified of his gifts.* If God accept of his gift, he was a righteous person; for God accepts the services of none but those that are righteous. First God accepts the person, and then the performance; so Gen. iv. 4, 'God had respect to Abel, and to his offering;' first to Abel, and then to his offering. The person pleased him in Christ, and then his sacrifice. It is said, Judges xiii. 23, by Manoah's wife to him, 'If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering, nor a meat-offering at our hands.' She builds the acceptance of the person upon the acceptance of the service; for God accepts the gifts and offerings of none but those whose persons please him in Christ. So the Lord himself says, Mal. i. 10, 'I have no pleasure in you,' no delight in their persons; then it follows presently, 'I will not accept of an offering at your hand.' Before the person pleaseth God, the work cannot, for these reasons—

1. Because this is the method of the covenant of grace, not to accept the person for the work's sake, but to accept of the work for the person's sake. God doth not accept us for our prayers and good duties; that was the tenor of the first covenant, whereby our justification depended upon the worth and value of our works. It is not now, Do and live, but, Believe and live; it is not according to the work that we are accepted, but according to our interest in Christ, Eph. i. 6, 'He hath made us accepted in the beloved.' Alas! when a man is out of Christ, it is not

enough for him to do his best ; the law is not relaxed ; it requires duty without abatement, or else it enforceth punishment without any mitigation. Do and live, sin and die. It doth not accept of our prayers, our tears, and our best, for the least failing renders us guilty of transgressing the whole law ; so that, upon that supposition, 'if it were possible to keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all,' James ii. 10. That rule brooks no exception, until we change our copy ; till we be in Christ, one failing is enough to provoke God's displeasure. If a natural man could be supposed to keep the whole law and break but in one point, he is undone.

2. Because otherwise our duties receive defilement from our persons ; like precious liquor in a tainted and unsavoury vessel, or like that jewel put into a dead man's mouth, that loseth all its virtue : Prov. xxi. 27, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord ;' mark, 'how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind ?' When it is represented to God with all the advantages imaginable, yet it is abominable because it is a wicked man's prayer ; but usually there is some foul defect, that their very persons taint their services.

*Obj.* 1. Is not God then a respecter of persons ? will not this infringe the justice of God ? I might answer thus—If he should, he is under no rule ; the moral law is a rule to us, but not to God ; and he may do with his own creature as pleaseth him, and with his own grace as pleaseth him ; Mat. xx. 15, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own ?'

But I answer rather, Respecting of persons, when it is sinful, is this, when in any cause we give more or less than is meet to any other person, because of something that hath no relation to the cause, as in judgment. When we wink at moral excesses, and acquit a man from the sentence of the law for his greatness, or when we deny right to a poor man because of his poverty. Now such a respect of persons cannot be imagined in God ; for—

[1.] There is a cause why God should accept the services of justified persons, because he hath received a satisfaction in Jesus Christ. We are made comely in his comeliness ; Christ hath paid down a valuable consideration why all your persons and services should be accepted, though accompanied with weakness : Heb. x. 19, 'Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus ;' this acceptance is purchased for us by the blood of Jesus. It was God's bargain with Christ, that he would love, bless, and justify all his seed, if he would lay down his soul as an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10. There is the solemn bargain, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.'

[2.] There is great reason why God should refuse the services of wicked men, because besides the state of their persons, there are gross defects in their services ; if he sacrifice, it is 'with an evil mind,' Prov. xxi. 27. For the principle, it is not out of obedience but custom ; for the manner, it is not with the affection of a child but with bondage ; for the end, it is not for God's glory but to promote secular interest. So that, *a posteriori*, these circumstances clear the justice of God ; their most devotional aim is to please God, that they may the better quiet

themselves in their vanity and excess ; but the reason why they are not accepted is because they have no interest in Christ.

*Obj.* 2. Will it not open a gap to looseness ? If wicked men be not accepted, why do they pray and hear ? had they not as good do nothing ? I answer, No.

