

Jer. xxxv. 6, 'We dare not break the commands of our father,'—and in a ready diligence in our obedience: 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of God constraineth us; for we thus judge, if one died for all, then were all dead,' &c. The will of our Father is instead of all reasons; Christ ever urged this, 'This is the will of my Father,' John vi. 26, 38. So to christians, 1 Thes. v. 18, 'This is the will of God in Christ concerning you:' 1 Thes. iv. 3, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' That is enough, beyond all enforcements.

[3.] As to the inheritance, they are very chary of it, and will not hazard the hope and comfort of it upon easy terms: Heb. xii. 16, 'Let there not be found a profane person, as Esau, who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage;' 1 Kings xxi. 3, 'And Naboth said to Ahab, the Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my father to thee.'

Use 3. Is direction to us in the Lord's supper. This is the seal of the new covenant; the table which God keepeth for the entertainment of his family; the feast for souls; God's children are sure of welcome; it is children's bread we eat; we come hither both to remember the grounds of our adoption, and to receive the comfort of it; we come to meditate on the fatherly love of God, and to get a new taste and experience of it in our own souls. Here we have special communion with him as children with a father; we come for a further participation of the Spirit, 'for we all drink into one Spirit,' 1 Cor. xii. 13. Here we look up unto God, and in our hearts cry, Abba, Father. We bind ourselves also to perform the duty of children; with new resolution to submit to his fatherly government, both in his laws and providences, to his commanding and disposing will; and we lift up our hope for the eternal inheritance.

SERMON XXIV.

The Spirit itself witnesseth to our spirits, that we are the children of God.—Rom. VIII. 16.

IN the words we have,—1. The privilege assured: That we are the children of God. 2. The double testimony by which it is confirmed,—The Spirit itself beareth witness to our spirits; or if you will, here are *testes, et testimonium*; the thing witnessed,—that we are the children of God; and the witnesses,—they are two, the Spirit itself, and our spirits; and in the mouth of two or three witnesses every thing is established. The Spirit itself is the Holy Ghost, and our spirits are our renewed consciences.

Doct. That our adoption into God's family is evidenced by the testimony of the Spirit to our spirits.

First, I shall show you the worth and value of the privilege; *Secondly,* Speak something of this double testimony by which it is assured to us.

First, It is certainly a great privilege, for we are excited to consider it with wonder and reverence: 1 John iii. 1, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' It is a blessed privilege, questionless, to have God for our father, and Christ for our elder brother, and heaven for our portion; what can we desire more? And this will appear to you, if you consider,—

1. The person adopting: the great and glorious God, who is so far above us, so happy within himself, and needeth not us, nor our choicest love and service; who had a Son of his own, Jesus Christ the only begotten of the Father, who thought it no robbery to be equal with him in power and glory, Phil. ii. 6; a son that was 'the express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3; 'the son of his love,' Col. i. 13; in whom his soul found full complacency: Prov. viii. 30, 'I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' If men adopt, it is *in orbitatis solatium*, a remedy found out for the comfort of them that have no children. Seldom was it heard that a father who had a son should adopt a son; therefore it heightens the privilege, that God should vouchsafe to poor creatures such a dear and honourable relation to himself.

2. The persons who were adopted;—miserable sinners, who were once strangers and enemies, Col. i. 21; 'children of wrath, even as others,' Eph. ii. 3; who had cast away the mercies of their creation, and involved themselves in the curse. Now that strangers should be taken into the family, and put in the place of children, and dealt with as children; that enemies should not only be reconciled, but have liberty to own the blessed God as their father in Christ; that children of wrath should be called to inherit a blessing; that those who had so often offended God, and were become slaves to Satan, should be called into the liberty of the children of God; this is that which we may wonder at, and say, Behold what manner of love is this!

