

## SERMON UPON 1 CORINTHIANS VIII. 6.

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*But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*—1 COR. viii. 6.

IN the text, there is a perfect antithesis or opposition to the fabulous devices of the pagan religion. Among the pagans there were θεοὶ πολλοὶ, 'many gods,' and κύριοι πολλοὶ, 'many lords,' ver. 5. By gods, meaning the supreme deities; by lords, middle powers, or gods of an inferior order, supposed to be mediators and agents between the supreme gods and mortal men; called by the orientals Baalim, lords, as gods here by the apostles. By the Greeks δάιμονες. So Plato in his Sympos.: διὰ δαιμονίων πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους—All the commerce and intercourse between gods and men is performed by demons. Now the christian religion doth herein agree with the pagan, that there is a supreme God and a mediator; but it differeth in that they had a plurality in both sorts of their gods, we but one in each; and so the christian religion is distinguished from all others by one God and one Lord. 'To us,' that is, to us christians, 'there is but εἷς Θεός, one sovereign God,' from whom, as supreme, we derive all our graces, and to whom, as supreme, we direct all our services. 'And one Lord,' that is, one mediator, by whom, as through a golden pipe, all mercies are conveyed to us, and by whom also we have access to God: 'But to us there is but one God,' &c.

In the words observe—

1. What is said of the supreme and most high God.

[1.] The unity of his essence, that though he be distinguished into three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet there is but one, the only and true God.

[2.] He is represented by his relation to the creatures, 'the Father.'

It is not taken ὑποστατικῶς, personally, but οὐσιωδῶς, essentially, as often in scripture; as Isa. lxiii. 16, 'Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us;' meaning not only the first person, but all the rest; and Mat. v. 16, 'Glorify your Father which is in heaven;' and Mat. vi. 9, 'Our Father which art in heaven;' James iii. 9, 'Therefore we bless God, even the Father.' In all these and many other places, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the only true God, and called Father.

[3.] He is set forth by his dignity and pre-eminence, as the first

cause and last end : ' For from him are all things, and we in him,' *ἐκς, αὐτὸν, i.e.,* to him and for him. I take the marginal reading. So Rom. xi. 36, ' For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.'

2. What is said of the mediator. He is described—

[1.] By his person or name, signifying his person, ' Jesus Christ : ' ' There is no other name given under heaven,' Acts iv. 12, &c.

[2.] By his dignity, ' Lord,' that is, mediator. Christ is often set forth by this term or title : Acts ii. 36, ' God has made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.' He is Lord over all creatures, and over the house of God : Phil. ii. 11, ' And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' He died for that end and purpose : Rom. xiv. 9, ' To this end Christ both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of dead and living.' Therefore we should own him as such : John xx. 28, ' My Lord and my God ; ' both in word and deed. In word : Phil. ii. 11, ' That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.' In deed, in worship : Ps. xlv. 11, ' He is thy Lord ; worship thou him.' In ordinary practice and conversation, loving, serving, studying to please him in all things : Luke vi. 46, ' Why call you me Lord, and do not the things which I say ? ' Col. i. 10, ' Walk worthy of the Lord in all pleasing.' It is our comfort that he is head over all things, Eph. i. 22. So he is able to subject the church to himself by his Spirit, to vanquish its enemies, and defend us by his power. And it is both our comfort and duty that he is our Lord : ' He purchased us by his blood,' Acts xx. 28, and Eph. i. 14. Therefore the church is given him as an inheritance, Ps. ii. 8. We are married to him in the covenant of grace. Therefore he appeaseth the wrath of God by his passion and intercession. He cherisheth and takes care of us.

[3.] The appropriation of this office and dignity to him alone : ' One Lord, Jesus Christ.' To set up other lords of our faith, or other mediators between God and us, is a wrong to Christ. There is but one Mediator, either of redemption or intercession, and no saints or angels share in this honour : 1 Tim. ii. 5, ' For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus ; ' Eph. iv. 5, ' One Lord ; ' without partner or substitute. He will communicate this glory and dominion over his church to no other, in whole or in part.

[4.] The distinctness of his operation as mediator, from what was said concerning the Father. It is said of the Father, ' Of whom, and for whom, are all things ; ' but of the Mediator it is said, ' By whom are all things, and we by him.' God is the fountain of all heavenly gifts, James i. 17 ; and Christ is the pipe and conveyance. God is the ultimate object of our worship, and by the Mediator do we make our addresses and applications to him : Eph. ii. 18, ' For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.' From God all things have their being, as from their spring and cause, both in a way of nature and grace ; so all things by the Mediator.