[1.] Because this would be a way to increase their sin, wholly to neglect them. There is no reason why God should lose his right because we have lost our power. Inky water will never wash the hands clean, and our sinfulness doth not take off our obligation ; God hath required it, and a wicked man is still under an obligation ; a drunken servant is not exempted from obedience though he be disabled for work. The command of God is absolute and peremptory, that all the sons of men should worship and fear him ; therefore to leave off duty would make the state more sinful. One sin cannot cure another ; there is more sin in the total defect than in the bare performance of duty.

[2.] Because duties are the means God hath appointed to break off their sin, and come out of this miserable condition. If none of their works can please God, yet it is good to stand in the road of mercy, and to lie at the pool, John v. 7 ; though God doth not accept us for these things, yet these are the means God hath appointed for us to use. Simon Magnus was bid ‘to pray, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him,’ Acts viii. 22 ; but the man that neglects the means cuts off himself from all hope, he reprobates himself and becomes his own judge ; he doth as it were say, I will never be saved. When men give over praying, and hearing, and reading, as the apostle saith, ‘you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,’ Acts xiii. 46.

*Obj.* 3. From experience God doth reward many wicked men, therefore how can it be said their duties are not accepted ? 1 Kings xxi. 29, Ahab’s humiliation kept off the judgment, and Nebuchadnezzar had the land of Egypt for his service against Tyre, Ezek. xxix. 18–20 ; that is nothing but a prophetic prediction. He did not think of accomplishing God’s decrees, and the expression ‘of giving him the land of Egypt for his labour’ is taken from the manner of men ; when a servant doth his work, he hath his reward. But for God’s rewarding of wicked men, I answer—

[1.] This is *ex largitate donantis*, out of the overflow of his own love and mercy ; they can claim and look for nothing : James i. 7, ‘Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.’ Though something may be given him, yet there is nothing theirs by way of promise ; all the promises being made and made good in Christ ; that is to them that have an interest in him : 2 Cor. i. 20, ‘For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, amen.’

[2.] These mercies are not given for their sakes, but to give the world a document of God’s bounty. Saith Calvin, *Deus saepe rependit mercedem umbris virtutum, ut ostendat sibi placere virtutes ipsas*—God doth often reward the shadow of virtue that he might show that grace itself is very pleasing and acceptable to him ; when Ahab doth but counterfeitedly humble himself, God will suspend the judgment to show how he prizeth true repentance.

[3.] All the blessings that wicked men have are but temporal, and salted with a curse ; there is nothing of acceptance to life. Ahab’s

humiliation gained but a delay of wrath, and that increased his sin. Children have the bread of life, dogs have but the crumbs and offals of providence. Wicked men do not serve God with all their heart, therefore their mercies are defective as well as their duties.

*Use 1.* It serves for terror to wicked men. A natural man is in a wretched estate; his most glorious acts, his very prayers, that are dressed up with a fair pretence of devotion, are abominable before God: Prov. xv. 8, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord'—not only his sins, but his duties. It is the greatest despite that can be done to a man, that when he hath set himself to please, yet he is still hated. So it is with wicked men; though they may preach, pray, and prophesy in Christ's name, yet nothing is well taken from them. Cain was punished for his murder, but was not accepted for his sacrifice. Ἐχθρῶν δῶρα ἄδώρα—the gifts of enemies are giftless gifts; wicked men are God's enemies, and so nothing is pleasing that comes from them. It is true, Jesus Christ saith, Isa. xlix. 4, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain;' but this was his comfort, 'his judgment was with the Lord, and his work with his God.' But with wicked men it is otherwise; they labour and toil, but all in vain. It may be they may have their penny of profit in the world, and that their gifts may be useful in the church, and they may have temporal reward, but it is salted with a curse; their sacrifice is but carrion, their prayer but babbling, and their table of the Lord is but the table of devils: Titus i. 15, 'To the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.'

*Use 2.* To represent the privilege of persons justified: their persons please God, and so do all their works. You may improve it for comfort and thankfulness.

