

SERMON UPON I PETER I. 12.

Which things the angels desire to look into.—I PETER i. 12.

THERE are two things for which the doctrine of the gospel is commended to us—the truth and the worth of it: 1 Tim. i. 15, *verum et bonum*, ‘This is a true and faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.’ The happiness of the intellect lieth in the contemplation of truth, and the happiness of the will in the enjoyment of good. In innocency this was represented by the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, and possibly under the law by the candlestick and the table of showbread. I shall not now speak of the truth of the gospel, but of the worth of it. The scope of the context is to show the worth of that salvation which is the end of the christian faith. To commend it the apostle produceth the instance of the prophets and of the angels.

1. Of the prophets: ver. 10–12, ‘Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.’ When the prophets foretold it, they viewed and reviewed their own prophecies, that they might be more thoroughly acquainted both with the thing and the time. They prophesied of other things, the rise and downfall of great and mighty monarchies and kingdoms; but these were not the things they inquired after so diligently, but the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which shall come to us. Well, then, if those to whom the Holy Ghost did dictate these mysteries did so accurately search into them, what should we delight in and study upon but the gospel?

2. Angels themselves did look into the excellency of this grace and salvation offered to us in Christ; they can never be satisfied with the contemplation of it, nor wonder at it enough; nor rejoice at it enough: ‘Which things the angels desire to look into.’ *Παρακίψαι* signifieth to bow the head and stoop that we may take a more narrow view of the thing which we would see: Luke xxiv. 12, ‘Peter ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes lying

by themselves.' So John xx. 5, *καὶ παρακύψας βλέπει κείμενα τὰ ὀθόνια*, 'And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying;' and in the 11th verse, Mary *παρέκυνθεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον*; we render it, 'She stooped down and looked into the sepulchre.' And probably there is an allusion to the type of the two cherubims over the mercy-seat, which were figured bending their faces towards it: Exod. xxv. 20, 'Their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.' As desiring to pry into the mysteries represented there.

Doct. That the mystery of redemption by Christ is an object worthy of the contemplation and admiration of the angels themselves.

I shall illustrate this argument by examining these circumstances—(1.) Who; (2.) What; (3.) How; (4.) Why.

I. Who desired? The text saith, 'the angels.' There are two sorts of them, some good and some bad; some that fell away, and stood not in the truth, others that are called 'the elect angels,' 1 Tim. v. 21. Now which of these are we to understand? Not the evil angels to be sure, for since the fall they are called devils, not angels singly, without a note of distinction. This was an holy desire of an holy object, of which those damned spirits are not capable. It is a burden to them to think of God and Christ; they abhor their own thoughts of God: James ii. 19, 'The devils also believe and tremble.' And Christ's presence was a torment to them: Mat. viii. 29, 'What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? art thou come to torment us before the time?' They cannot please themselves, nor find such a delight and full satisfaction in the view of these truths. Therefore it is meant of those good angels that behold the face of God and minister in his presence; they are beholding, wondering, and rejoicing at the mysteries of the gospel. There are two kinds of creatures made after the likeness of God—angels and men; and they are seated and placed in the two extremities of the world; the one in heaven, and the other on earth, in the highest and lowest story of the universe, that at both ends of the creation there might be some to glorify him and acknowledge his excellencies. Alas! here with us in the lower part of the world, how few take notice of the glorious discoveries of God in any of his works, especially in the work of redemption! so that all God's preparations and expenses seem lost, as to the honour and service which he might justly expect from us. But there is another world, where this mystery, that is so little regarded here, is more thought of, and better studied; even by the blessed angels, creatures more excellent and more numerous than mankind, who are always glorifying God, and admiring his excellencies upon this account. As we behold the sun that shineth to us from their part of the world, so do they behold the sun of righteousness from our part of the world, even Jesus Christ the Lord, in all the acts of his mediation: 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels;' that is, beheld with wonder and reverence. God needeth not to court us with such importunity; he hath creatures enough to glorify him, ten thousand times ten thousand angels, that stand before his throne, and know more of God than we do, and are more ready to praise him.