*Doct.* That the owning and worshipping God by the Mediator, Jesus Christ, is the sum of the christian religion.

Natural religion owneth a God, but the christian religion owneth a Mediator ; and Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for that only true God,

and Jesus Christ for that Mediator. See other scriptures: John xvii. 3, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' There is the sum of what is necessary to life eternal, that God is to be known, loved, obeyed, worshipped, and enjoyed, and the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer and Saviour, to bring us home to God, and to procure for us the gifts of pardon and life, and this life to be begun here and perfected in heaven. So 1 Tim. ii. 5, 'For there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' Here are the two great points of the christian religion—one God, in whom is all our trust and confidence; and one Lord Jesus, the only Mediator for the restoration and reconciliation of man with God.

Here I shall show you—(1.) The necessity of a mediator; (2.) The fitness of Christ for this office; (3.) The benefit and fruit of it; (4.) Who are the parties interested in these comforts, and most concerned in these duties.

I. The necessity of a mediator in this lapsed and fallen estate of mankind. Two things infer and enforce this necessity—distance and difference. Distance by reason of impurity, and difference by reason of enmity; both these occur in the case between God and men. God is a God of glorious majesty, and we are poor creatures. God is an holy God, a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and we are sinful creatures. As creatures, we are unworthy of immediate access to God; as lapsed, and under the guilt of sin and desert of punishment, and unable to deliver ourselves, we cannot draw nigh to him with any comfort.

1. Our distance, which is so great that it is a condescension for God to take notice that there are such creatures in the world: Ps. cxliii. 6, 'Who humbleth himself to behold the things which are in heaven and earth.' The excellency and majesty of God is so great that either angels or men are unworthy to approach his presence. Now, as inferior and mean people dare not approach the presence of a great prince but by some powerful friend and intercessor at court, so our distance produceth our fears and estrangedness, and backwardness to draw nigh unto God, and so hindereth our love and confidence in him. Well, then, to depend upon one so far above us, that he will take notice of us, take care of us, relieving us in our necessities and straits, and help us out of all our miseries, and finally save us, requireth a mediator; one that is more near and dear to God than we are, which can be no other than Jesus Christ, as I shall show by-and-by. When a sinner looketh only at God as in himself, he is confounded and amazed, as quite out of the reach of his commerce.

2. Difference. A mediator is chiefly one used between disagreeing parties: Gal. iii. 20, 'Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.' There must be two parties, and usually two differing parties. There is God angry, and man guilty. Conscience of guilt presents God terrible, and taketh away all confidence from the guilty sinner, so that of ourselves we cannot approach in a friendly manner to an offended and provoked God: Heb. xii. 29, 'For our God is a consuming fire;' and 'Who can dwell with devouring burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Who shall interpose and stand between God and us,

the power of his wrath, and our weakness and obnoxiousness to his righteous vengeance.

II. That none but Christ is fit for this high office, that, though God be high, and just, and holy, yet poor creatures and sinners may have access to him. A mediator must be one that can take off the distance, and compromise the difference between us and God: 'O that there were,' saith Job, 'a day's-man between us, that might lay his hands upon both!' Job ix. 33. Now, considering this, Jesus Christ is the only fit interposing party; therefore he is called 'the Mediator of the new covenant,' Heb. xii. 24, 'And to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant,' and 'The Mediator of a better covenant,' Heb. viii. 6.

1. As to the distance; so in his person he is God-man. Our mediator must be one in whom God doth condescend to man, and by whom man may be encouraged to ascend to God. Now in Christ God is nearer to man than he was before, and so we may have more familiar thoughts of God. The pure deity is at so vast a distance from us while we are in the flesh, that we are amazed and confounded, cannot imagine that he should look after us, concern himself in us and our affairs, love us, show us his free grace and favour. Now it is a mighty help to think of God manifested in our flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16; 'The Word made flesh,' John i. 14. So that while we are here in the flesh, yet we may have commerce with God. It is a mighty encouragement to consider how near God is come to us in Christ, and how he hath taken the human nature into his own person; for surely he will not hide himself from his own flesh, Isa. lviii. 7. He came down into our flesh that he might be man, and familiar with man. This wonderfully reconcileth the heart of man to God, and maketh the thoughts of him comfortable and acceptable to us, so that we may encourage ourselves in free access to God.