3. The dignity itself; compared,

[1.] With the honours of the world. David saith, 1 Sam. xviii. 23, 'Seemeth it a light thing to you to be a king's son-in-law?' We may with better reason say, Is it nothing to be taken into God's family, and to become sons and daughters of the Most High God? All relations may blush and hide their faces in comparison of this; all the splendid titles which are so ambitiously affected by the world, are but empty shows and gilded vanities, and do much come short of this privilege, both in honour and profit. Therefore it is a greater instance of the love of God, than if he had made us monarchs of the world; or if a man could deduce his pedigree from an uninterrupted line of nobles and princes. Alas! how much better is it to be born of the Spirit, than of the froth of the blood? and to have a title that will be our honour and interest to all eternity, than to be distinguished from others by a title that will cease at the grave's mouth?

[2.] Compared with God's relation to other creatures. There is a relation between God and all his creatures; as he gave being to all, so he hath an interest and propriety in all. Sun, and moon, and stars are called his servants, Ps. cxix. 91; all creatures are subject to the law of his over-ruling providence; but man is under his proper government.

Adam, by the covenant of works, was rather God's subject, and hired servant, than his son. The people of Israel were his children; but as children in their non-age; for 'an heir as long as he is a child *οὐδεν διαφέρει δούλου* (Gal. iv. 1), differeth little from a servant, though he be lord of all.' A servile spirit was upmost in that dispensation. With respect to the covenant of grace, we are most strictly said to be children of God; Gal. iii. 26, 'For ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' Some live only under the visible administration of the new covenant, but not under the efficacy and power; and by the ordinances of the gospel have the badges of liberty, but they are not free indeed, sons indeed. There are among them others whom God hath begotten by his Spirit, and adopted and taken into his family; he hath a paternal affection towards them, and they a filial disposition towards him; he hath a paternal care and providence over them, and they have a filial confidence and dependence on him; he expects the honour of a father, and they may expect the privileges of children. His special relation is distinct from his common relation to other men, for it proceedeth not from his common goodness, but his special and peculiar love. The whole commerce and communion that is between us and him, is on God's part, fatherly; on our part, child-like; he giveth us his choicest benefits, and we perform to him the best service we can.

4. The manner how it is brought about.

[1.] The first foundation of it was laid in the election of God. He is the bottom-stone in this building: Eph. i. 5, 'Predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will.' Now what are we, that the thoughts of God should be taken up about us, so long ago?

[2.] Before God's eternal purposes could be executed, and conveniently made known to the world, redemption by Christ was necessary. Therefore it is said, Gal. iv. 4, 5, that he was 'made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of children.' Sin needed to be expiated by the Son of God in our nature, before God would bestow his honour upon us; Christ was to be our brother, before God could be our father; to take a mother upon earth, that we might have a father in heaven; and to endure the law's curse, before we could be instated in the blessing.

[3.] It is necessary that we should be regenerated and born of God, before it can be applied to us. For this new relation dependeth upon the new birth; and none are adopted but those that are regenerated, and renewed to the image and likeness of God. Nominal christians are bastards, and not sons; not illegitimate, but degenerate children. The relative change goeth before the real: John i. 12, 13, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; which are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' And the next foundation of this relation is not our being, which we have from God as a creator, but our new being, which we have from him as our father in Christ. As we are men, God is a governor to us, and we are his subjects; as we are new men, God is a father to us, and we are his children.

[4.] The immediate issue of regeneration is faith: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of

God, even to as many as believe in his name.' Receiving Christ is an hearty consent to take Christ to the ends for which God offereth him : namely, that he may be our lord and saviour, that we depending upon the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, and assurance of his covenant and promises, may obey his laws, and wait for our final reward.

