

## SERMONS UPON REVELATION I. 5, 6.

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### SERMON I.

*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—REV. i. 5, 6.*

THE sacrament is an abridgment of the gospel, and we shall best suit the end of it when we lay before you the sum of the gospel in one entire view. This scripture presenteth us with the principal parts of it. It carrieth the form of a doxology or a thanksgiving; wherein observe—

1. The person to whom this doxology is directed, ‘To him;’ that is, to Jesus Christ, ‘the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.’

2. The reasons or matter of it. Wherein—(1.) The moving cause of all that Christ hath done for us, ‘He loved us.’ (2.) The benefit obtained for us, ‘He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.’ (3.) The fruit of it, ‘And made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.’

3. The doxology itself, ‘To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.’

*Doct.* That the Lord Jesus deserveth everlastingly to be honoured, lauded, and praised by all the saints that make mention of his name.

John having occasionally mentioned Christ, falleth into this doxology.

*Reasons.* (1.) From what he is; (2.) For what he hath done for us; (3.) For the fruits and benefits we have thereby.

I. From what he is. He is described—(1.) ‘To be ‘the faithful witness,’ who hath made known the will of the Father with all fidelity and certainty. (2.) As one who, being crucified, rose from the dead as our first-fruits, ascertaining our resurrection: ‘The first begotten from the dead.’ The apostle saith, Col. i. 18, ‘The first-born from the dead.’ The resurrection is a kind of birth, and Christ is the first-born or first-begotten, because he was the first that rose from the dead in his own

strength, and vanquished death. Others were raised before him, but to die again; they were raised in their own single persons, he as a public person: 'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept,' 1 Cor. xv. 20. And he will by the same power raise again all his members to immortality and life. (3.) He is 'the Prince of the kings of the earth;' one that hath all power given him in heaven and in earth, and is superior to all princes of the world, not only in regard of eminency, as a far greater prince than they, but authority and power over them; he is their Lord and sovereign as well as ours: as it is said, Dan. iv. 17, 'The Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will.'

1. Observe, these titles are given to Christ with respect to his three offices of king, priest, and prophet. (1.) His prophetic office is implied in that term, 'The faithful Witness;' one that hath brought the gospel out of the bosom of God, and plainly and clearly revealed it to the world, and hath confirmed the certainty of it by divers miracles, especially by his death, from which he rose again, and ascended, and poured out the Spirit upon the disciples for a testimony; and still continueth that dispensation in part of giving the Spirit, so far as to assure the hearts of his people that this is the truth. (2.) His priesthood is implied in that expression, 'The first-begotten from the dead.' He died, and so offered himself as a sacrifice of atonement to God; he rose again, and is entered within the veil, to continue the exercise of that office by his constant intercession. (3.) His kingly office is implied in that other expression, 'The Prince of the kings of the earth.' They are all his vicegerents, absolutely at his dispose, and can do neither more nor less than he will have them: Mat. xxviii. 18, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' He hath supreme and absolute authority given him over all things, both in heaven and earth, for the good of the church; and in the church he is the only head and king, to appoint and maintain the way and means of gathering, preserving, ruling the church, and ordering all the affairs thereof to the world's end.

2. Observe, that all these titles are suited to the present occasion of this prophecy, which is to encourage his people to suffer persecution for the gospel's sake. (1.) As he was 'The faithful Witness,' it assured their cause to be right. The gospel is called 'The testimony of Jesus Christ,' ver. 2. He declared nothing to us but the will of God. The flesh hath such a value for and tenderness of its interests, that men will soon distinguish themselves out of their duty if there be the least doubtfulness in the cause for which they suffer, or any suspicion of it. Therefore now, when dreadful troubles attended the profession of the gospel, he setteth forth Christ as 'The faithful Witness,' to heighten their zeal. As also, Rev. iii. 14, 'These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness.' (2.) As he was 'The first-begotten from the dead,' it still encourageth them more, by assuring them of a joyful resurrection if their lives should fall in this quarrel and conflict. This should allay all the fears of death. Christ is not called the first-born of the living, but the first-born from the dead, to own a relation to us in every condition, dead as well as living: he, as the first-born, rose as a pledge and pattern of what should be done to us. (3.) As 'Prince

of the kings of the earth,' of whose power and persecutions they were so much afraid, but needed not; for they are not only accountable to Christ at last, which those adverse powers little valued, having not embraced the profession of the gospel; but were held in by the reins of his government for the present, so as they could not so much as touch an hair of their heads without his leave. So that here was much encouragement for suffering christians, who at that time were to conflict with great difficulties, and exposed to the slaughters and butcheries of cruel enemies.

3. Observe, all these titles serve to beget a reverence and great respect in our hearts to the person that owneth them; he is 'The faithful Witness.' The great Prophet of the church should be regarded by us: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,' Mat. xvii. 5. We are to hearken to him, believe him, obey him, as knowing that we must stand or fall at the sentence of his word. He is the greatest and most excellent of all the prophets, and far above them all, who knew more of God and of his mind than all they joined in one; and hath declared his will more fully, clearly, and powerfully; and shall we set at nought his counsel? Some that despised the counsel of an ordinary prophet smarted for it: Heb. x. 28, 29, 'He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?' who came out of his bosom on purpose to teach us the way of salvation. If he require repentance and faith, with a promise of righteousness and eternal life, and a commination of eternal death unavoidable, if we believe not, nor repent, we are to believe it with all certainty, to set about this work with all care and diligence, and continue therein with all constancy and perseverance: 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.' Christ came from heaven at first, returned to heaven again, from heaven sent down the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, and by that Spirit enabled them to preach the gospel with success. Oh, surely we should attend to his doctrine, and receive it with firm assent, and obey it with humble submission.

Again, he is 'The first-begotten from the dead.' That he died should render him dear to us, for it was for our sakes, as I shall show by-and-by. That he rose again was for our sakes, for our justification: 'Who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification,' Rom. iv. 25; for it sheweth that his sacrifice was accepted as sufficient for our atonement. Yea, for our blessed resurrection: 1 Cor. xv. 20, 'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept;' as the whole harvest was blessed and sanctified in a little handful of the first-fruits offered to God. But I urge it now as an argument why we should give him glory, as deserving it by the greatness of his person. This made it evident that he was the Son of God: Rom. i. 4, 'Declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.' The true Messiah, and judge of the world: Acts xvii. 31, 'Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man

whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' If he had been an impostor, neither could he have raised up himself, being a mere man, nor would God have raised him up ; for we cannot imagine that divine providence would co-operate to countenance a lie or cheat. As then you would not be found enemies to Christ in his imperial day, give him glory and dominion. If you slight him, you despise one that is evidently declared to be the Son of God. And there is no medium ; either he must be your loving Saviour or your terrible judge. If you neglect him, he will not be the first-born from the dead to you, nor the first-fruits to you—the first-fruits did not bless the tares, or the cockle, or darnel, or filthy weeds, but only the good corn—though raised again you shall be by his judicial power.