II. What? The text telleth us, 'which things;' that is, those things spoken of in the context.

1. The person of the Redeemer, the most glorious object that can be looked upon, or taken into the thoughts of any creature. The view of this is now our comfort, and will be our happiness to all eternity: John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.' When we are in heaven, on the other side of the world, that will be our work and our happiness; but it must not be wholly omitted here. So the angels delight in the person of the Redeemer; it is their rejoicing to look upon Christ, in whom the glory of God shineth forth more admirably than in any other of his works. Yea, I shall go one strain higher; God himself delighteth in looking upon Christ: Prov. viii. 30, 'There was I by him, as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight.' In the Hebrew it is 'day, day,' one day after another. God never satisfieth himself enough in this. Yea, God delighteth in Christ as mediator: Mat. iii. 17, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' Isa. xlii. 1, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.' It is the ground of his gracious aspect upon us as holy. He delighted in all his works, and was refreshed at the view of them: Gen. i. 31, 'And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good;' compared with Exod. xxxi. 17, 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.' Well, then, this is one thing which the angels look upon, the person of Christ, the most lovely object to be thought of, figured in the mercy-seat or cover of the ark, who interposed between the law and God. Christ is called *ἱλαστήριον*, 'the propitiation,' that is, Christ incarnate.

2. The way of redemption: ver. 11, 'The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.' And therein the sweet harmony and concord between infinite mercy and infinite justice, that both might have full satisfaction. This is figured in the mercy-seat, God's reconciling himself to man by Christ: Rom. iii. 24-26, 'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'

3. Another thing spoken of in the context is, 'The grace that should come to us,' ver. 10, God's keeping familiar correspondence and communion with poor creatures in and through Christ: 1 John i. 3, 'And truly our communion is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' The dwelling of our nature with God in a personal union, a thing which angels may wonder at, since God abaseth himself to behold things in heaven or things on earth: Ps. cxlii. 6, 'Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth.' His majesty and all-sufficiency is so great, that he might justly despise the angels, of whom he standeth in no need. Now, that he should stoop so low as to look after poor crawling worms, and admit them to such intimacy with himself, this commerce between God and

the inhabitants of the lower world is matter of wondrous delight to the angels.

4. The mission of the Spirit, here just before the text, 'The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;' and then presently it followeth, 'Which things the angels desire to look into,' viz., the copious effusion of gospel grace. Before the price was paid, when God gave out grace upon trust, it was more sparingly dispensed, but now more plentifully since the price of redemption is actually paid. The angels are ascending and descending, present with the churches in their holy worship. When the Spirit was first poured out, the men that were conscious to it were all surprised with wonder: Acts ii. 7, 'They were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans?' And surely the angels see cause to glorify God for his gifts and graces bestowed on the church. It was done in the sight of angels: Eph. iv. 8, 'When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men;' compared with Col. ii. 15, 'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.'

5. The gracious providences of God in leading on the church to their eternal happiness: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,' *πολυπόικλος σοφία*; that curious variety and interweavings of providence in bringing poor creatures to glory. When we are on the top of the mount, and we shall know as we are known, then shall we see how variously he did confound the wisdom of men and devils, and led the saints to glory. The angels see more of God in this than in any of his other works; the state of the church here upon earth is the great glass wherein God discovereth his wisdom, power, goodness, and truth.

6. The final glorious estate of the saints. Christ shall be admired in them: 2 Thes. i. 10, 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.' For poor dust to shine as stars, and to be admitted with Christ to judge the world, even evil angels. All men shall be at last owned or disowned by Christ, confessed or denied before the angels, as those that look after these things: Luke xii. 8, 9, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God;' Rev. iii. 5, 'I will confess his name before my Father, and his angels.' We may admire at these things: 1 John iii. 1, 2, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Behold, now we are the sons of God; and it doth not appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

III. The manner how? *Ἐπιθυμοῦσιν παρακύψαι*, they desire to look into.

1. It noteth an accurate inspection, to look towards, so as to look through. They understand more of these mysteries than we do, having no mass of flesh to clog them, and obstruct the operations of these spirits; as having no secular vanities to divert them, as being so near God, so entirely loving him; because of the excellency of their

natures they have more advantage than we ; as the world wherein we dwell is more known to them than to us, yet they are prying ; and should not we ‘ follow on to know the Lord ? ’ Hosea vi. 3.

2. It is earnest and affectionate, *ἐπιθυμοῦσιν* ; they desire ; their hearts are in it.

Object. Desire argueth a defect, and the angels, that are in the presence of God, are *in statu perfecto*, in a perfect state.