1. For comfort. When you are discouraged with your infirmities, your many failings in every duty, Christ will accept you: Ps. xxxiv. 15, 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.' Consider, thou art troubled about the imperfection of thy works; they cannot be worse than thy person when God took thee into grace. God that pitied thee when thou wert in thy blood and perfectly evil, he will accept and love thee when thou art in thy person sanctified; though there be abundance of dross, he can see there is some gold; though abundance of wax, yet there is some honey: Cant. v. 1, 'I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey.'

2. For thankfulness. Oh! what a mercy is this, that God should testify concerning our gifts, such worthless duties so tainted and defiled by the adherency of corruption! There are many considerations to stir up our thankfulness.

[1.] That which is good is rather his own than ours, yet God will put it upon our account: 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' When you come to God with the best enlargement and quickness of affection, it is the Lord that made us thus willing; yet God counts them as our duties, though they may be fruits of his own Spirit. Then—

[2.] They are mingled with a great deal of weakness and defilement

—*Partus sequitur ventrem* ; our duties have more of us than of the Spirit, therefore they are filthy and defiled. Observe the practice of the saints, their remarkable blemishes : Jacob seeks the blessing with a lie ; Rahab entertains the spies, but makes a lie about dismissing them ; Sarah calls her husband ‘lord,’ but her words are full of discontent and murmuring and distrust of God’s promise. Moses smote the rock twice ; once in obedience and once in indignation. Who would think of such weak services, that God should accept of them ? nay, not only accept of them, but delight in them : Prov. xv. 8, ‘The prayer of the upright is his delight ;’ that the holy God should delight in such creatures as we are ! We have imperfect conceits of God’s holiness, otherwise we would wonder that he should accept of our faulty performances ; that the holy and pure God should not only accept, but delight in the prayer of a worthless creature. Then—

[3.] There is no profit redounds to God for all this, the advantage is ours : Prov. ix. 12, ‘If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself ;’ l’s. xvi. 2, ‘My goodness extendeth not to thee.’ God is blessed for ever, sufficiently happy without the service of the creature. Job xxii. 2, there is a question propounded, ‘Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself?’ God is eternally and everlastingly happy ; he is incapable of improvement ; all the comfort and profit is ours, yet that he should delight in them !

*Use 3.* Direction to teach us what to do in our preparation to duties and holy exercises. If God accept the person and then the performance, look to your state, as well as to the frame of your hearts. Many men heap up duties upon duties, go round in a circle of religious exercises, as if they would work out their salvation that way, but do not regard the interest of their persons. Consider, examination is one of the preparative duties, as well as purgation of sin and excitation of the affections : 2 Cor. xiii. 5, ‘Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.’ We must prove our state still, otherwise we shall be disallowed. It is not necessary only to examine ourselves before the Lord’s supper, but before other solemn ordinances. God would fain draw the creatures to a certainty, therefore he hath required often trial to look into their state. This is the method of God’s acceptance ; first the Lord cleanseth, fits, and consecrates the person to be a spiritual priest, and then he is to offer : Mal. iii. 3, 4, ‘He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.’ Where God speaks of worship in the times of the gospel, first we must be purified and set apart for the priesthood, then offer up our gift ; first there is a ‘purgings of the conscience from dead works,’ then we are meet ‘to serve the living God,’ Heb. ix. 14 ; first we are ‘washed from our sins in his blood ;’ and then ‘made kings and priests to God,’ Rev. i. 5, 6. There must be an interest founded, and a ground of acceptance for our persons. God will accept nothing at the hands of an enemy ; duties are but varnished sins. This should stir you up to the trial of yourselves, whether you are justified and reconciled to God.

But you will say, What shall men do that have no assurance, that cannot discern the interest of their persons in Christ ?

I answer, by distinguishing—The case concerneth either persons that have lost assurance, or those that have never gained it.