5. The benefits occurring to us thereby. I shall instance in three :

[1] The gift of the Spirit, to be our sanctifier, guide, and comforter. This is a gift which he giveth to none but his children, and which he giveth to all his children ; a gift which suiteth with the greatness and love of our Father ; and is absolutely necessary for us as children. God as a creator giveth us our natural endowments ; but as a father in Christ he giveth us his Spirit : Gal. iv. 6, ' And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.' If we have this high privilege of adoption, we have also the Spirit of adoption, to reside and dwell in our hearts as our sanctifier, guide, and comforter. As a *sanctifier* he doth first change our hearts, and transform us into the image of God in Christ : 2 Cor. iii. 18, ' But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into his image from glory to glory ;' And Titus iii. 5, 6, ' Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ;' and so he maketh us children. But as bees first frame their cells, and then dwell in them ; so he doth dwell in us, that he may further sanctify us, restraining us from sin : Rom. viii. 13, ' If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' And quickening us to holiness : Gal. v. 25, ' If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' As a *guide*, leading us into all truth : John xvi. 13, ' When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide us into all truth.' And regulating all the motions of the spiritual life : Rom. viii. 14, ' As many as are led by the Spirit ;' especially our prayers : Jude 20, ' Praying in the Holy Ghost ;' Rom. viii. 26, ' We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us.' As a *comforter*, confirming our present interest and future hopes : 2 Cor. v. 5, ' Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of his Spirit.' Indeed, the Spirit is not so necessarily a comforter as a sanctifier ; yet a comforter he is ; and if not so explicitly and manifestly, we may blame ourselves. This is God's allowance, and we deprive ourselves of the benefit of it by our own folly.

[2] Such an allowance of temporal mercies as is convenient for us : Mat. vi. 32, ' For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' A christian hath two things to relieve him against all his distrustful fears and cares,—adoption, and particular providence. He hath a father in heaven, and his father is not ignorant of his condition, nor mindless of it ; and therefore though he hath little or nothing in hand, it is enough that his father keepeth the purse for him, whose care extendeth to all things, and all persons, and hath the hearts of men in his own hands, and performeth all things according to his own will. He knoweth their persons, necessities, and temptations ; and if we trust him for our heavenly inheritance, we may trust him for our

daily maintenance, which he vouchsafeth to the fowls of the air, and beasts of the field; yea, to his enemies, while they are sinning against him, dishonouring his name, oppressing his servants, opposing his interest in the world. He that feedeth a kite, will he not feed a child? He that supplieth his enemies, will he not take care of his friends? those of his own family? Indeed, he chooseth rather to profit us, than please us, in his dispensations; but it is your duty to refer all to his wisdom and love.

[3.] Eternal blessedness is also the fruit of this adoption: Rom. viii. 17, 'If sons, then heirs, co-heirs with Christ.' As soon as we are taken into God's family, we have a right to the blessed inheritance; and the right and hope that we have now, is enough to counterbalance all temptations. Alas, what are all the carnal pleasures and delights of sin, which tempt us to disobey our Father, to those blessed things which he hath provided for us in heaven! It was Esau's profaneness to sell his birth-right: Heb. xii. 16. So all the fears and sorrows of the present life: Luke xii 32, 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom;' if we have the kingdom at the last, it is no great matter what we suffer by the way; but hereafter we shall fully receive the fruits of our obedience: Rom. viii. 23, 'We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.' In heaven we have the fullest and largest demonstration of God's love and favour. It is love now, and grace now, that he will take us into his family, and employ us in his service; but then it is another manner of love, when taken not only into his family, but presence and palace; where we have not only a right, but possession; not only some remote service and ministration, but everlastingly enjoying, delighting, and praising God.

Secondly. We now come to the proof and testimony of our interest in this privilege,—'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit.' Here let us,—

1. Open the double testimony.
2. What the one superaddeth above the other.
3. The necessity of their conjunction to our full comfort.

1. The nature of this double testimony; and there,—

[I.] Let us begin with that which is more known to us, and understood by us, and that is the testimony of a renewed conscience. Let us consider it, as *conscience*, and as *renewed*.