Ans. 1. In many things this mystery exceedeth their understandings, therefore they desire to know it more and more. There is in the angels understanding, and knowledge natural, supernatural, and experimental. Their natural knowledge reacheth to things that are belonging to the perfection and happiness of their nature. In supernatural things, that depend upon the mere favour of God, angels know no more than God is pleased to manifest to them, and so are ignorant of those things which God will not reveal, and cannot be found out by any created understanding. Their experimental knowledge is by the accomplishment of prophecies, and what is foretold concerning the state of the church here upon earth ; as Christ ‘ learned obedience by the things he suffered,’ Heb v. 8, so might angels learn more when they saw Christ born, die, and rise again, the Spirit poured out, the devil dispossessed, the gospel kingdom erected.

2. Some defects are perfective ; as hungering and thirsting after righteousness proveth blessedness : Mat. v. 6, ‘ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.’ As Gregory, *Et satiantur, et sitiunt ; ne enim sit in desiderio anxietas, desiderantes satiantur ; ne sit in satietate fastidium, satiati desiderant.* They are satisfied with what they desire, to prevent anxiety and trouble ; and they desire that with which they are satisfied, to prevent satiety and loathing. It is a sweet thirst, not a painful dissatisfaction ; such as quickens, but not pains. Desire is an act of love ; the object of it is dear and esteemed. So the angels, they are desiring and enjoying. *Sitientes satiabimur, et satiati sitemus* ; as in heaven the saints desire more of God, because they are not weary of him.

3. They look upon it so as to be ready to discharge their ministry about it. As the cherubims were figured with outstretched wings over the mercy-seat, as ready to be employed in God’s errand, so the angels look into these things. We find them ever ministering about Christ in his temptations and agonies, in his grave and at his ascension ; so are they ministering about the saints, whom these things do concern : Heb. i. 14, ‘ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ? ’ The angels do so look into the things purchased for us by Christ, that they are helpful to us in them, according to the will of God.

IV. The reasons.

1. Negatively.

[1.] Not curiosity ; that cannot be imagined in these blessed spirits. Now curiosity is either—(1.) In the matter, when we pry into secret things, which we cannot, nor ought we to see into : Col. ii. 18, ‘ Intruding into those things which he hath not seen ; ’ those things wherein the mind of God is not known or understood. But God revealed himself to the angels concerning the salvation of man, they

being so often employed in the prediction and discovery of those things that concerned the coming of Christ and salvation by him. They were the messengers to carry the glad tidings of it to the patriarchs and prophets. Gabriel informed Daniel, and talked with him concerning the seventy weeks, Dan. ix. 21-24, after which the Messiah should be cut off. God used their ministry to instruct the church in all the acts of his mediation. The angels comforted Christ in his temptations and agonies; the angels brought news of his birth: Luke ii. 10, 'And the angel said unto them, Fear not; I bring you good tidings,' &c. When tempted, they ministered to him: Mat. iv. 11, 'Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered to him.' In his agonies they strengthen him: Luke xxii. 43, 'There appeared an angel to him from heaven, strengthening him.' When he was buried, and in his grave, they rolled away the stone: Mat. xxviii. 2, 'The angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door.' Where he lay in the sepulchre, 'there were two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been,' John xx. 12. At his ascension, Acts i. 10, 11, 'Two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee! why stand ye gazing up into heaven?' &c. Therefore this was not a thing which God would keep secret from them. What the church knoweth the angels know in some measure. Or (2.) In the end, only to know. They did not know merely that they might know. To know that we may be knowing¹ is arrogance; to know that we may gain by our knowledge is covetousness and self-seeking; to know that we may know is curiosity; but to know that we may adore and worship God, this is religion and godliness. This was their end, that they might the more admire God in the discoveries of himself to the creatures.

[2.] Not total ignorance of this mystery before it was brought about. They had some knowledge of it; but now to their natural and supernatural knowledge there is added experimental knowledge, which is daily increased in them.