Again, he is 'The Prince of the kings of the earth,' and therefore highly to be respected. Respect to great ones and fawning upon great ones is the practice of all the world ; all will seek the ruler's face. As all rivers run to the sea, so do all the respects of the world to the great and the mighty ; and is not the Son of God worthy of our respects, that is set down at the right hand of majesty above all ? If we did live by faith as much as by sense, we would see it is our interest as well as our duty to honour Christ ; we would not fear a mortal man, that can threaten us with a prison, but Christ, who can threaten us with hell ; nor be dismayed at the frowns of men when Christ smiles : 'Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ?' Rev. xv. 4. We would yield up ourselves to be his willing subjects, and obey his laws, who can reward us, not with temporal dignities, but eternal life. The authority and power that all others have is but derived from Christ, and subordinate to him ; therefore, if he smiles, whose frowns need we fear ? He is the one lawgiver, that hath *potestatem vite et necis*, power of life and death ; he is able to destroy absolutely, and you may be safe in his protection. Well, then, if we consider what he is, he deserveth everlastingly to be honoured.

II. What he hath done for us, 'He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' And there we begin—

First, With the fountain and bosom cause of all, and that is Christ's love : 'To him that loved us.'

1. Christ's love is the ground of man's redemption ; that stirred all the causes, and set them a-work, that concurred to this end. Other attributes were manifested in the redemption of mankind, as God's wisdom, power, justice, holiness ; but they are all subservient to love : but love is at the upper end of all causes, subservient to nothing but itself. If you ask a reason of other things, it may be assigned ; but if you ask a reason of his love, that cannot be given but from itself. If the question be, Wherefore did God discover such riches of wisdom, goodness, and power, for the saving poor worthless creatures ? He loved us : John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.' Wherefore did Jesus Christ submit to such bitter agonies, such an accursed death ? He loved us : Eph. v. 2, 'Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour ;' Eph. v. 25, 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it ;' and Gal. ii. 20,

‘Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ But now put the question, Wherefore did he love us? Love only is the reason of itself; he loved us because he loved us: Deut. vii. 7, 8, ‘The Lord did not set his love on you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, &c., but because the Lord loved you.’

2. As it is the fountain cause, so it was that property that shined forth most conspicuously in the work of redemption: Rom. v. 8, ‘God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.’ And therefore this is that which we should most admire and be ravished with in our thoughts. Here, next to the description of the excellency of Christ’s person, the first thing mentioned in the doxology itself is this, ‘To him that loved us.’ This is a comfortable word, as if Jesus would be described and known by nothing so much as by his love. What was the Son of God but love incarnate, love born of a virgin, love conversing in the world, and preaching salvation to poor sinners; love going about and doing good; love relieving the diseased and the possessed, curing the deaf, and the dumb, and the blind, and the lame; and finally, love dying and hanging on the cross? ‘God is love,’ 1 John iv. 8. The angels in heaven adore this love, though spectators, not parties interested; he came not for their sakes, but ours only. We have a little notional knowledge of it, but could we once find the saving effects of God’s love in Christ, impressed upon our hearts by the Spirit, how would you be melted and ravished, and ever be thinking what glory and honour you might bring to him that thus loved you? You and I may discourse of it; it is not a few cold thoughts of the love of Christ will work on us, but ‘the shedding of this love abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost,’ Rom. v. 5. There is no knowledge like the experimental knowledge which ariseth from the felt and known effects of this love; this would awaken your hopes, fill you with solid comfort, excite you to your duty: 2 Cor. v. 14, ‘For the love of Christ constraineth us.’ However, till you have this, the means you must use are sound belief and serious consideration.

[1.] Embracing by faith the love of God in Christ, and the good things prepared by it, as they are revealed and offered in the gospel; that is the way to get this fuller insight and experimental knowledge and feeling of this love; for so the apostle prayeth, 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;’ 1 John iv. 16, ‘We have known and believed the love which God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.’

[2.] The serious contemplation and meditation of it. It is your duty to study it with the deepest, serious, and most ponderous thoughts you can use: Eph. iii. 18, ‘That we may comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of it.’ We are not to content ourselves with a superficial view of God’s love in Christ, but must take an accurate inspection of it, in all the dimensions thereof, upward, downward, on the right hand and left. Narrow thoughts and shallow apprehensions do little good, either as to God’s glory, or our solid comfort, and

that earnest constraint or encouragement to duty which it is wont to produce in the heart. We must neither do it slightly nor seldom. Our hearts are too narrow to understand it all at once; it is so vast and boundless, so rich and unsearchable, yea, infinite. We never know so much but there remaineth more still to be known. Therefore we must often renew the meditation, and continue it so long, till the heart be warmed, and ready to break out into praise; and till our wonder and admiration be raised, and we see the object too big for the faculty, for it is beyond all created understanding; till we be swallowed and overwhelmed in this deep and bottomless ocean, and through a penury of thoughts cry out, Oh, the depth of the riches of the mercy and love of God! For the present I shall content myself with four properties of this love.

(1.) It was a free love: 'I will love them freely,' Hosea xiv. 4. If he did not love us with a free love, how could he love us at all? What could he foresee in us but what was the effect of his own grace? We were neither loving nor lovely. Not loving; we did not prevent God. To love those that love us, it hath nothing singular; that is the ordinary courtesy of the world. By nature we were God's enemies, and what could an enemy deserve? Not lovely; all that grace that is wrought in us afterward is his gift; therefore this was at first a free love, that had no motive nor foundation but within itself. He loveth us, not because he seeth anything lovely or amiable in us, but only because he will demonstrate the absoluteness of his own will, and self-inclination to do us good.

(2.) It was a real love, not an empty complimenting love; it rested not in good wishes; there was great proof and manifestation of it: 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' It was such a love as made him leave the height of his glory, and assume our nature, and die in that nature, and shed his blood, and by it wash us from our sins. There was a benevolence in it, and a beneficence also. A man may wish health when another is sick, and supplies when another is poor; but Christ did not wish us well only; but as fire sheweth itself by heat and by light, so love by the real effects of it. Perhaps thou sayest to another, Believe that I love thee; but while this is only professed in words, he may believe it, but he cannot see it; but if upon occasion you do anything for him, or expose yourself to danger for his sake, then he saith, Now I see that thou lovest me. So God to Abraham: Gen. xxii. 12, 'Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.' Here is a plain proof and signal evidence. So here; Christ hath demonstrated the reality of his love; the man seeth it.

(3.) It was eminent and transcendent love. Compare it with the love of one creature to another, and in all the world you cannot find a parallel to equal it: John xv. 13, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.' But where is that rare instance of friendship? Rom. v. 6-8, 'For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a

righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.' He died, the just for the unjust, the judge for the offender, God for sinners. It can be resembled by no love upon earth; therefore he himself compareth his love to lost sinners with the Father's love to him: John xv. 9, 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.' It is eternal, incomprehensible, and unchangeable.