1. To those that have lost assurance by turning to folly, or tasting of the forbidden fruit of sin. By scandalous falls conscience is weakened, and prayer is interrupted; as the apostle speaketh of family jars: 1 Peter iii. 7, 'Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.' By allowance of passion, and wrath, and domestical disorder, the heart is discomposed, and we cannot with such a holy boldness and confidence call God father. The like may be said of many foul falls, by which conscience is wounded, and men have lost the peace and calmness of their spirits. Now, in such a case, men are not to come reeking from their sins and rush upon duty; that would argue little reverence of God, and will find little acceptance with him: Isa. i. 15, 16, 'When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes,' &c. Neither are they wholly to decline worship and restrain prayer; that would increase the distemper, and add sin to sin. David got nothing by his silence: Ps. xxxiii. 3, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long;' Ps. li. 3, 'I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.' However, the main care of the next duty must be to get the person reconciled by these solemn acts.

[1.] There must be serious acknowledgment of sin with shame and sorrow. This is God's established way for fallen saints: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is the saint's practice: Ps. li. 3, 'I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me;' and this is the most rational course. It is impossible it should be otherwise, either on God's part or ours. We are under a sequestration till we make suit to God: Num. xii. 14, 'If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?' Tender hearts will melt and mourn.

[2.] They must run to the old fountain opened for their uncleanness. There is no reconciling ourselves to God, but by Christ: Mat. iii. 17, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' We must come with Christ in our arms: 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Duties are not our atonement, but Christ's intercession, which is the renewed application of his merit.

[3.] They must earnestly sue out their former estate, and the wonted effects of his favour: Ps. xxv. 6, 'Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindnesses, for they have been ever of old;' Ps. li. 12, 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.' Christ doth not only intercede, but the believer must also, the earnest motions of the Spirit being the copy of his intercession.

2. It concerneth those that never got assurance. To those, I answer in several propositions:—

[1.] Assurance is very necessary and comfortable in our approaches

to God; such addresses do most become his grace. Christ hath taught us to begin our prayers with 'Our Father;' Heb. x. 21, 22, 'Having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' Having such free offers, such an abundant merit, such sweet experiences, God looketh that we should draw nigh in the assurance of faith: 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.'

[2.] Every suppliant cannot sail with such full sails into the haven of grace, nor all persons at all times; there is a weak faith as well as the faith of Abraham, and yet a weak faith is faith. David and Heman, two choice spirits, sometimes wanted comforts, and it is God's usual course still with many of his dear children; they have less peace, that they may have more grace; and God withholdeth comfort out of wise dispensation to engage them in the more duty: every one hath not an abundant entrance into heaven, 2 Peter i. 11.

[3.] When we cannot reflect upon our actual interest, the direct and dutiful acts of faith must be more solemnly exerted and put forth.

(1.) You must disclaim earnestly your own personal righteousness. This complieth with God's end; for therefore do his respects begin with the person, that the work may not be the ground of acceptance: Dan. ix. 18, 'We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.' Every one cannot go to the highway of comfort; there is safety in going the low way of humiliation, and in the sense of your own unworthiness for all acceptance with God in Christ.

(2.) You must adhere to God in Christ the more closely; faith giveth safety, though assurance giveth comfort. There may be a dependence and renewing of confidence, and a waiting with hope, in every duty; and a christian, though he be without comfort, yet he is not without encouragement; there are invitations to wait upon God, and they cast themselves upon God in this hope: Ps. xxii. 8, 'He trusted on the Lord, that he would deliver him.' It is good when you can refer yourselves to God's acceptance upon the hopes of the gospel.

(3.) There must be consecration when you cannot make application. It is sweet when we can say, mutually 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' Cant. ii. 16; but it is safe to say, 'I am my beloved's,' and he is mine by choice, though I cannot say he is mine by gift. A christian resigneth up himself to God: Ps. cxix. 94, 'I am thine, save me.' David pleadeth his choice; he taketh Christ as a Lord, though he cannot apply him as a saviour.

(4.) These direct acts may be pleaded to God in prayer: Phil. iii. 9, 'And be found in him, not having my own righteousness,' &c., and so casting ourselves upon God: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.'

*Secondly*, 'By it he, being dead, yet speaketh.'

The words are enigmatical, a holy riddle; and they include a

seeming contradiction, that a man should speak, and yet dead ; therefore the words, as all dark places, are liable to several constructions.