2. Affirmatively.

[1.] They have such a deep sense of the worth of these things that they desire to know more: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' By 'principalities and powers' are meant angels, so called because God maketh use of them in governing the world, and because of their great power and strength. By principalities and powers 'in heavenly places' are meant good angels. Now these glorious creatures see more of the wisdom of God by his gracious dispensations to the church; they improve and come to a more full knowledge by observing and looking unto the tenor of the gospel, and the providences that do accompany it; though their present state of happiness doth give them full satisfaction for the time, yet it is capable of some additions, and shall be perfected more fully at the last day, when the torments of the fallen angels are also full: 2 Peter ii. 4, 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.' It is true they are *in termino*, not *in via*; there can be

¹ Qu. 'known'?—ED.

no change of their state; yet as to the degree they have not their full happiness till then. There are some things in this mystery which they know not; it is a deep treasure of wisdom, and the angels cannot see to the bottom of it.

[2.] In other things which they know they delight themselves in the view of them. It is a sweet and comfortable speculation, with the thoughts of which their hearts are ravished. They desire to look into these things out of the delight which they take therein.

But why do the angels so much delight in the mystery of redemption. (1.) Because of the glory of God discovered therein. (2.) The good of man procured thereby. Both are laid down in the angel's song: Luke ii. 14, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.'

(1.) For the glory of God. They see their creator gets a great deal of honour. God was but half discovered in the creation of the world, but now more fully in the redemption of the world. In the creation he showed his power, wisdom, and goodness; but now he discovers more attributes, and these in a greater latitude, as his truth, holiness, and justice. His truth in that this is the greatest promise; his holiness, for here is the greatest instance of his hatred of evil; and his justice in the agonies, and sufferings, and shame of the Son of God. In the work of redemption God discovers his power in dissolving the works of the devil, overpowering the resistance of man. It is true, in the creation there was nothing to help, but there was nothing to let and hinder. His goodness: Rom. iv. 8, 'But God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' God commendeth his love to us in loving such unworthy creatures, and with such a love. So the apostle: Titus iii. 4, 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared.' His wisdom, not in ordering the creatures, but reconciling his attributes. When God embraced such unworthy, polluted creatures, this is that the angels are taken with, to see the wisdom, power, and justice of God shining forth in the person of our Redeemer and in the work of our redemption; this is an admirable looking-glass wherein to see these things.

(2.) For the good of man. The angels are without envy; they rejoice at our welfare, when the nature of man is so much preferred before theirs. They are brought in rejoicing when man was made: Job xxxviii. 7, 'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' When Christ was born: Luke ii. 13, 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.' When man is converted: Luke xv. 7, 'Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.' They rejoice in our salvation.

Use 1. Information. It showeth us—

1. The sublimity of gospel mysteries; they are speculations that befit angels; the angels that behold the face of God admire at them. Oh! how should we admire the love of God in Christ, that he hath provided such things for us in Christ that angels wonder at! The business of our salvation is called a mystery: Eph. iii. 4, 'Whereby,

when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ ;' Rom. xvi. 25, ' According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began ;' 1 Tim. iii. 16, ' Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.' A holy secret, transcending the reach of ordinary knowledge, such as nothing of it could be known by man or angel before it was revealed ; and after it is revealed it is a thing hidden from carnal men in the spiritual beauty of it, and in a great measure from believers themselves, if their knowledge be compared with what it shall be hereafter : 1 Cor. xiii. 12, ' Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face ; now I know in part, then I shall know even as also I am known.' Many are scandalised at the scriptures because of the simplicity of them, as containing only a few plain truths ; but there are mysteries which take up the mind and study of angels, and they think them worthy their best thoughts.

2. The goodness of them. The angels are delighted in this study. It is a pleasant, sweet, ravishing frame of truths ; the more we know them aright, the more inquisitive shall we be, and the more diligent to know more. Those know nothing of Christ savourily who are so soon gospel-gluttoned and Christ-gluttoned, and look upon these discoveries and discourses of God's grace in Christ as dry chips and withered flowers, and hear them without any joy and thankfulness : Rev. xix. 10, ' The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' What should we delight in, and busy our heads and hearts about, but with God in Christ reconciling the world to himself ? This takes off our delight from vain trifles. Many of you gentlemen, that leave this study to divines, you lose much of the comfort and sweetness of your lives, because you do no more warm your hearts with these thoughts. Gentlemen, leave off the reading vain books and romances ; they that have found the saving effects of God's love will do so : Eph. iii. 18, 19, ' That ye 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.' This will be for our comfort : Rom. v. 5, ' Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us.' It will quicken us to holiness, if ever we feel the love of God : 2 Cor. v. 14, ' The love of Christ constraineth us.'