(4.) It was a full love, removing our misery, procuring all blessings for us, to make us completely happy; for as it fetched us from the lowest hell, it leaveth us not till it bringeth us to joys and happiness in the highest heavens: 1 Thes. v. 9, 10, 'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.' Well, then, if I should stop here, I hope you have so much ingenuity and sense of your Redeemer's affection to you as to say, 'To him be glory and dominion, even to him who loved us.'

Secondly, The signal act of his love to us: 'He washed us from our sins in his own blood.'

1. Observe, this is put as the great instance of his love. We cannot know the love of God by any other fruit and benefit till this be done. By the bounty of his general providence he provideth for all his creatures, and feedeth them, and maintaineth them in that kind of being unto which he hath raised them out of nothing. So he supplieth the young ravens and the beasts of the field; much more is he good to mankind; he giveth them food and raiment convenient for them, and beareth with them notwithstanding their renewed provocations: Acts xiv. 17, 'Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' The heathen might trace God by acts of bounty rather than acts of vengeance. But hereby they can have no assurance of God's special love to them; for 'No man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before them,' Eccles. ix. 1. Thou canst not say, God giveth me riches, therefore he loveth me; or sendeth me poverty, therefore he hateth me. No; he may give these things to his enemies, and deny them to his friends; but you may undoubtedly conclude, He loveth me, for he hath washed me from my sins. Clear this once, and you have a full and concluding proof of God's special love to you.

2. The value and worth of this benefit is exceeding great. This will appear if you consider—

[1.] The necessity of it. We were all defiled with sin, which is such a filthiness and stain as cannot easily be washed away. The party displeased and provoked is God, and the party defiled is the immortal soul of man, which being subject to the power of God, and bound by his laws, upon disobedience is conscious to itself of the merit of death and punishment, and debarred from all communion with God. And it cannot have any sound peace till it knows that God is satisfied, and that it shall be admitted again into terms of grace and favour with him. That sin hath made us filthy and loathsome to God, that we cannot please him, nor be accepted with him, the word doth not only assert it:

Ps. xiv. 2, 3, 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one;' Job xv. 14, 'What is man, that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?' Job xiv. 4, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' But conscience is in part sensible of it, so that a sinner hath a secret dread and shyness of God, especially upon the commission of actual sins: 1 John iii. 20, 21, 'For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' I know generally man looketh to the foulness and cleanness of the body, but is insensible of the stain of the soul. Yet we cannot always exempt, no, not the worst, from a secret sense of this. However, our misery and happiness dependeth upon God's judgment, not our own; if in the eye of God all of us are polluted and unclean, lying in our blood, defiled with the guilt of sin already committed, and the filthy vileness of sin yet indwelling. This is evident, we were miserable enough till God found out a remedy; and this misery is the deeper, because man loveth what God loatheth; as the swine loveth wallowing in the mire, and therefore it is a creature loathsome to us. We count sin a bravery, when it is the greatest impurity, a filthiness deeply ingrained in our natures, and therefore not easily washed away, both as to the guilt, as also to the stain and blot.

[2.] This being our misery, Christ came to wash us, and with no other laver than his own blood, as a priest offering himself a sacrifice for our sins. The remedy for so great a mischief must have a noble and excellent cause. That blood was necessary appeareth by the types of the law, for the typical expiation was made by the blood of bulls and goats offered in sacrifice. And that no blood but the blood of Jesus Christ would serve the turn is evident, if you consider the party displeased and provoked, who was God; the party defiled, the immortal spirit of man; and the heinous nature of the offence, which was a breach of his righteous and eternal law. Therefore it is said, 1 John i. 7, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;' Heb. i. 3, 'He by himself purged our sins;' and Heb. ix. 13, 14, 'If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?' There is virtue and efficacy enough in the blood of Christ, partly from the institution of God, and its own manifold worth and value, as being the blood of God; partly by the way and manner in which it was offered, by an act done in our nature, of the greatest obedience and self-denial that ever was or can be, and so God is fully repaired in point of honour.

[3.] This sacrifice thus offered was accepted of God in the behalf of sinful man, as a full price and merit to procure for us both justification and sanctification. We needed both, being polluted both with the guilt and stain of sin. Both are a trouble to a sensible conscience or an awakened sinner, who is in the next capacity to receive this sacrifice:



1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' As a man that hath broken his leg is not only troubled with the pain, but would have it set right again. Both are implied in this washing, and both are effectually accomplished by virtue of his bloody death and sacrifice: 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' And Christ hath obtained both by virtue of his bloody death and sacrifice for our pardon and restitution to God's grace and favour: Rom. v. 1, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' As also the gift of the Spirit, to sanctify and renew us to the image of God: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'

[4.] Besides the impetration of this benefit, we must consider the application. The sacrifice had power to purge us and wash us from our sins, as soon as it was offered and accepted of God. The procuring of the power is the impetration, which was antecedent to actual pardon and sanctification; therefore it is said, 'When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high,' Heb. i. 3. Then he interposed the merit; then was the first grant made or liberty given. But then for the application: It is applied when we submit to those terms that are agreed upon between our Redeemer and God, as our supreme judge and lawgiver. As when this sacrifice is believed and depended on, and pleaded in an humble and broken-hearted manner, and improved to thankfulness, and resolutions to return to the obedience of our creator, then is sin actually pardoned, and our hearts cleansed. He did not pardon, nor cleanse, nor sanctify, as soon as this blood was shed upon the cross, until it be effectually applied to the filthy soul by a lively faith: Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith;' and a serious and broken-hearted repentance: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' We must bewail our sins, depend upon the sacrifice of Christ, sue out the virtue of it by prayer: Ps. li. 2, 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' Extinguish the love of sin by godly sorrow and all holy means, and mortify the flesh by the help of the Spirit: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body,' &c.; and more and more interest ourselves in his cleansing.

[5.] Because the application is a difficult work. Besides the purchase of the gift of the Spirit, Christ hath instituted the help of the word and sacraments, to bring us into possession of this benefit: Eph. v. 26, 'That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.' The merit of his death falleth upon these means, that we may use them with the more confidence: John xv. 3, 'Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.' The word is the glass wherein to see corruption, which sets a-work to seek purging; by that our sense of our natural impurity is revived, the means and causes of our cleansing set down, that we may with deep humiliation confess our sin, humbly

sue out the grace offered, and wait for it in the conscionable use of all the means of grace. And for the sacraments: As the word containeth the charter and grant of Christ and all his benefits to those that will receive him, so this is the seal of the grant: Rom. iv. 11, 'He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith;' whereby we are more confirmed in waiting for the Spirit, and excited to look for this benefit from Christ. Well, then, we must still lie at the pool of the word and sacraments.

And now you have my second argument why Jesus Christ should be honoured, lauded, and praised by all the saints; because he hath done so great an office of love, and procured so great a benefit for us, as the washing away of our sins in his blood, that we might be admitted to communion with God.