2. As the person of the Redeemer, so his work; which is to take away the difference and quarrel between us and God. To understand this, observe, that the mediation between the two differing parties must be carried on so that God, who is the supreme and offended party, may be satisfied. Now God stood upon these terms that the honour of his governing justice should be secured: Rom. iii. 25, 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.' And that the repentance and reformation of sinful man should be carried on: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.' These must be done, otherwise man must lie under his eternal displeasure. If the one be done and not the other done, no reconciliation can ensue. Therefore we must not look to Christ's mediation with God so as to overlook his work with man, nor so look to his work with man as to overlook his mediation with God: Heb. iii. 1, 'Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.' We have both here. The work of an apostle lieth with men; the work of an high priest with God. He hath an office with God and man, and both are necessary to bring about our salvation. And Christ cannot be a complete Saviour without doing both. To be barely a prophet would not serve the turn, but he must be a priest to

satisfy God's justice also by the merit of his sacrifice. In short, his work with God is that of a priest; his work with man is that of a prophet and king.

[1.] His work as a priest is to pacify God's wrath, procure his grace, love, and favour for us; and this he doth under two relations—as a sponsor and intercessor.

(1.) As a sponsor and surety. He was the surety of a better testament: Heb. vii. 22, 'By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.' So—

(1st.) By way of satisfaction, he undertook something to be paid and performed for us. He undertaketh to satisfy God's justice by the sacrifice of himself, and so make way for his mercy on easy terms. The pacifying of God's justice was a great part of his mediation: Heb. ix. 15, 'For this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that, by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance;' that is, that penitent and believing sinners might be acquitted from the curse due to them by the first covenant, and so made capable of eternal life. What they owe he hath paid.

(2d.) By way of caution, undertaking for those whom he reconciled to God that they shall perform what God requireth of them in the new covenant. Having purchased the Spirit, he hath enabled them to repent, and believe, and mortify and crucify the flesh, and obey the gospel: Rom. vi. 6, 'Knowing that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.'

(2.) As an intercessor. He is in heaven dealing with God in our behalf. He hath not cast off his relation or affection to his people upon his advancement: Heb. viii. 2, 'A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.' In all his glory he is the church's agent, appearing for us as our attorney in court, Heb. ix. 24; pleading for us, and answering all accusations as our advocate: 1 John ii. 1, 'And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' And maintaining a correspondency between us and God, as an ambassador between two states, promoting our desires and prayers: Rev. viii. 3, 'And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.' And obtaining all necessary graces for us.

[2.] His work with men, as a prophet and king.

(1.) As a prophet, and so as a messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 11. He showeth us the way how we may be reconciled with God, persuading us also to be so reconciled to God. For we are ignorant and obstinate, loath to part with sin and submit to God's terms; therefore he revealeth, and persuadeth us to accept, the conditions of the new covenant, and to cast away all our rebellion against God, and enter into his peace: 2 Cor. v. 20, 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' They plead in his name, and by virtue of his power.

(2.) As a king and lord ; so he maketh these terms part of the new law for the remedying of lapsed mankind : Heb. v. 8, ' Though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things he suffered.' And not only so, but he subdueth us to himself,' Luke xi. 21 ; by strong hand rescueth us out of the power of the devil, and giveth us grace to serve him acceptably, Heb. xii. 28 ; and taketh us into his care, and ruleth us and protecteth us, till we enter into everlasting life. His lordship is a great part of his mediation.

III. The comforts and duties thence resulting, namely, from Christ's being constituted as mediator, as they are laid forth in the text.

1. I observe, that the Father's honour and glory is still secured, and preserved safe and entire, notwithstanding the giving the glory to Christ as the Lord of the new creation. The glory of the Mediator doth no way impair and infringe the Father's glory. That is apparent, partly because all the good we have is from the Father, but only by Christ ; for when the Father is spoken of, it is said, ' From him are all things ;' but when the Mediator, then it is said, ' By him ;' which notes a subordinate operation or administration, as lord-deputy under the Father ; and therefore, in the subjection of the creature unto Christ, the glory of the Father is expressly reserved : Phil. ii. 11, ' That every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of the Father.' Again, it is apparent, because it is said, ' We are to him,' or ' for him.' The Mediator does not lead us off from God, but to him. Therefore both our love to God and subjection to him must still be preserved.

[1.] Our love. You must not think of the Father that he is all wrath, severe and inexorable, and his favour not to be gained but upon hard terms. No ; if he himself had not loved us, we could never have had Christ for our Redeemer. All things are of him, not only in a way of creation, but redemption ; and one great end of sending Christ was to show the amiableness of the divine nature. Christ himself was sent by the Father : John iii. 16, ' God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son ;' 2 Cor. v. 19, ' God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them ;' Rom. viii. 32, ' God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.'