3. It informeth us of the harmony between the churches, between the old testament church and the christian church : John viii. 56, ' Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad ;' Luke x. 24, ' I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.' The times of the gospel would to them have been a sweet sight : they ardently desired to see Christ in the flesh. And between the church militant and the church triumphant ; they join together in admiring Christ. Saints and angels have one beatitude, beholding the face of God ; therefore they join in one duty, looking on Christ. We shall one day meet in one assembly, Heb. xii. 23. We hope to be, Luke xx. 36, *ἰσάγγελοι*, ' Like the angels.' We should do as they do if we would be as they be.

4. That creatures busy their thoughts as they are affected. Base spirits are busied about light matters; but eagles will not stoop to catch flies, nor angels employ themselves in inferior and mean speculations, but they have a great delight in acknowledging the manifold wisdom of God in the work of redemption. Great spirits are taken up with things of great weight and importance: Acts xvii. 11, 'These were more noble than they of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.' Whilst others quench their souls in sensualities, they are for the divine study. These were *ἐνγενέστεροι*. It is not meant of natural nobility, but spiritual true nobility and excellency, which lieth in a care of salvation; not in wearing fine clothes or enjoying plentiful revenues or good descent, but in the study of Christ; not in greatness of birth, but diligence in searching out the mysteries of salvation; that is nobility indeed, not to enslave ourselves to the opinions of men and their customs: 1 Cor. vii. 23, 'Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.' Not to wallow in earthly pleasure, but seek things above: Col. iii. 1, 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;' Phil. iii. 20, 'For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Not to be overcome by a man's passions and corrupt affections: Prov. xvi. 32, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city;' Prov. xxv. 28, 'He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.' These noble spirits will not yield to lusts.

Use 2. To reprove—

1. The slightness of men, and to confound us with shame that we do no more take care to look after this happiness, that we do so unwillingly think of these things, or set apart ourselves for the study of them. Shall we slight these things which angels wonder at? Some will scarce vouchsafe to look into these things, scarce think or talk seriously of them, whilst their minds and discourses are taken up with baubles and trifles. Angels are more noble beings, nearer to God; they are not the parties interested; we have particular benefit by them: Mat. xxii. 5, 'But they made light of it.' They would not let it enter into their care and thoughts. We are bound to this under pain of damnation; it is not a thing arbitrary: Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Bewail your stupidity that you have so slight a sense of these things. Meditation I know is painful work; it is very difficult; but the sweetness of the argument should persuade us to it.

2. It reproveth that satiety that is apt to creep upon us. Why should we be weary of searching into these holy mysteries? What is the reason of this satiety? (1.) We search for them out of curiosity, or content ourselves with mere speculations, which is an adulterous love to truth, not to get an interest in them: John iv. 10, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water.' (2.) We do not look upon them with the eye of faith: Eph.

iii. 17, 18, '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.' Our embracing by faith is a good means to make this study effectual. (3.) They content themselves with a superficial view, but do not make an accurate inspection. We do not know it so as to stand wondering at it in all its dimensions: Eph. iii. 18, 'That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.' Breadth, whereby it is extended to men of all ages and ranks: Mat. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world;' 1 Tim. ii. 4, 'Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' Length, whereby it reacheth from eternity to eternity: Ps. ciii. 17, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.' Depth; it stoopeth to our lowest misery. Christ delivered us from the depths of misery and sin: Ps. lxxxvi. 13, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.' And there is height in it, whereby it reacheth to heavenly joys and happiness: John xiv. 3, 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' Study those several respects and ways wherein it is manifested, till you are ravished with the thoughts of it; draw solid comfort, hope, and quickening from it: Ps. xxxix. 3, 'While I was musing the fire burned.'

3. It reproveth those that only study it, but do not get an interest and experience of the comfort of it, otherwise it is a cold story: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' There is Christ revealed to us and Christ revealed in us; then is there sweetness in these truths: Gal. i. 16, 'It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.'

4. It reproveth those that mar their savour with fleshly lusts, and are distracted with hunting after the pleasures and profits of the world: Rom. viii. 5, 'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.' They that were invited to the feast, 'They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise,' Mat. xxii. 5. They do not value the glory of God and the true interest of their own souls.