In the general, we are certain it must be some privilege and consequent of his faith ; for the apostle saith, ' By it.' Some take the word's *speaking*, *συνεκδοχῶς*, for *living*, as if it intimated the resurrection ; though slain by Cain, he yet speaketh, converseth with the glorious saints above, to the praise and glory of the Lamb for evermore, upon whom he had pitched his faith. Certain it is that the Jewish doctors make it to be one of the great arguments of life after death, the crying of Abel's blood. Again, some translate *λαλεῖται*, passively ; he is yet spoken of, as if it implied nothing but his name living ; yet in the church that is the usual recompense of faith. God perpetuates the names of the godly when the names of the wicked shall rot ; but this the apostle had spoken of already, ' By which he obtained witness that he was righteous ;' he is famous for his righteousness through all ages. Again, others take it as a metaphor, ' speaks ;' that is, doth as it were speak, and it may be by way of exhortation or clamour.

1. By way of exhortation : though he be dead, yet still by his example, he preacheth to the church. Thus dead persons may be said to speak by their example ; and voice is often in scripture given to inanimate things ; the creature is said ' to groan,' Rom. viii. 22, and the heavens ' to declare the glory of God,' Ps. xix. 1, 2. Abel, the first martyr that died for the service of God, is a speaking instance and example for all ages. He speaks several lessons—(1.) That duty is not to be declined though we get hatred by it. (2.) That we must be obedient even to the death ; and when we are called to it, we must seal our faith and profession with our blood. (3.) That the rage of the wicked against the righteous is very great. (4.) That God will call wicked men to an account for our blood, as he did Cain for Abel's blood. But this cannot be the meaning, because this is no peculiar privilege of faith. All examples have a voice, the creation hath a voice ; but—

2. I suppose another speaking is intended ; the crying of his blood, a clamorous speaking for vengeance upon Cain. Two reasons for this—

[1.] Because it suits best with the expression of Moses : Gen. iv. 10, ' The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.' Now the apostle's design is to abridge the history in Genesis.

[2.] Because it suits with the other expression of the apostle. Abel's speaking is mentioned : Heb. xii. 24, ' The blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel ;' the blood of Abel speaketh after he was dead punishment, but the blood of Christ speaketh pardon.

*Obj.* An objection may be framed against this in the text—' He being dead, yet speaketh ;' *ἔτι*, yet, or to this day.

I may answer, The present tense is put for the preterperfect tense—change of tenses is usual in scripture ; or ' yet,' that is, after his death, though not till the apostle's days. But I rather pitch upon another answer, because there is a special emphasis in the expression, Abel's blood is still crying. There are Cains alive to this day : some

that walk in the way of Cain, as Jude speaks, ver. 11; he was the patriarch of persecutors, therefore Abel's blood is not fully revenged to this day, but cries for vengeance still. Those that inherit the rage of former persecutors do always inherit their guilt; for imitation is a kind of consent, as if we had been by and consented to the fact: Mat. xxiii. 35, 'That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zecharias, the son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.' The blood of Abel was revenged upon the Jews that killed Christ. These two are mentioned because of two remarkable circumstances at their death. Of Abel it is said, Gen. iv. 10, 'His blood cried from the ground.' Zecharias, when he died, said, 2 Chron. xxiv. 22, 'The Lord look upon it, and require it.' All the martyrs join in one common cry against the persecutors of all ages: Rev. vi. 9, 10, 'I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony that they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' That is to be understood metaphorically. Passions of revenge being not proper to the glorified saints, the meaning is, their blood is as it were newly shed, and cries to God afresh, requiring vengeance; so that Abel and all the saints still cry, though some succession of ages are passed since their blood was shed. Many things notable are implied in this clause. I shall despatch all in some brief hints.

First, Let us take notice of his dying—'He being dead.' The history is in Genesis. There were probably two causes of the murder; one plainly expressed in scripture, the envy of Cain; the other implied—that is, indignation against the reproof of Abel.

First, One cause is plainly expressed. God accepted Abel; he had a better offering, and therefore Cain slew him: 1 John iii. 12, 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' The note is this—

*Doct. 1.* Persecution usually ariseth from envy.