(1.) As conscience. There is a secret spy within us, that observeth all that we think, or speak, or do, Rom. ii. 15, 'Their conscience bearing them witness, and their thoughts in the mean time accusing or excusing.' Now this conscience must not be slighted. Partly, in respect of ourselves, because it is so intimate to us; it is a spy in our bosoms, and can give a better judgment of us and our actions, than anything else can. The judgment of the world by way of applause or censure, is foreign, and grounded upon appearance; therefore not so much to be valued: 1 Cor. ii. 11, 'The spirit of a man which is in him, knoweth the things of a man.' Who knoweth more of us than we do ourselves? and this witness cannot be suspected of partiality and ill will; for what is deurer to ourselves than ourselves? therefore if our hearts condemn us, what shall be said for us? 1 John

iii. 20, 21, 'For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' And partly, because of its relation to God; it is called 'the candle of the Lord,' Prov. xx. 27; it is God's deputy judge, and in the place of God to us; and therefore if it doth accuse or excuse, it is to be regarded, for it is before God's tribunal that it doth condemn or acquit us. It is his sentence that we are to stand in fear and dread of; to whom doth it accuse us, but to God? Whose wrath doth it fear, but God's, even then when there is no outward cause of dread and fear? Conscience is the vicegerent of the supreme judge; partly, because of the rule it goeth by, which is the will of God, by which good and evil are distinguished; which is either revealed by the light of nature, or the light of Scripture. The light of nature; Rom. ii. 14, 15, 'For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law; these having not the law, are a law to themselves, which show the work of the law upon their hearts; their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.' The apostle proveth the heathen had a law, because they had a conscience; for conscience ever inferreth some rule and law by which good and evil are distinguished. The light of Scripture comprehendeth either the covenant of works, or the covenant of grace. Works,—and so conscience condemneth all the world as 'guilty before God,' Rom. iii. 19; and there is no escape from this sentence, but a regular appeal, and passage from court to court: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,' where poor condemned sinners may take sanctuary of the Lord's grace, and humbly claim the benefit of the new covenant. Grace—wherein the penitent believer, and those that sincerely obey the gospel, are accepted. The legal conscience condemneth all the world; but the evangelical conscience acquitteth us if we sincerely and thankfully accept the new covenant; that is, if we take the privileges offered for our happiness; and the duties required for our work. Therefore it is said, 1 Pet. iii. 21, 'Baptism saveth, not the putting away of the filthiness of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God;' not the bare ordinance, but the covenant which is sealed by it. And what doth the covenant require? Accepting the Lord's offers, and resolving to obey his commands.

(2.) As renewed. By nature conscience is blind, partial, stupid; but by grace it is made pure, tender, pliant, and more able to do its office. The Spirit is not said here to witness to our heart, but to our spirit; that is, to conscience as renewed and sanctified. Now such a conscience implieth these things,—First, Some knowledge of and consent to the new covenant; for without knowledge the heart is not good, Prov. xix. 2. It erreth in point of law and rule, and therefore cannot well witness in the case. And, secondly, consent there must be; for we cannot claim privileges by a charter which we never accepted. Therefore, Isa. lvi. 4, 'And choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant.' They thankfully accept the offered benefits, and resolve by the

strength of the Lord's grace to perform the required duties. Thirdly, That our hearts be set to fulfil our covenant vow; for otherwise we double, and deal insincerely with God: Heb. xiii. 18, 'We trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.' The habit and bent of the heart is for God, and obedience to him. Fourthly, That there be some answerable endeavours, and pursuance of this resolution and care to please God in all things: Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' Fifthly, That these endeavours be uniformly carried on, that our sincerity may be evidenced to conscience. For then it is matter of rejoicing and assurance to us: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world;' 1 John iii. 19, 'And hereby we know we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' Grace, constantly and self-denyingly exercised, hath an evidence in the conscience, and conduceth also to give liberty and boldness before God.

[2.] The witness of the Spirit. Because this is often mistaken, I shall the more distinctly lay it before you.