Use 3. Is to persuade us to search into and meditate upon these blessed and glorious mysteries. Surely if the angels desire to look into these things, they much more are propounded to our admiration and delight, because we have more need, by reason of the imperfection of our knowledge, and these things do more concern us, because we are the parties interested. Needless speculations we may well spare; the things which concern our redemption by Christ are our own affairs, and our greatest and most necessary affairs. To know our threatened misery to prevent it, and our promised happiness to obtain it, what we must do, and what we must be for ever, is that business which we must most attend upon.

Here I shall inquire—(1.) What; (2.) How; (3.) Why.

First, What? The person of our Redeemer and the work of redemption.

1. The person of our Redeemer is a point of great concernment, to

be often thought upon. The frame of nature is set as a glass, wherein to behold and admire God: Rom. i. 20, 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.' Much more the person of our Redeemer, for we best behold God in the face of Jesus Christ: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;' wherein we see God in our nature, and as head over all things to the church, and as our Lord and Saviour. God is most honoured in his greatest works, as the sun doth more honour him than a star, and a star than a plant or herb and pile of grass; so the person of Christ doth more set forth God than either man or angel, or anything besides: Heb. i. 3, 'Who being *ἀπαντασμα τῆς δόξης*, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.' As God sets forth more of his glory in him, so he expecteth it from him and by him. We are always looking at our own benefit, but we do not look at God's glory, nor what of God is discovered in Christ, in whom his goodness, wisdom, and power doth eminently shine forth. Certainly the knowledge of Christ is the christian's wisdom, the true and proper feast of a rational mind. Two things are most considerable in Christ—his relation to God, and his relation to the universal church.

[1.] His relation to God, as the express image of his person. So the angels delight to look upon him. Those holy creatures do not consider their own benefit so much as their Creator's glory. Where they find most of God, there they are most ravished, therefore they greatly delight themselves when they consider the wisdom, power, and goodness of God as manifested in Christ. The contemplation of these things is their happiness. Now, shall the angels pay this rent of glory to God, and shall not we? Surely God should be as dear to us as to them.

[2.] His relation to the universal church. It is more to be the church's head and Saviour than ours in particular. The angels adore him for the excellency of his office, and his transcendant glory and dignity. It doth us a double good to reflect upon this; partly to make our affection more public, and that we may consider the common good; for a narrow private spirit maketh christians self-seeking and unpeaceable. Christ mainly is the head and saviour of the body: Eph. v. 23, 'Christ is the head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body.' When you see that he is head of all saints, under what form and denomination whatsoever, your affections are less liable to partiality, for then all christians will be dear to you, as they are united to you in him, and you will be more tender of the prosperity of the church, of which Christ is the head. And partly to fortify you against the splendour of all created glory; for, Eph. i. 21, Christ is exalted 'far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named; not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.' The glory and splendour of earthly things doth often dazzle our eyes; now it is good to divert our minds by considering the glory and excellency of Christ. Kings and emperors are nothing to him, less than the light of a candle compared with

the sun. The angels see him far above them, and we should see him far above all created power and glory, and so hearten ourselves against all discouragements.

2. The work of our redemption, which is double—

[1.] In reconciling us to God: 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.' We should always ravish our hearts with this speculation: Heb. iii. 1, 'Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.' He is our high priest as dealing with God, and our apostle as dealing with man. God thought it worthy of his eternal thoughts, and therefore we should more set our minds a-work about it. Redemption by Christ is so much slighted, because we do not consider the high and excellent ends thereof. Certainly every faculty must be exercised in praising God, mind as well as heart; and this is the proper object to exercise our minds, as it doth the angelical contemplation, and by our minds our hearts.