Men malign what they will not imitate; when others are holier than their interest and vile affections will give them leave, therefore they hate them. Our Lord himself was delivered for envy: Mat. xxvii. 18, 'Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered him;' his disciples sold him out of covetousness, and his enemies persecuted him out of envy.

To apply this let us hate this sin with the more indignation. Alas! we are apt to envy each other's gifts, esteem sanctity, and grace; from thence arise contentions and quarrels, and they end in blood. The first man that ever died in the world was slain and murdered by envy. Pride gave us the first merit of death, and envy the first instance of it: Gen. xxxvii. 11, 'His brethren envied him;' they envied Joseph, and then conspired his death. Envy may be impeached as the cause of most of the blood that hath been spilt in the world; that is the reason why envying and murder are so often joined together, Gal. iv. 21.

Secondly, The second cause is implied—viz., indignation at reproof:

Gen. iv. 8, 'And Cain talked with Abel his brother;' what their talk was we find not. The hint is—

*Doct. 2.* Another cause of persecution is indignation at reproofs.

The world would fain sleep quietly in sin, and complain that these bawling preachers trouble their sinful rest. When a man holds out the testimony of Jesus, he torments and troubles them: Rev. xi. 10, 'The witnesses tormented the dwellers upon earth;' their testimony was the world's torment.

*Use 1.* It teacheth us to bear it the more patiently: James v. 10, 'Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.' Did you ever hear of any that spake in the name of the Lord, and the world not hate them? The cross is very kindly to our rank and order; Abel, that is but now a priest, presently is made a martyr.

*Use 2.* Bear reproof patiently. Storming at reproof is the cause of that hatred that is against the ministry: Jer. vi. 10, 'The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; when he came to reprove, they thought he had railed.'

From the murder itself—'He slew his brother.'

*Doct. 1.* Hatred of the power of godliness began betimes.

There is an old prediction: Gen. iii. 15, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' There are two parties that will never be reconciled. And here are two brothers, one of them the seed of the woman, and the other the seed of the serpent; though they were brothers, came of the same womb, and brothers of the same birth as is conceived. The apostle speaks of two other brothers of the same father, one persecuted the other: Gal. iv. 29, 'As then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, so it is now.' And in all ages of the world we may say, 'So it is now;' and so it will be for ever: this is the old hatred.

Then consider Abel's death, not only as the death of a saint, but as the death of a brother. The note will be—

*Doct. 2.* The strife of brethren usually ends in blood, or in sad and dreadful accidents.

Solomon saith, Prov. xviii. 19, 'A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.' You may as soon surprise a strong city barred, as gain an offended brother. It is a hint useful to those families where discord ariseth by reason of difference in religion. Difference in brothers is like a rent made in the whole cloth; a seam may easily be sewn, but a rent in the whole cloth cannot; the nearer the union, usually the greater rent. A Spanish preacher that embraced the Reformation was slain by his own brother. Some may be restrained by the severity of laws; but in times of public tumult there have been many such sad instances among nearest relations.

It followeth, 'yet speaketh.' Consider it under a twofold regard, as the common murder of a man, or as the murder of a saint.

First, As the murder of a man; this was a murder done in secret, yet Abel's blood speaks to God, that is, God took notice of the fact though past human cognisance. The note is—

*Doct. 3.* That murder is a crying sin.

It will out one way or other, God cannot want witnesses. We have seen in providence strange ways for the discovering of murder. Remember that is God's office, to be inquisitive for blood: Ps. ix. 12, 'When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them.'

*Use 1.* It is terror to them that are secretly guilty of murder. Many times wicked men act at a distance, nobody can tell who hath done the harm, yet God will find them out. Or if men should occasion public changes or confusions merely to promote their private interest, to build up a name to themselves, 'the stone out of the wall shall cry, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it,' Hab. ii. 11. Or if a man hath plotted the death of any merely to enrich himself, the Lord takes notice of it.

Secondly, Or look upon it as holy blood that was shed, as the blood of a martyr. The note is—

*Doct. 4.* The blood of a martyr hath a loud voice in the ears of God.