III. The fruits and benefits that we have thereby: 'He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and to his Father.' This doth oblige us the more to ascribe, and give glory and dominion to him for ever and ever, since he hath brought us into communion with God, and set us apart as consecrated persons, such as kings and priests were of old, to perform daily service to God.

In this third thing—

1. Observe the order. We must be washed from our sins before we can be kings and priests, or minister before the Lord. Aaron and his sons, though they were formerly designed to be priests, yet they could not officiate and act as priests before they were consecrated. So must we be consecrated and made priests to God, and that by the blood of Christ. They were seven days in consecrating. This whole life is the time of our consecration, which goeth on by degrees, and will be made complete, both for body and soul, upon the resurrection, when we shall be fit to approach the throne of glory, and serve our God in a perfect manner, in the eternal temple of heaven. For this life, though our consecration be not finished, yet here we are styled an holy priesthood, to minister before the throne of grace, though not before the throne of glory. Now, if we be washed from our sins in the laver of regeneration, we may draw near to God, as the priests under the law were washed in the laver, and then came to the altar. It holdeth good both in this life and in the life to come, that none but the washed can come so near to God, either before the throne of grace or throne of glory. The throne of grace: Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' So Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' In the state of glory: Rev. vii. 14, 15, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.' The persecuted saints, who came out of great tribulation, they first washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, before they were admitted, as priests, to stand before the throne of God, to serve him day and night in his temple. Sanctification must go before consecration; and the more sanctified, the more consecrated. When our

sanctification is finished, then our consecration is consummate ; and then we shall have a full communion with our God, a clear vision of his eternal beauty, and as great a fruition of his godhead as we shall be capable of, in a state of full contentment, joy, and blessedness.

2. The privileges are exceedingly great, to be consecrated to so high a dignity ; that we should be consecrated or set apart for God, to be objects of his special grace, and instruments of his glory and service. Much more, that we should be advanced to so great a dignity as to be kings and priests to God. We share in Christ's own dignity. He was a king and a priest, so are we ; he had an unction, so have we ; he was Christ, we are christians : by virtue of our union with him, we are partakers of his kingdom and priesthood. The church of Israel was called ' a kingdom of priests,' *Exod. xix. 6* ; and believers in the new testament are called ' a royal priesthood,' *1 Peter ii. 9* ; not to disturb civil kings, or the order God hath instituted in the church ; for it is kings and priests ' to God,' not to the world. Let us consider these privileges asunder.

[1.] Kings. King is a name of honour, power, and ample possession.

(1.) Here we reign spiritually, as we vanquish the devil, the world, and the flesh in any measure. It is a princely thing to be above these inferior things, and to trample them under our feet in an holy and heavenly pride. An heathen could say, *Rex est qui metuit nihil, rex est qui cupit nihil*—He is a king that fears nothing, and desires nothing. He that is above the hopes and fears of the world. He that hath his heart in heaven, and is above temporal accidents, the ups and downs of the world, the world beneath his heart and affections, this man is of a kingly spirit. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, neither is a believer's : *Rev. v. 10*, ' Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth,' viz., in a spiritual way. It is a beastly thing to serve our lusts, but kingly to have our conversations in heaven, and vanquish the world : *1 John v. 4, 5*, ' Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world ; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? ' To live up to our faith and love with a noble royal spirit.

(2.) Hereafter we shall reign visibly and gloriously, when we shall sit upon thrones with Christ, at his last coming to judge the world, and angels themselves : *Mat. xix. 28*, ' Verily, I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel ; ' *Luke xxii. 29, 30*, ' I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' This was spoken at the Lord's supper, which is a pledge of it : ' The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning,' *Ps. xlix. 14*.

(3.) They shall be kings eternally in heaven : *Luke xii. 32*, ' Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom ; ' *2 Tim. ii. 12*, ' If we suffer, we shall also reign with him ; ' that is, in heaven. With respect to this right, title, and interest, so they are made kings. We are heirs in Christ : *Rom. viii. 17*, ' If

children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ : if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.' We are heirs of a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

[2.] Priests. That was a great dignity among the Jews. To this all christians are now advanced : 1 Peter ii. 5, 'Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.' Our sacrifices are not expiatory, but gratulatory ; not sin-offerings, but thank-offerings ; not typical, but spiritual. Jesus Christ is the only sin-offering. Our thank-offerings are either ourselves : Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' Or our duties, which are spiritual offerings. We offer not beasts, which were typical, but the calves of our lips, our prayers and praises : Heb. xiii. 15, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually ; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.' Or alms : ver. 16, 'But to do good, and to communicate, forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased ;' Phil. iv. 18, 'But I have all, and abound ; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you ; an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.' Now this is a great honour, that we should be separated by the Lord from all the rest of the world, and admitted into such a nearness and access to God with boldness, and hope of being accepted through Christ.

*Use 1.* In the general, all this should stir up our hearts to give continual praise and glory to Christ our blessed Redeemer. So doth the apostle here ; that is the use he maketh of it : 'To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.' It is a thing to be reproved in christians that we take so little time to admire, honour, and praise our Redeemer, which yet is a great part of our work. Surely if you had a due sight of his excellency, or a sense and taste of the riches of his goodness and love, you would be more in this delightful work. Usually praise is a stranger to our worship ; and however we are enlarged in confession of sin or supplication for such things as we want, yet we are straitened in our gratulations. Surely lauding and praising God in Christ is as necessary as the other parts of worship : Ps. xxii. 3, God is said to 'inhabit the praises of Israel ;' that is, in Israel, where he is praised. The great end of worship is not the relief of man so much as the honour of God ; therefore we should not only ask things needful for ourselves, and mind merely the supply of our necessities, but the honour of Christ : Ps. l. 23, 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' If God will account it an honour to be well thought of and spoken of by his creature, we should more abound in this work. Why are we then so scanty in praises and thanksgivings ? The reasons of this defect are self-love ; we are eager to have blessings, but we forget to return to give God the glory. Prayer is a work of necessity, but praise is a work of mere duty. Self-love puts all upon prayer, but the love of God upon praise. Again, stupid negligence ; we do not gather up matter of thanksgiving, nor watch in our prayers, nor seek after matter for it : Col. iv. 2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.'

2. More particularly, let us take our example from this doxology, 'To

him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.' We can but ascribe to Christ what he hath already, but we must do it heartily. Observe here—(1.) The things ascribed to Christ, 'Glory and dominion.' (2.) The manner of ascription; it is imperative. (3.) The duration, 'For ever and ever.' (4.) The seal of all, in the word 'Amen.'