(2.) Our subjection and obedience : Rev. v. 9, ' Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.' His ancient right in us is not disannulled, but promoted. We are redeemed to his service and obedience. See 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, ' Which are God's,' viz., by a right beneficial, as a further obligation. God is the efficient and final cause of all things ; therefore, still our subjection to God and love to God must be preserved.

2. I observe, that the expressions here used imply returns as well as receipts. Look to the expressions in both clauses, either concerning the one God or the one Mediator. The one God : ' From him are all things, and we by him,' or ' for him.' As from his bounty and goodness, so for his honour and service : Prov. xvi. 4, ' God hath made all things for himself ;' 1 Cor. x. 31, ' Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' Whether it be in a way of

nature or grace, all things come of God. These words do especially concern christians. All matters of grace come from the Father to us for his glory; all things that belong to the new creation, as appeareth by the last clause; we by him, *ἐς αὐτὸν*, or for him. See Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory.' So for what is said of the Mediator; and 'one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things;' that is, which we receive from God; and 'we by him;' that is, all the services which we return to God again. Not only blessings come from the Father to us, but we also must return duty and service to God by the same Mediator. Receipts come from God by Christ, and returns go back by Christ to God. Which is to be noted by them who are all for receipts, but think not of returns; and also by them who own God in their mercies, but make returns in their own name. No; all that duty which we perform to God is by the Mediator. All christianity is a coming to God by Christ, Heb. vii. 25. If we believe in God, it is by him: 1 Peter i. 2, 'By whom we believe in God.' If we love God, it is in Christ. If we pray to God, it is in and through him: Eph. ii. 18, 'For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.' If we praise God, it is in and by Christ: Phil. i. 11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.' Otherwise our duties are not acceptable and pleasing to him.

3. I observe, that in the receipts we expect from God there is great encouragement to expect them; for God is represented as a fountain of grace, as a father, as a God and father, that acts by a mediator, whose merit is expressed as large as the Father's power.

[1.] As a fountain of grace. He is the supreme cause of all things, from whom all creatures have their life and being; a fountain ever-flowing, and overflowing. What can we ask of him which he is not able to do? Ps. lvii. 2, 'I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.' If it be pardon of sin or the gift of the Spirit, if subduing enemies or everlasting salvation, he is able to give it you. If it be strength against temptations, or grace to serve him acceptably, you come to a God from whom are all things. When a man seriously worshippeth God, he turneth his back upon all other things, and turneth his face to God as the supreme lord and fountain of all happiness. You may with confidence present your petitions to him that can perform all things.

[2.] You come to God as a father. If you take it personally, it is comfortable to come to him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. iii. 14; or essentially, as a father of the whole family of the faithful. He loveth us dearly. We have the supreme God for our father, and shall not we trust in him? 2 Cor. vi. 18, 'And I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.' Who would distrust a father, and an omnipotent father? When we remember not only his sufficiency, but his love to us and our interest in him, we make our addresses to him with confidence. Who may be confident if not the children of such a father?

[3.] This fatherly goodness and all-sufficiency is engaged for our relief by the Mediator. As all things are from the Father, so all things are by him; that is, purchased and bought by his merit. The extent

and virtue of his merit is expressed as largely as the Father's power. If we believe in God as an all-sufficient fountain of grace, we believe in Christ as an all-sufficient mediator : John xiv. 1, ' Let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me ; ' 1 John ii. 23, ' He that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.' Besides this, the veil of Christ's flesh doth break the beams of his terror to those that behold his excellencies and rejoice in them. By that we are encouraged to come to God for the Mediator's blessing, which is the pardon of our sins : Mat. i. 21, ' He shall save his people from their sins ; ' and Acts iii. 26, ' God hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your sins.' One great petition which we have to put up to God is for the pardon of sin. This is a principal suit, which sinful man hath daily to present to God. Now, when we are sensible of sin, how comfortable is it to come to God in the name of this Lord and Mediator, who came on purpose to take away sin, and hath satisfied God's justice, and merited God's favour and mercy for us, and liveth in heaven to plead the merit of his sacrifice ?