It implies two things—God's love to his oppressed children, and a certainty of vengeance to the oppressors.

1. God's love to his oppressed children. Vengeance is quick-sighted on their behalf. Though the children of God are dumb, like sheep before their shearers, yet their blood cries. Christ spake no words of revenge, but rather prayed for his enemies; yet for shedding his blood, 'Wrath came to the uttermost upon the Jews,' 1 Thes. ii. 16; Gen. iv. 10, it is, 'The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me.' Every drop was precious, and every wound hath a mouth open to God: Ps. cxvi. 15, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' God hath a precious account of them after death. God's love lasteth after death. He is in covenant with their blood and with their dust when it is in their grave, therefore he will know what is become of them. Nay, he doth not only take notice of their blood but of their tears: Ps. lvi. 8, 'Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?' Men may burn their bodies, but they cannot blot their blood and tears out of God's register.

*Use,* This is comfort to the children of God. He doth not only take notice after their death of the cry of their blood, to avenge it on their enemies, but to recompense the innocent, to reward them; for that is one effect of its crying. God doth not only take notice of Cain, but vindicates innocent Abel; therefore is he slain, that he may live for ever; slain, that God may bestow upon him a happy life. When your blood is shed for the testimony of God, treasure up this comfort; God will not be wanting to reward it. The two first martyrs in the old testament and the new were Abel and Stephen. What doth Abel signify, but vanity and mourning? and Stephen signifies a crown. Your mourning in the world doth but make way for a crown of glory: James i. 12; 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.'

2. It implies certainty of vengeance to the oppressors; when the parents did not accuse, yet the blood cried. The children of God may not know who harms them, yet their wrongs cry loud in the ears of God. Abel's blood did not only cry in God's ears, Gen. iv. 10, but cried in Cain's conscience, ver. 13. How many cries are there? The affliction itself that cries; God hath an ear for affliction. He heard the affliction

of Hagar, Gen. xvi. 11. Then your tears have a voice: Lam. ii. 18, 'Their heart cried unto the Lord, Let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.' Then the prayers of saints have a voice: Luke xviii. 7, 'Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?' The martyrs under the altar cry: Rev. vi. 9, 'The souls under the altar cried with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' Persecutors' consciences, they cry, O thou bloody Julian! thou hast murdered the children of God, and hast been guilty of oppression! As is storied of the king of France, that was author of that bloody massacre, he could never sleep afterward, but was haunted with terrors in his conscience, and at his death blood issued out at all the pores of his body.

*Use.* What terror and astonishment should this be to the enemies of the church, be they secret or open! Oppressed innocency will cry aloud; they may forgive, but the Lord forgets not. The Lord will not only take notice of their blood, but bottle their tears: Ps. lvi. 8, 'Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?' God kept a register of David's sufferings; every weary step was recorded in God's book; it is but folly and madness to think to hide your practices, or to escape punishment.

## SERMON XXI.

*By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.—HEB. xi. 5.*

THE apostle makes it his chief scope in this chapter to convince the Hebrews of the nature, and worth, and efficacy of saving faith. To that purpose he layeth down the acts of sanctifying faith, ver. 1, and throughout the chapter he treats of the effects, fruits, and consequences of faith. Here we meet with a consequent or fruit of faith in the instance and example of Enoch, who, among the rest of those glorious lights wherewith this chapter is adorned, shineth forth like a star of the first magnitude. Let me inquire why the apostle mentioned Enoch next to Abel, Seth and other holy patriarchs of the blessed line and race being passed by? I answer, Though the Spirit of God is not bound to give an account of his method, and therefore is not to be vexed with the bold and daring inquiries of human reason, yet because all things in the scripture are ordered with good advice, a few humble inquiries are lawful and profitable.

1. Enoch was the next solemn type of Christ; Abel was a type of Christ's death, and Enoch next proposed as a type of his ascension. **הַנּוֹךְ** from **הִנָּךְ** *dedicavit*, the dedicated, or the dedicator. (Christ), 'hath consecrated for us a new and living way through the veil, that is to say,