[1.] The things ascribed to Christ, 'Glory and dominion.' In other places it is honour and power everlasting: 1 Tim. vi. 16, 'Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen.' In the Lord's prayer more fully: Mat. vi. 13, 'For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.' Where by 'kingdom' is meant right and authority to dispose of all things according to his own pleasure; by 'power,' strength and all-sufficiency to execute what he pleaseth; by 'glory,' his honour, which is the result of all that he doth. *Clara cum laude notitia*—Excellency discovered with praise. We desire that he may be more honoured, and brought into request and esteem in the world. Here we have but two words, 'glory' and 'dominion.' 'Glory,' that is, just praise and esteem; gracious hearts think they can never set Christ high enough in their esteem and praise; this is all they can return to him for his great benefits. 'Glory,' that he may have the honour, as they the comfort. 'Dominion,' implieth lordship and sovereignty; this they would have given to Christ as his due by his own purchase and God's assignment: Rom. xiv. 9, 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' It was God's end: Phil. ii. 10, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.'

[2.] The form is imperative, as binding themselves and others to give him glory and dominion. 'Themselves in the first place, and that not only with the tongue, but with the heart; not only in word, but in deed. So they would give him glory, praise him with their lips, and honour him with their lives. They would make that their work and scope, that this may be the real language of their hearts and actions, which speak much louder than words. 'These show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light,' 1 Peter ii. 9, that really they may be the glory of Christ: 2 Cor. viii. 23, 'They are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ;' 2 Thes. i. 12, 'That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.' So for dominion; the practical acknowledgment is better than the verbal: Luke vi. 46, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' Mat. vii. 21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' Christ was mocked when they cried, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' Mat. xxvii. 29, and yet they crucified him. If we would have dominion given to Christ, we must look upon ourselves as not our own, but his; not live to ourselves, or use ourselves for ourselves, but resign up ourselves absolutely to him. Then for others, such is their love to Christ and the souls of men, that true christians desire that Christ may not only be glorified by themselves, but others; that he may be known, worshipped, and believed on in the world, especially those about them; as fire turneth all things about it into fire.

[3.] The duration, 'For ever and ever.' In all doxologies a long duration is expressed. They desire not only the present age may glorify God, but the future. When we are dead and gone, the Lord remaineth, and they would not have him remain without praise and honour. It is the comfort of their souls, when dying, that God shall have a people to praise him; and they prize their own salvation the more, that they shall live for ever to glorify God; that, as God's blessings are everlasting, so shall be their praises.

[4.] It is ratified by a solemn attestation, 'Amen.' It is *nota desiderii et supplicationis*; by it we testify our fervent affection, and strength of desire after the glory of Christ. We should have an Amen for our praises as well as for our prayers; not only to say, 'Jesus, master, have mercy on us, Amen;' but, 'To him be glory for ever and ever, Amen.'

## SERMON II.

*And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.*

REV. i. 6.

I SHALL take up this subject again, and speak of our priesthood, when we shall be admitted into the immediate presence of God, and praise him for evermore. There is a ministration before the throne of grace, or before the throne of glory; before the throne of grace we minister in this life, before the throne of glory in the life to come. Of the latter I shall now speak, because it is a truth commonly overlooked.

*Doct.* That the priesthood which we have by Christ concerneth our ministration in the heavenly temple.

I shall prove it by these arguments—

1. Because a christian is conformed to Christ, and made like him in all things. Christ must *πρωτεύειν*, first it in all things: Col. i. 18, 'That in all things he might have the pre-eminence;' Rom. viii. 29, 'Whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren.' Now if I shall prove to you that Christ was not consecrated to his everlasting priesthood till he died, then it is very congruous that it should be so with a christian; for our office dependeth upon his, and is carried on in a way of conformity to his. Now, that Christ was consecrated at his death, I prove by these places: Heb. v. 9, 'And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;' that is, when he had 'learned obedience by the things which he suffered,' ver. 8. And Heb. ii. 10, 'The captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings;' that is, fully consecrated, and fitted to be a priest, to perform that office to our comfort. His death is expressed by a notion of perfection: Luke xiii. 32, 'Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected;' that is, shall suffer death. It is good to

inquire in what sense, in these and in many other places, Christ is said to be made perfect ; it is not meant of his personal perfection, but official. As to his person, as he was God, he was perfect from all eternity ; as God-man, he was perfect from the first moment of his conception. The word *τελειωθείς*, 'being made perfect,' relateth to his office, and may be rendered 'consecrated,' as well as 'made perfect ;' 'being consecrated, he became,' &c. ; and 'it behoved the captain of our salvation to be consecrated through sufferings.' The word signifieth, in its first sense, to finish and accomplish a thing. That which is brought to an end is perfected ; so was Christ as a priest perfected ; that is, fit to minister before God as a priest. But that it should be rendered consecrated I prove—

[1.] Because the word is rendered consecrated elsewhere : Heb. vii. 28, 'Consecrated for evermore.' In the margin, 'perfected,' *τετελειωμένον*. What is in the old testament, 'Thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons,' Exod. xxix. 9, the Septuagint render, *καὶ τελειώσεις Ἀαρόνους τὰς χεῖράς*, thou shalt perfect, or fill the hand of Aaron and his sons. And the sacrifice of consecration is called *θυσία τῆς τελειώσεως*, the sacrifice of perfecting or completing, because the priest was to pass through some ceremonies ; and these being done, he is said *τελειοῦσθαι*, to be consummate, or made perfect, or fully authorised to perform the priest's office.

[2.] I prove it from the context in Heb. v. There the apostle is discoursing of Christ's everlasting priesthood, and his being made perfect is with respect to that office. He was not perfect or fitted for that work till he stood before God with a sacrifice in his hand, till he had offered up himself with prayers, and tears, and strong cries, and had learned obedience by the things which he suffered ; but then he was made perfect, for the rites of his consecration were over ; that is, his agonies and bloody sufferings ; then he was fully consecrated and completed to be a priest. So that Christ's solemn consecration was at his death.

[3.] The reason of the thing sheweth it. Jesus Christ was to be 'a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,' Heb. ii. 17. These two attributes, 'merciful' and 'faithful,' refer to God and us. Merciful to help and relieve sinful miserable man ; faithful with respect to God, in performing all things which belong to his sacerdotal office, and going through with his work given him in charge, till he hath fully finished it. The best and most merciful high priest that ever was must be made in the best and most convenient manner. Well, then, he is made perfect when he hath had a thorough sense of our misery, and took the course prescribed to remove it ; when his heart was entended, and his hand was filled with the purest sacrifice that ever was offered ; and so by his agonies and bloody sufferings he was perfected, consecrated, and fully qualified to minister before the Lord, and to intercede for poor creatures, and to bless them with the blessing of eternal life. His priestly actions after the order of Aaron were his consecration to his everlasting blessed priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. Without these sufferings he could neither be a faithful nor a merciful high priest, nor satisfy his Father's justice, nor have a

full feeling from experience of the creatures' misery. Well, then, as Christ was consecrated at his death, so is a christian who runneth parallel with Christ in all his offices. As Christ had an inauguration into that priesthood he executed upon earth at his baptism, so hath a christian for his spiritual priesthood; as soon as washed in the laver of regeneration, but for his everlasting priesthood at death.