[4.] As we are encouraged greatly to expect the graces and favours needful, so we are as deeply engaged to the returns of love, service, and obedience ; and that not only as obliged in point of gratitude, but as inclined, suited, and fitted ; for as we are for God, so we are by him. I say, we are obliged in gratitude for the many blessings which are procured and conveyed to us by the Mediator. If we have all things from God, and all things by him, and we christians, more than ordinary creatures, surely we should in a singular manner fulfil his will and seek his glory : 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, ' For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' And not only are we obliged, but enabled and inclined. We ' for him ; ' there is our duty in the first clause ; we ' by him,' there is our help : Eph. ii. 10, ' We are his workmanship in Christ Jesus, created unto good works.' Not only ' by him,' so as to perform it acceptably, but by him so as to perform it cheerfully and with all readiness of mind. It relateth to our assistance as well as our acceptance. There is the Spirit to help our infirmities, which is shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Titus iii. 6. So we are ' by him,' that is, are fitted for the service of God, and put into a capacity to please him.

IV. Who are the parties interested in these comforts, and most concerned in these duties.

The apostle saith here, ' To us there is but one God and one Lord ; ' meaning to us christians ; all those that own God, and worship God by the Mediator : Heb. vii. 25, ' Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.' Who are they ? Some will not come to God ; others, not by him. They, and they only, are the persons that enjoy the benefit of this mediation, who come to God by him ; and that two ways—

1. They come to God by him who take upon them the profession of being his servants, and obedient subjects in Christ. The bare profession bringeth us somewhat nearer to God. Thus the people of Israel



are said to be a people nigh unto God, Ps. cxlviii. 14. They were a step nearer to God than the Gentiles. So the profession of christianity bringeth us near unto God: 'Who were sometime afar off, but now are made near by the blood of Christ,' Eph. ii. 13. Before they were afar off from God, from his church, his covenant, and communion with him in his ordinances. Surely it is some advantage to come so near to God by Christ as to have union and communion with the visible church of Christ. They are in that society and community of men who are under God's special care and government above the rest of the world, and where they enjoy the means of salvation, and such ordinarily by which God useth to convey his choicest blessings. These have a benefit above those who are wholly without the church, as having an offer of the gospel-benefits, though not a right to them. They are nearer at hand, and in grace's way, and may sooner understand that Christ is a means chosen and used by God to bring home sinners to himself; and by the christian doctrine current amongst them, which they know and profess to believe, have a dogmatical faith, at least, that God is the supreme fountain of all happiness, and Christ the only way to him; and have the common, conditional, pardoning covenant sounding in their ears continually, wherein God offereth to be a God and Father to them in Christ, and telleth them what he will be and do, to and for all those that do come in and submit to this covenant.

2. Those come to God by him who really enter into the evangelic estate, and are converted by an unfeigned 'repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts xx. 21. Repentance respects God as our supreme Lord and chief happiness, and faith our Lord Jesus Christ as the only one Mediator. When you turn from sin, self, and Satan unto God, then you come to him; for certainly the farther we depart from sin, the nearer we come to God. Now this coming is by Christ. The sinner that is turned from the creature to God, and from sin to holiness, is also turned from self to Christ, who is the only means of our recovery, by his merit and efficacy reconciling us to God, and changing our hearts: by the one restoring us to his favour, by the other to his image. Therefore a turning ourselves from our sins, with a resolution to forsake them, without a reflection upon Christ, is but a natural religion, not evangelical. The evangelical religion is a coming to God by Christ, or, as it is described by the apostle, Heb. x. 22, 'A drawing nigh with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' Those that are justified by the merit and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and fully resolving entirely and unfeignedly upon the duties of the gospel, depending upon the promises thereof, these indeed have one God for their Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ for their Redeemer and Saviour. Till a man be renewed and reconciled, sanctified and pardoned, he is unfit for God, and incapable of salvation, or any present communion with God. What can we expect from him, and how insufficient are we for either of these two works, to renew our souls and reconcile them to God? What can we do to satisfy justice, or break the love of sin in our souls? Therefore the Lord Jesus hath undertaken the office of being the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, by his sacrifice, merit, and intercession. We must be pardoned and

accepted, and only by him must we come to God. If your repentance towards God and your faith in him be sincere, you shall have all the blessings of the new covenant. In short, obedience and the love of God was the primitive holiness for which we were created, and from which we fell. We, by repentance, are willing to return to this again, and therefore depend upon a saviour and sanctifier, that we may be reconciled and renewed, and so are said, in this general sense, to come to God by him.

Secondly, More particularly we are said to come to God by Christ three ways—

1. In the exercise of our graces. I shall instance in the three radical ones, which constitute the new creature—faith, hope, and love; for in the exercise of these communion with God doth consist.