(1.) The Spirit layeth down marks in scripture which may decide this question, whether ye are the children of God, yea or no. As for instance: 1 John iii. 10, 'In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother.' And again, Rom. viii. 14, 'As many as are led by the Spirit, are the sons of God.' So every where in the Scripture God expressly telleth us who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell; and that there is no neutral and middle estate between the holy and carnal; all are of one sort or other. Now if we should go no further, the text would bear a good sense. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, when our conscience can witness our sincerity in a course of obedience unto God. The Spirit's witness in Scripture, that this is a sound, so a true evidence; and the testimony of conscience confirmed by Scripture; for whatever is spoken in scripture, is supposed to be the very voice and testimony of the Spirit: as Acts xxviii. 25, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers;' so Heb. iii. 7, 'Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day if ye will hear his voice.' So the Spirit speaketh or witnesseth to our spirits,—namely, in the word; supposing what is to be supposed, this must not be slighted. Yet this is not all; for the context speaketh not of a witness without, but motion within, whereby we are restrained from sin, and inclined to cry, Abba, Father.

(2.) He worketh such graces in us, as are peculiar to God's children, and evidences of our interest in the favour of God; as when he doth renew and sanctify the soul. And so many of the choicest divines take the word *witness* for evidence, or the objective testimony; namely, that the presence, and dwelling, and working of the sanctifying Spirit in us is the argument and matter of the proof, upon which the whole cause or traverse dependeth. That it is so to be taken, is clear in that exclusive mark: Rom. viii. 9, 'But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' And in that positive mark: 1

John iii. 24, 'And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us;' and again, 1 John iv. 13, 'Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us his Spirit.' That holy and charitable spirit; the gracious operations of his presence, are the argument whence we conclude.

(3.) He helpeth us to discern this work in our souls more clearly. Conscience doth its part to discover it; and the Spirit of God doth his part; namely, as he helpeth us to know and see that grace which he giveth and actuateth in us; for he revealeth 'the things given us of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 12, not only in the gospel, though chiefly; but also in our hearts. The workman that made a thing can best warrant it to the buyer. First he sanctifieth, and then he certifieth; sometimes we overlook our evidences, through the darkness and confusion that is in our hearts. Hagar saw not the fountain that was near her, till God opened her eyes, Gen. xxi. 19. There is a misgiving in the conscience; we cannot see grace in the midst of weakness and imperfections. Mary wept for the absence of Christ, when yet he stood by her, John xx. 14, 15. The Spirit dwelleth and worketh in their hearts, but they know it not.

(4.) He helpeth us not only to see grace, but to judge of the sincerity of grace. It is more easy to prove that we believe, than to know that our faith is saving; to love Christ, than to know that we love him in sincerity; because of the deceitfulness of the heart, and the mixtures of unbelief, self-love, and other sins; and some degrees may be in hypocrites, as temporary faith, tastes, imperfect love, partial obedience. And besides, grace where it is weak, is hardly perceived; the air will show itself in a windy season; the fire when it is blown up into a flame, it is no more hidden. Grace strengthened, increased, acted, is more evident to conscience; habits are discerned by acts and exercise, and God is wont to reward the faithful soul with his assuring seal of light and comfort: 1 John iii. 18, 'Love not in word, or in tongue only, but in deed and in truth.' The less we are christians in show, and the more in sincerity, the more joy and peace.

(5.) He helpeth us with boldness to conclude from these evidences. Many times when the premises are clear, the conclusion is suspended. We find in case of condemnation, it is suspended out of self-love; many know that they that live after the flesh shall die, yet they will not judge themselves; and the same may be done in case of self-approbation, out of legal fear or jealousy; for persons of great fancy, and large affections, are always full of scruples, or loathness to apply the comforts due to them. The Spirit concludeth for them, that they are the children of God: 1 John iii. 14, 'We know that we have passed from death to life;' 1 John ii. 3, 'And hereby we know that we know him.'

(6.) He causeth us to feel the comfort of this conclusion: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing;' it is an impression of the comforting Spirit; and Acts ix. 31, 'They walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' The Spirit is necessary to this actual joy; for it is possible a man may be persuaded of his sincerity, or have no doubting of it, and have too much deadness and dulness of soul; not so comforted. Well then, it is not an oracle, as to Christ,

Mat. iii. 17; nor an internal suggestion, Thou art a child of God; we have no warrant for that from scripture. It is not only to, but with conscience. Now conscience goeth upon rational evidence; and we reason and argue from what we feel, or find in ourselves; and it is according to the covenant, where privileges are assigned the believer: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;' to the penitent: Acts ii. 38, 'Repent, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost;' to the obedient: 'He is become the author of salvation to all that obey him.'