2. My next argument is, this suiteth with the other privilege of kings. We are made kings as well as priests. Now, as our kingly office is not perfect till we come to heaven, so neither our priestly; and therefore it mainly respecteth our ministration in the heavenly temple. How is a poor christian a king here, unless in a riddle, ἐν αἰνύματι, as he vanquisheth the devil, the world, and the flesh? as it is a princely thing to be above inferior things, and to trample them under our feet. The heathen could say, *Rex est qui metuit nihil, rex est qui cupit nihil*—He is a king that is above the hopes and fears of the world, that feareth nothing and desireth nothing. This is indeed, in a metaphor, a kingly spirit, to have our hearts in heaven, and to look upon all sublunary things as beneath our care and affections. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, neither is a believer's. Here upon earth we reign only in a spiritual way; but the privilege cometh fully to be verified when we tread Satan under our feet, and triumph over enemies, and reign visibly and gloriously, sitting upon thrones with Christ at his coming, judging the world and angels themselves: Mat. xix. 28, 'Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;' Luke xxii. 29, 30, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;' Ps. xlix. 14, 'The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;' and 1 Cor. vi. 2, 'Know ye not that we shall judge the world?' and ver. 3, 'Know ye not that we shall judge angels?' neither will this kingdom be terminated and ended at the day of judgment, but they shall be kings eternal in heaven: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;' 2 Tim. ii. 12, 'If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him;' that is, in heaven. With respect to this title, right, and interest, we are said 'to be made kings.' Now proportionably, the other privilege, of 'being made priests,' must be expounded also. We are spiritual priests upon earth; we have our sacrifices of prayers, praises and alms, and devoting ourselves to God; but this office is not completed till we come to heaven, and do immediately minister before the Lord. Then we have entrance into the holiest: Heb. x. 19, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' Not in spirit, but in person; for if the chief part of our kingly office be yet behind, why not the chief part of our priestly office also?

3. Then we are qualified and prepared. Sanctification must go before consecration; and the more sanctified, the more consecrated; and when our sanctification is finished, then our consecration is consummated, and not till then. Now in this world our justification and sanctification is imperfect; we are not got above our legal fears,



and grace is very weak in us. You know before we can serve the living God 'our consciences must be purged from dead works,' Heb. ix. 14, as the high priest was not to approach God without his washings lest he die; and we are bidden to 'draw nigh to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,' Heb. x. 22. If we have the privilege of priests, we must perform the duties of priests. Now we are not perfect as appertaining to the conscience, nor are we fully cleansed and sanctified, till the veil of the flesh be removed, and we be presented to God without spot and wrinkle. Somewhat is begun indeed, that will tend to, and end in, perfect sanctification, enough to qualify us for our ministration at this distance from God. There is enough done on Christ's part, by way of impetration and merit: Heb. x. 14, 'For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' or consecrated; he hath paid the price; but as to the application, that is by degrees. The priest under the law was seven days in consecrating; this figured all the time that interveneth before we enter upon the everlasting sabbath. Our whole life is the time of consecration, which goeth on by degrees, and will be made complete, both for body and soul, at the resurrection; for then shall we be made fit to approach the throne of glory, and serve our God in a perfect manner in the eternal temple of heaven. In this life our consecration is not yet finished, we cannot come so near God. We are qualified indeed to come to the throne of grace, but not qualified to come to the throne of glory; but the work is a-doing, and in time it will be accomplished.

4. We have not the full privileges of priests till then, which is intimacy, full communion, nearness of access to God, and ministration before him. This is the privilege we have as priests. The apostle telleth us, Heb. ix. 8, 'The Holy Ghost signifieth that the way to the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.' How did the Holy Ghost signify this? I answer—By the whole economy and frame of that dispensation. God kept state and majesty then, and his people must not come too near him; the common Israelite must not come too near the sanctuary; they were not to camp or pitch their tents round about it, but only the Levites, lest they die: Num. i. 52, 53, 'And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard throughout the host. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel.' It was a dangerous thing for the common Israelites to be too near the symbols of God's presence; to teach us the distance between God and men, and their unworthiness to come near him and his holy things. But though the Levites might encamp near it, yet none but the priests must enter into the tabernacle: Num. iv. 18–20, 'Cut ye not off the tribe of the family of the Kohathites from among the Levites; but this do unto them, that they may live, and not die; when they approach unto the most holy things, Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service, and to his burden: but they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.' They were to keep near the tabernacle, and the Kohathites to bear

things which they must not see and touch, upon pain of death. And this was not only threatened, but executed on the Bethshemites, which was a city of Levites, when they looked into the ark : 1 Sam. vi. 19, 20, ' And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men. And the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? and to whom shall he go up from us? ' Well, God kept at a distance from that people, and would not have them too familiar with him ; but the priests might come near and minister before the Lord, but not till they were consecrated, and till they had cleansed themselves : Exod. xxx. 20, 21, ' When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not ; and when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not.' But though an ordinary priest might come to the altar of burnt-offering, yet the high priest was only to enter into the sacrary, or holiest of all ; and that not when he pleased, but only once a year : Lev. xvi. 2, ' And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not.' The high priest was a solemn type of Christ, yet he was not to be too familiar with God. The people were sensible of this state and distance which God kept, and murmured at it : Num. xvii. 12, 13, ' And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish ; whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord, shall die : shall we be consumed with dying? ' What did the Holy Ghost signify by all this? That the way of the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. But now God is more familiar with his people ; a christian hath the privilege of the high priest, a privilege which the most eminent person of that dispensation could enjoy but once a year, in the most solemn service which ever he performed, and that not till after many washings and purifications. In every time of need we may come to the throne of grace. It was dangerous heretofore to thrust themselves upon God, but now the Lord is willing to admit us into his presence ; gospel-believers may come to him, the fountain of grace is not inaccessible. Well, but though we may come to the throne of grace, we cannot come to the throne of glory, thence we are all shut out ; no man can immediately approach the throne of glory till he be both fully and perfectly justified and sanctified ; for the present we are not fit to come nigh him ; as Absalom, when his peace was made, and he was permitted to come home to Jerusalem, yet he was not admitted to his father's sight and presence : 2 Sam. xiv. 24, ' The king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face.' And Esther, when chosen for a spouse for the great king Ahasuerus, yet she was to ' accomplish the months of her purification,' Esther ii. 12. We have access to the throne of grace, that is all we can have in this life ; but hereafter we shall have access to the throne of glory, then we shall have full communion with our God, and a clear vision of his eternal

beauty, and as great a fruition of his godhead as we shall be capable of, in a state of full contentment, joy, and blessedness.