[1.] Faith seeth God in Christ, as sitting upon a throne of grace, ready to give out all manner of grace, and seasonable relief to penitent believers in all their necessities and temptations and duties. Well, then, boldly trust him and depend upon him. Thus we come to God by Christ: 2 Cor. iii. 4, 'Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward;' 1 Peter i. 21, 'By him we believe in God.' This is living by faith in Christ, so often spoken of in scripture. When you make use of him in all your wants, duties, and difficulties, expecting your Father's love and blessing to come to you through him alone, and the Spirit that must help you and assist you in all your infirmities and temptations, as coming from the Father and the Son; not only procured, but given by him your head. In all your doubts, fears, and wants, you go to him in the Spirit, and to the Father by him, and by him alone; this is living by Christ.

[2.] Love, which vents itself in a desire of full communion with God and delights in him. Desire is a coming to God, or a following hard after him; delight is an adherence to him, as satisfied with so much as we enjoy of him. Our enjoyments here are partial, and therefore our delight is very imperfect; but yet, such as it is, it begets a study to please God and fear to offend him. Our Father is in heaven, but on earth we have a glimpse of him, enough to make him amiable to the soul: Ps. xvii. 15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Thus we love him through Christ or in Christ; for we study Christ to see the goodness and amiableness and love of God in him: Eph. iii. 17-19, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.' A condemning God is not so loved as a gracious and pardoning God. Surely we love him more as a father than as a judge. And it is the Spirit of Christ which maketh us cry 'Abba, Father;' not only thereby expressing our confidence and dependence, but affection: Gal. iv. 6, 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'

[3.] Hope. We come to God as we longingly expect the full fruition of him. Love puts us upon seeking after God. But alas! upon earth we do but seek; in heaven we expect to find. Hope causeth us to hold

on, seeking till we find, and get nearer to him, and maketh us resolve that it is better to be a seeker than a wanderer; to wait till the delight of love be perfect, than to turn the back upon God and his ways. We cannot have Mount Zion in the wilderness. For the present, Christ doth but guide us to the land of promise; we have a refreshing by the way, manna in the wilderness; but not Canaan in the wilderness. Earth at the best will not be heaven. Our perfect blessedness is when God is all in all. For the present, as God is seen but as in a glass, so he is proportionably enjoyed. The devil, the world, and the flesh, are not perfectly overcome, and therefore we have but little of God. And the ordinances cannot convey him all to us, while his interest is so crowded up in our hearts, but we wait, and look, and long till we have more. Our only coming now to him is by hope, and that partial enjoyment of his love which we attain unto makes us look for more. The new nature inclineth us to hope; for they that love God will desire to be more like him, and to get more of him. And our experience quickeneth our hope, Rom. v. 4. But all is by Christ. The apostle saith, 'The Lord Jesus himself hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace,' 2 Thes. ii. 16. As at first he inclined us to set our hearts on another world, and lay up our hopes in heaven, and to part with all things seen for that God and glory which we never saw, which otherwise, by reason of unbelief and sensuality, we should never have done; so still he inclineth us to hope and wait in the midst of difficulties and disappointments, and encourageth us by his tenderness and constant pity: Jude 21, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto everlasting life.'

2. This coming to God is by all divine ordinances or acts of worship. The use of our liberty to approach to him in these duties is one special way of coming to him by Christ. To come to him in the word as our teacher, in the Lord's Supper as the master of the feast, in prayer as our king and almighty helper, is a very great privilege and comfort. Certainly if at any time, then we come to God. We come to him in worship; for then we turn our backs upon all things else, that we may present ourselves before his throne. But now thus we can only come by Jesus Christ. If we come to receive a blessing in the word, we come to receive the fruits of his purchase: John xvii. 19, 'And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth;' Eph. v. 26, 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' If we come to the Lord's Supper, that duty was instituted for the remembrance of Christ, that his flesh might be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. But especially in invocation or solemn calling upon God in a way of prayer or praise, into which all duties issue themselves.

[1.] In a way of prayer. The mediation of Christ doth especially respect that duty, and you must put your suits into his hand if you mean to speed: John xvi. 23, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' There is no speaking to God or hoping for anything from God but by Christ. Having such a mediator to present our desires and requests, we may come boldly to him. The Father is well pleased with these requests. We cannot have sufficient sense enough of our unworthiness and his worth and merit.

[2.] In a way of praise: Col. iii. 17, 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' All the success of our lawful undertakings or expectations is to be ascribed to God through Christ. All good things derived to us from God as the prime author is by Christ's mediation: Eph. v. 20, 'Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' For all things, temporal, spiritual; success of all ordinances, providences. His merit procured the mercy, and maketh the duty acceptable.