[2.] In vanquishing our enemies, and removing the impediments of our salvation. By merit Christ did it on the cross: Col. ii. 15, 'Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it;' that is, on the cross. Satan triumphed visibly, Christ invisibly. It was the hour of the power of darkness, and yet of the conquest of the Son of God. *Representative* he did it in his ascension: Eph. iv. 8, 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive;' he foiled his enemies on the cross, and he triumphed over them at his ascension; but it was before the tribunal of God, in the sight of angels and our faith. But then there is an actual conquest and triumph. The conquest is still carrying on till his kingdom be complete: Ps. cx. 1, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thy enemies thy footstool.' The effects are discerned, as Christ casteth the devil out of his temples and territories, and out of the hearts of men. The triumph is gloriously visible and sensible, and open to the view of all at the last day. In both these things the angels are concerned. In his conquests, as Christ doth confound the wisdom of men and devils in maintaining and preserving his church. They are a part of Christ's army, and have a great respect to his church: Heb. i. 13, 14, 'But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?' They are some of God's messengers, that help to restore and recover man from the power of the devil, and disdain not the service Christ appoints them for lost sinners, but have a great respect to his church and the assemblies of his people: 1 Cor. xi. 10, 'For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels;' 1 Tim. v. 21, 'I charge thee before God, and the elect angels.' For his triumph; with them Christ will appear at the end of the world, when he hath won the field, and cometh in triumph to confound his conquered enemies: 2 Thes. i. 7, 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.' These things the angels pry into, so should we.

Secondly, How?

1. Accurately and seriously. Usually we content ourselves with

running cursory thoughts, never sit and pause with ourselves what manner of saviour and salvation this is, what is required of them that would be partakers of it, and so content ourselves with a superficial view, without an accurate inspection. Slight and shallow apprehensions leave no impression on the soul. The hen that often straggleth from her nest suffereth her eggs to chill. We should dwell upon these things till they produce a clearer knowledge, a firmer belief, an higher estimation, a greater admiration; for this is to resemble angels: Eph. iii. 18, 'That we may comprehend with all saints the depth, and length, and breadth, and height;' all which begets solid comforts. When the mind is wholly taken up with other things, the soundest knowledge worketh not.

2. Spiritually, profitably, practically. Our business is not so much to know new truths about the gospel, as to know them in a more useful manner. Let us pry into these things as the angels do, not to satisfy our curiosity with a little notional knowledge, or out of pride, that we may pertinently discourse of them, or hold up an argument about them, but that God may be glorified and admired in the person of the Redeemer, and our souls delighted for our comfort and quickening, and weaned from the vanities of the world: ver. 13, 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus-Christ.'

Thirdly, Why?

1. Because it is an honourable employment to look into the mysteries of salvation, and to be much conversant about them. It will be a great part of our happiness and work in heaven to behold Christ's glory: John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' All our faith, hope, and labour tendeth to this. The queen of Sheba took a long journey to behold the glory of Solomon, which did so ravish her that her spirit even fainted within her; and yet that was but an earthly, temporal, fading glory. But to behold the majesty and greatness which Christ our Redeemer hath at the right hand of God is the great work which we have to do to all eternity; therefore now we should busy ourselves about these things, that our mouths may be filled with praise and thanksgiving.

2. Because it is delightful to gracious hearts. God findeth a delight in Christ, and shall not we? There is more in the gospel than a vulgar eye taketh notice of, or our first apprehensions represent unto us. Shall angels wonder at these things, joy and delight in these things, and shall we slight them? Paul counted all things 'dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,' Phil. iii. 8; and 1 Cor. ii. 2, 'I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' Surely unless our thoughts are lawfully diverted or suspended we should think of no other thing. Austin cast away 'Tully *quia nomen Christi non erat ibi*, because the name of Christ was not in it.

3. It is useful.

[1.] That all created glory may wax dim, and be more obscured in our eyes; their power is nothing, their loveliness is nothing in comparison of Christ; this should take up thy soul, and draw off thy

observation from deluding vanities, such as riches, and honours, and pleasures. As the light of a candle is scarce seen when the sun shineth brightly, so all the tempting baits of the flesh are nothing when the glories of Christ are considered by us. See ver. 13, 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' So for affrighting terrors; what are potentates and powers to him? All authorities and powers, lawful or usurped, must be subject to Christ: 1 Peter iii. 22, 'Who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.' This promoteth the joy and constancy of believers under sufferings.

2. To draw out our hearts after him: John iv. 10, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given thee living water.' Looking after these things is in order to choice: Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' What are all things in the world if set against Christ and his salvation?

3. That we should converse with him in holy duties with more reverence: Heb. xii. 25, 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven;' Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.' Now, shall we scarce vouchsafe these things a serious thought? The angels are concerned in a way of duty, not in a way of benefit; it is their duty to worship Christ: Heb. i. 6, 'And again, when he brought his first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him;' but not by way of recovery; and yet they desire to look into this glorious mystery.