5. If there be a temple in the other world, then there are priests, and there will be a ministration; but now heaven is often represented as a temple. As the temple under the law was a type of Christ, in whom the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily, and a type of the church, in which God manifesteth his power and presence; so also it was a type of heaven, and so frequently applied. As in the temple there were three partitions, the outward court, the holy place, and the holy of holies; so is there the airy heaven, the starry heaven, and the heaven of heavens, as it is called, Acts iii. 21, 'Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things;' and the third heaven: 2 Cor. xii. 2, 'I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, such an one caught up to the third heaven.' This third heaven, the seat of God and of the blessed saints, is often called 'the holiest,' with respect to the type in the temple or sanctuary. Therefore that is called 'a worldly sanctuary,' Heb. ix. 1, and 'holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true;' that is, heaven itself, ver. 24. The earthly or worldly sanctuary was the throne and palace of God, residing as a king in the midst of his people, which figured or shadowed a more excellent throne and palace, which is heaven, where God doth manifest his presence in a far more glorious manner. Well, then, in this temple must we minister, and be admitted to a nearer attendance upon God.

6. One great part of our sacrifices and oblations remaineth everlastingly to be done by us, and that is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; it is a great branch of the thank-offerings of the gospel: Heb. xiii. 15, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.' And in heaven they cease not. Prayer suiteth more with our imperfect state, when we are compassed about with divers infirmities and necessities; but the angels praise God, and so do the blessed spirits. We shall then have a fuller sense of the mercies and goodness of God, when our redemption is full and complete, and a clearer sight of his excellencies when we see him face to face. Here we do but tune our instruments, and prepare for the work of heaven, but then we perform it. We are here but as learners, when we see God by faith, and understand a little of the love of Christ, but then as practisers. Therefore certainly to be kings and priests unto God doth not respect the present life only, but our ministration in the heavenly temple. There is a 'for ever' always affixed to the doxologies of the saints, to show that now they do but begin in the work which they shall complete hereafter.

7. The scriptures do plainly express that our service is not ended with our lives, but, as we still stand in the relation of creatures to God, so we still glorify him and serve him: Rev. vii. 14-16, 'And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in the temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them, and they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more,' &c. There is the explanation of the mystery of being washed in Christ's

blood, and made kings and priests unto God. This office they chiefly perform when they come to enjoy their happiness before the throne of God and in the heavenly temple. And what is the work there? They serve him day and night; they do not their service then by fits and starts, but constantly. A type whereof were the priests under the law, who, in their courses, were admitted day and night to be in the temple: Ps. cxxxiv. 1, 'Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord.' But what was done by many in their turns is now done by the same persons continually; for they are never weary, and there is no intermission in their service. And God always dwelleth amongst them; they shall not be at a distance from God, nor he at a distance from them; but they shall still enjoy his company, as dwelling in one house with him; for there shall not be sin nor sorrow any more, and then shall they praise God cheerfully. This will be our work when we are admitted into the most holy place.

8. As heaven hath the notion of a place, a temple, so our estate in heaven hath the notion of a day or time wherein our priesthood is to be solemnly exercised; for it is called *σαββατισμός*, a sabbath or rest: Heb. iv. 9, 'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.' A sabbath is for holy rest, not a time of idleness, but to be religiously employed; so this glorious eternal rest, which is prepared for and promised to believers, is not passed over in ease and idleness, but in acts of worship and adoration. It is a rest from toil and labour, but not from work and service. On the sabbath-day the sacrifices were doubled; the priest had more to do upon that day than any other; so in our everlasting sabbatism, we serve God after a more perfect manner than now we do. On the sabbath, a special delight and rejoicing in God was to be raised: Isa. lviii. 13, 14, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' So in our eternal rest shall we delight ourselves in his presence.

*Use 1.* It informeth us—

1. That our service is an honour, and worship a privilege; for it is not only a way to heaven, but a beginning of heaven. Our work there is a part of our reward. The priestly ministration is so the work of heaven, that it is also a reward for our present diligence. Well, then, it is the most blessed life we can live upon earth, to be serving God and ministering before the Lord, and to be employed in any nearness about him; his people desire no sweeter work. Alas! what is the work of all the world to this but a toilsome drudgery or base servility? Go to the brutish world, what is the work of the drunkard, glutton, gamester, or fornicator, compared with that of the spiritual priest? They are priests to feed the belly, that base dunghill-god: Phil. iii. 19, 'Whose god is their belly.' Their business is to provide for and please the flesh. Nay; go to the more refined part of the world, the covetous and ambitious worldlings; they aim at nothing beyond this life; but

the spiritual priest continueth for ever ; his service is begun, and will ever last ; his work is his wages.

2. That it is no easy matter to be familiar with God, and to draw nigh to him in worship. We are stupid, and therefore not sensible of it. You see what distance God kept under the law, and what distance he yet keepeth as to his immediate presence. Surely 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him,' Ps. lxxxix. 7. The redeemed are honoured to have access to God with boldness, yet they ought to be humbly sensible of the privilege. Every nearer approach to God is an enlargement of honour. We must keep an even hand between natural bondage and irreverence. Natural bondage ; we are sometimes afraid to come into God's presence, and doubt of access, being so unworthy to come before the Lord ; but we are privileged by our calling ; Christ by his death hath made us kings and priests. The priests were sanctified to draw nearer unto God than the common people, and to be employed in his most holy service ; so if we be cleansed by the blood of Christ, we are separated from the ungodly world, and may acquaint him with all our desires, griefs, and fears. On the other side, against irreverence. It is no easy matter to come before the Lord as we ought to do ; and we must be sure to bless and thank the Redeemer for this favour, that we are made priests of God and Christ, that we are freed from the fears of the second death : Rev. xx. 6, 'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ ;' and we may hope for a more solemn service.

Use 2. To exhort the children of God—

1. To long and hope for the time of their ministration in the heavenly temple. When the time of our consecration is finished, then we shall be admitted into this blessed estate. Oh, comfort yourselves with the forethought of it ! There are many reasons to induce us—

[1.] Because then we shall see him whom we worship, and stand before his throne. This is often promised : Ps. xvii. 15, 'As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness ; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness ;' 1 John iii. 2, 'When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' So 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face ;' John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.' Now it is a blessed thing to see what we love, and possess what we see. The priests here, though they do not worship an unknown God, yet they worship an unseen God. The Romans, when they brake into the *sanctum sanctorum*, and saw no image there, gave out that the high priest did worship the clouds. The world suspecteth the God whom we worship ; but there we see him face to face, with a clear and distinct vision : 2 Cor. v. 7, 'For we walk by faith, not by sight.' There vision succeedeth in the room of faith, fruition of hope, and perfect love of that weak adherence which now we put forth towards God. If God should suffer himself to be seen by his creature in the condition to which sin hath reduced him, it would prove rather a ground of fear and astonishment than of love and fruition ; or else the majesty

must be clouded with some allay of condescension, which would not sufficiently reveal him to us. The immediate presence of God, which is our felicity in heaven, would be our misery upon earth. The scripture telleth us, *Exod. xxxiii. 20*, 'No man shall see him and live.' And *Manoah, Judges xiii. 22*, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God.' We cannot look upon this glorious sun but we are in danger of losing our life together with our sight. The scripture sometimes maketh God to dwell in darkness, sometimes in light inaccessible, to note the incapacity of our faculties, and the incomprehensible splendour of his glorious majesty. We are not able to pierce through this darkness or endure this light. But the majesty of God is not there formidable, but comfortable; for we shall behold the glorious God in a glorified estate, both of soul and body.