3. We come to God in the practice of all commanded duties. A christian is always with God; he liveth with him, and walketh with him. He that is a stranger with God in his ordinary conversation can never be familiar with him in his worship; and the grace of faith, hope, and love are acted, not only in worship, but ordinary practice. Whilst having a deep sense of an invisible God, and a constant aim at an invisible world, love doth level and direct all our actions, that we may please this God, and attain the happiness of that unseen world. Every righteous action is done in obedience to God and an aim at heaven, either by a noted thought or the unobserved act of a potent habit. Sure I am that a great part of our communion with God is carried on in our ordinary conversation: 1 John i. 7, 'But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.' And every holy action is a step towards heaven, as every sinful one is in itself a step to hell. Now this can only be by Christ. Unless we are in him, and be assisted by his Spirit, how can we bring forth fruit unto God? Phil. i. 11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.' He is the root of your life, and you live as upon him and by his life. The apostle saith in one clause that we are for him, in the other that we are by him; whole we, not only some actions of ours, but God hath put our life into his hands; and 'because he liveth, we live also,' John xiv. 19. We do not use Christ only at our need, but as the branches the root, or the members the head. We can do nothing apart from him, but in all businesses and in all conditions we must live in him to God. Now this is to come to God by Christ.

*Use 1.* To press us to improve this for our comfort and use.

1. It is an encouragement in our expectations from God, and those communications of grace which he exhibiteth to us in the covenant of grace; for here is 'one God and Father, from whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus, by whom are all things.' God is set before you as an all-sufficient fountain of grace, and Christ as an all-powerful mediator.

[1.] Here is 'one God and Father, from whom are all things.' Where shall we find comfort if not in God? He can supply all our wants, cure all our diseases, overcome all enemies, deliver us out of all dangers. God in the new covenant is represented under the notion of God all-sufficient, Gen. xvii. 1. He offereth himself under that notion to engage us to trust him alone. The people of God gather it from their covenant interest: Ps. xxiii. 1, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.' So elsewhere there is an infinite latitude in the object of faith. This one God and Father is every way sufficient to do us good. No pain so great but he can mitigate and remove it; no danger so dreadful,

so likely, but he can prevent; no misery so deep but he can deliver us from it; no enemies so strong but he can vanquish them; no want that he cannot supply. When we have a want God cannot supply, or a sickness that God cannot cure, or a danger that he cannot prevent, or a misery that he cannot remove, or enemies that are too hard for him, then you may yield to despondency of heart. Choose God for your portion and chief happiness, and you shall want nothing; whatever faileth, we have an all-sufficient God still to rejoice in and depend upon. See how largely God expresseth himself in the offers of his grace: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' We are subject to dangers and perils from enemies bodily and spiritual; he is our shield. We want all manner of blessings; now he will give us all things that truly belong to our happiness; he will be a sun to us: a shield here, a sun hereafter: 'I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward.' If he be a reward, and a great reward, it cannot come short of heaven's glory, and that eternal happiness which is an aggregation of all blessings. Then our sun shall be in his meridian, and shall fully and for ever shine upon the saints. It followeth there, 'Grace and glory will he give.' He will restore what we lost in Adam, the image of God, the favour of God, and fellowship with God, and bestow upon us a blessedness which possibly we should not have had if Adam had stood—eternal life and rest in heaven, grace to bear our expenses to heaven, and glory at the end of the way: all manner of light, life, and comfort. See one place more: 2 Peter i. 3, 'According to his divine power hath he given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.' Whatever pertaineth to life, that is, life spiritual, the substance of every saving grace, though not the full measure; also a right to what may enable us to honour God in practice, either to an holy heart or an holy life.

[2.] Here is a complete and powerful mediator. And—

(1.) Hereby we see God in our nature, and so nearer at hand, and ready to help us. God is become our neighbour, yea, as one of us, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. That made Laban kind to Jacob, Gen. xxix. 14. Though he hath removed his dwelling into heaven again, yet it is for our sakes and for our benefit; our nature remaineth there at the right hand of God: Heb. iv. 14, 'Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens,' &c.