2. The one superaddeth to the other. Not the privilege without the qualification; that is sufficiently done by the word; not the conscience by discourse, and the Spirit immediately; no, they concur to produce the same conclusion. The Spirit's testimony superaddeth certainty, authority, and overpowering light: 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord;' and Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' As the influences of the heavens work strongly, but imperceptibly, while they mingle themselves with the motions of the creatures; so doth the Spirit with our spirit; it fortifieth and strengtheneth the testimony of a man's own heart; and so doth with more authority and power persuade us that we are the children of God.

3. The necessity of this to our full comfort.

[1.] We cannot pray without it. For the text is brought to prove that they have a spirit within them, which inclineth them to cry, Abba, Father. Surely it is a great advantage in prayer, to be able to say, Isa. lxiii. 16, 'Doubtless thou art our father;' and again, Isa. lxiv. 8, 'But now, Lord, thou art our father.' But how will you do, unless you be God's children? And how will you know you be God's children, but by the Spirit bearing witness to, and with your spirits? I know all God's children have not the comfort of the Spirit, but they have the Spirit of comfort, and in some measure can come to God as a father.

[2.] We cannot apply the promises without it, for the promises are children's bread. Unless we be the children of God, what comfort can we take in the promises, unless we have an interest in them? Privileges have their conditions annexed; the right is suspended till the condition be performed; that is, till we know ourselves to be true believers, the promises are in vain and of no effect. If to all, you deceive the most; for though some are of God's family, the whole world lieth in wickedness; the most are the children of the devil. If to some, they have their characters, which occasioneth the restraint; and you are told here, this is known by the Spirit's bearing witness to our spirits.

But what shall poor creatures do, that have not yet this clear testimony?

(1.) Disclaim all other confidence. When you cannot, apply Hos. xiv. 3, 'Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.'

(2.) Own God in the humbling way; creep in at the back door of the promise, 1 Tim. i. 15, 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' If Christ came to save sinners, I am sinner enough for Christ

to save. Luke xv. 18, 19, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'

(3.) Come to him, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Eph. iii. 14, 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Certainly God will love and accept all those that come to him by Christ.

(4.) There is a child-like inclination, when there is not a child-like familiarity and boldness. The soul cannot keep away from God, and that is an implicit owning of him as a father: Jer. iii. 19, 'Thou shalt call me father, and shalt not turn away from me.' We call him father, *optando si non affirmando*; unspeakable groans discover the spirit of adoption, as well as unutterable joys; we own him by way of option and choice, though not by actual assurance of our special relation to him, and interest in his fatherly love; there may be a child-like love to God, when we have no assurance of his paternal love to us.

(5.) There is a child-like reverence and awe, when not a child-like confidence. Their heart standeth in awe of (as the Rechabites), their father's command, dare not displease him for all the world; these in time will overcome. In short, God hath a title to our dearest love, when we cannot make out a title to the highest benefit.

SERMON XXV.

If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.—ROM. VIII. 17.

THE Apostle had showed, ver. 13. That if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. He proveth it by this medium and argument; that as many as obey the sanctifying motions of the Spirit, are children of God; and children may look for a child's portion. He proveth they are children, because the Spirit accompanieth the dispensation of the new covenant, whereby we are adopted into God's family; and this Spirit acts suitably, as is evident by his impression, ver. 15, by his testimony and witness, ver. 16. Now he goeth on further, and proveth, that if we be children, we are heirs; and that we shall live, if we mortify the deeds of the body, is more abundantly proved, for our inheritance is eternal life and glory, 'And if children then heirs,' &c.

In the words observe,—

1. A dignity, inferred from our adoption.
2. The amplification of it, from the excellent nature of this inheritance, 'Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.'
3. It is applied as a comfort against adversities; 'If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.'