(2.) God in our nature was abased, crucified, made sin, made a curse for us, that he might pacify the justice of God, and reconcile us to him. So that, besides the infinite mercy and power of God, there is the infinite righteousness and everlasting redemption of a mediator. God offended with man is fully satisfied with the ransom paid for sinners by Christ: Mat. iii. 17, 'This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

(3.) God, having laid such a foundation, and bestowed so great a gift upon us, will not stick at anything which is necessarily required to make us fully and eternally happy: Rom. viii. 32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up, &c., shall he not with him freely give us all things?' Here in the text it is said, 'All things are by him;' such abundant provision hath he made for man's salvation. Surely here is

a broad foundation for our comfort and hope. Here is God appeased, the works of the devil dissolved, our wounded natures healed, our enemies vanquished by him as the captain of our salvation, the church defended and maintained by him as supreme head and pastor, all kept quiet by him between God and us as our agent and advocate; and, finally, he will bring us into the immediate presence of God, that we may remain with him for evermore.

(4.) Besides the dignity of his person, consider the suitability of his office to our necessity. The dignity of his person must not be overlooked, for he is God-man, and therefore he is accepted by the Father, and may be relied upon by us: Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?' Besides the institution there is an intrinsic value, Acts xx. 28, it is called 'the blood of God.' But what a suitable as well as valuable a remedy do his offices of king, priest, and prophet make him! By these three offices he exerciseth the office of mediator. The three offices are alluded unto: John xiv. 6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' The way as a priest, truth as a prophet, life as a king. The way, because he hath removed the legal exclusion; we were fugitives exiled. And then truth to direct us, and give us the knowledge of God's nature and will. The life, to begin a life of grace in us by his Spirit, which shall be perfected in heaven. So 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' All the offices of Christ are there expressed with a suitability to our misery. Wisdom as a prophet to cure our ignorance and folly. We had no true sense of the evil we deserved, nor the good we wanted, nor of the way to remove the one or obtain the other, but he convinceth and instructeth us in all these things. We lie also under the guilt and power of sin; that is our second necessity; and so Christ is made righteousness and sanctification as a priest; for he gave himself to cleanse us from sin, Eph. v. 26. We are also liable to many miseries introduced by sin, yea, under a necessity of dying and perishing for ever; therefore Christ is made redemption as a king, and as captain of our salvation at length fully redeemed us from all evil: Rom. viii. 23, 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our bodies; Luke xxi. 28, 'And when these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh: Eph. iv. 30, 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.' Thus you see how amply we are provided for in Christ. It may as well be said, 'By him are all things,' as it may be said of the Father, 'From whom are all things.'

2. Another improvement is to engage and encourage us to make those returns of love, worship, and obedience, service and glory, which are expected and required of us. There is something which reflecteth from us upon God, from all this grace and mercy, which God dispensed by the Mediator. We must be for him, and we must be by him. It is more than if it were said, We must serve him, glorify him. We in our whole capacity; we must be whatever we are, and do whatever we do, to God, and for God, by the Mediator.

[1.] We must enter into covenant with him, and give the hand to the Lord, and consent to be his : Isa. xlv. 5, 'One shall say, I am the Lord's ; another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord.' They should enter their names to God to be entered into his muster-roll, or listed among the faithful that belong to him, and are listed for his service ; a member of that body whereof Christ is head, a subject of that kingdom whereof Christ is king : 2 Cor. viii. 5, it is said, 'But first gave their own selves unto the Lord ;' Rom. xii. 1, 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' Christ gave himself a sin-offering, and we give up ourselves a thank-offering.

[2.] There must be a strong love to God ever at work in our hearts, levelling and directing all our actions to his glory ; and this love must be an impression of the love showed to us by Christ, a thankful sense of his mercies and benefits : 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him, because he loved us first ;' 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' Love is an earnest bent and inclination of heart towards our chief good and last end, and its effect and work is to devote ourselves to his service, will, and honour, longing after more of God, and continually seeking for it : Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.' A soul that hath chosen God for its portion cannot want him, nor be long without him, nor satisfied with any partial enjoyment of him, therefore still seeketh for more. The main work of this life is a desirous seeking after God, and getting nearer to their last end by all the means which God hath appointed us to use.

[3.] There must be a constant study and care to please, honour, and glorify this God : Acts xxvii. 23, 'Whose I am, and whom I serve.' If we be dedicated to God, there must be conscience of our dedication, that we may live unto God : and this not now and then, but in our whole course. All our faculties, bodies, souls : 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ? ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' Estates : Rom. xiv. 7-9, 'For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself : for whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of dead and living ;' Phil. i. 21, 'To me to live is Christ.' All our actions, not only in solemn acts of worship, but in our ordinary conversations, must be directed to him : Zech. xiv. 20, 21, 'In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness to the Lord ; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts.'