[2.] We shall serve him perfectly, and without weakness, weariness, and distraction.

(1.) Here is weakness. What dull and low conceptions have we of God! What heartless, irreverent, and poor expressions of his glorious excellency whenever we come to worship before him! such as should make us ashamed to open our lips before the Lord: *Isa. vi. 5*, 'Woe is me, for I am undone,' saith the prophet *Isaiah*, 'for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' Or as *Job, chap. xl. 4*, 'Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.' The best of God's servants, when their eyes are but a little opened to see the glory of that God they speak to, how sensible would they be of the shortness of their apprehension and expressions of that God they speak to! Alas! how can such narrow hearts frame an apprehension, or receive an impression of such an infinite greatness and eternal goodness as there is in God! But when we shall see him as he is, then we shall better praise him, and conceive more suitably of him.

(2.) Here is weariness, and we cannot endure long under our weak duties, neither as to the frame of body nor mind; but there God in communion is always new and fresh to us every moment. And the more we look upon the object, the more is the faculty fortified and strengthened in conversing with God: *Mat. xviii. 10*, 'In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' The blessed spirits are never weary of beholding God, and enjoying his glorious presence.

(3.) Here is distraction. We pretend, when we worship God, to leave the world, and turn the back upon all things else, and to set ourselves before the throne of God; but alas! we bring the flesh along with us, and that will have its excursions, and so our hearts are stolen away from under Christ's own arm. We mingle sulphur with our incense, groan under divers infirmities: 'We cannot do what we would do,' *Gal. v. 17*. But there is nothing to divert us from thinking of God; there is no blemish in priest or sacrifice; nothing will appear in us displeasing unto God, which is a comfort in our present weaknesses.

[3.] We shall then serve God uninterruptedly; for there shall be no impediment of business, nor need of sleep. Here earthly occasions straiten Christ, and crowd up his interest in the soul, and we spend

almost half our time in sleep, not showing one act of thankfulness to God; but then 'we shall be ever with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17. We shall always stand before his throne of glory, and abide in his blessed presence. Our labour shall not need repose, nor shall the night ever draw a curtain upon that day. There will be no miseries, wants, and necessities to distract us, and take off our minds. The whole strength of our souls is carried out to God, and our time is spent wholly and only in worshipping and serving God. Constant and perpetual solemn service is a celestial privilege, and they that serve God most uninterruptedly come nearest heaven, for there Christ is ever with us, and we ever with him: 2 Cor. v. 8, 'We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' When absent from the body, we are present with the Lord, and shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

[4.] There we are admitted into a nearer communion with God than now in this mortal estate. We draw nigh to him now, but we are not so nigh but there is some distance; but in the palace of glory our approach will be so near as to take away all distance, and we shall have immediate and full communion with God. Now God is in heaven and we upon earth, we receive no more of God than an ordinance can convey to us. Here and there he droppeth in a little comfort and quickening into the soul; the pipe cannot convey much, and the vessel can hold less; the means are narrow, and the person is not capacitated to be filled up with all the fulness of God; but then the Lord will do his work by himself, the means shall not straiten him; God will communicate himself without means, and be instead of all means; he will be all in all, and therefore will communicate his grace in full perfection. The more we draw nigh to God here, the more like him. Moses, while he conversed with God in the mount, his face shone. Christ was transformed in his prayers: Luke ix. 29, 'And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.' So by proportion in heaven; the nearer we draw to God, the more we enjoy of him: 1 John iii. 2, 'When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Perfection of holiness is the glory and happiness of the saints in heaven; as iron by lying in the fire seemeth to be all fire; when it is red-hot the qualities of fire are imprinted on it; so we, by being ever with the Lord, and ministering in his presence, have more of the divine nature communicated unto us.

[5.] There is the unanimous conjunction of all the saints in the praises of God, or a joining in comfort, without jarring or difference. The apostle biddeth us, Rom. xv. 6, 'With one mind and with one mouth to glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is our duty, but never performed to the full, but when we meet together in that great *πανάριον*, that council of souls, or 'the general assembly and church of the first-born,' which the apostle describeth, Heb. xii. 23, 'The spirits of just men made perfect,' or consecrated. It is comfortable to join in worship with the people of God now. Moses preferred it, with afflictions, before all the riches, and honours, and pleasures he enjoyed in Egypt: Heb. xi. 24, 'Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.'

But then is the communion of saints completed, when all are admitted to the vision and clearest knowledge of God, and have the most perfect adherence and love to him. Now what an happy time will that be, when we and all the holy ones of God shall, with the same enlarged affection, set about the same work ! as our groans here made but one sound, and our conjoined tears but one stream, and our united desires but one prayer, so all our praises then shall make but one melody and harmony. If it be an happiness to live with the saints in their imperfection, when sin doth often embitter their society, surely it is an happiness to live with them for ever when they are purged and freed from sin, and fully consecrated and fitted to minister before the Lord.

[6.] To think of God, and to rejoice in his glory, and to love and praise him, will be our great employment. There we shall be intent upon our choice and noble work, which is praising and lauding God : Ps. lxxxiv. 4, 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house ; they are still praising thee.' Praises now are a part of our sacrifices, and must be mingled with our prayers : Phil. iv. 6, 'In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known unto God.' So Rev. v. 8, 'The four beasts and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.' Harps signify their praises and thanksgivings. Here it cometh in by way of mixture, but there it is our sole employment. There is no need of prayers, for there are no sins, nor wants, nor necessities there ; all is praise. David calleth upon the angels 'to bless the Lord,' Ps. ciii. 20, to tell us what they do. And when a multitude of them descended at Christ's birth, Luke ii. 13, 14, they presently fell a-lauding and praising God, 'Glory be to God in the highest.' It is the opinion of the ancient Hebrews that every day they sing praises to God, and that in the morning ; this they gather from Gen. xxxii. 6, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh ;' which place the Targum of Jerusalem thus explaineth, 'Let me go, for the pillar of the morning ascends ; and behold, the hour approacheth that the angels are to sing.' This was their opinion. Sure we are that the angels bless God, and that in an eminent manner, as appeareth by frequent passages of scripture, where they are called upon to bless the Lord ; for though the speech be in the imperative mood, as if it were hortatory, yet it is to be expounded by the indicative, as narrative of what the angels do. Particularly we read they blessed God for his own excellence : Isa. vi. 1-3, 'In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims ; each one had six wings ; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.' For the creation : Job xxxviii. 4-7, 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest ? or who hath stretched the line upon it ? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ? or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy ?' For the nativity of Christ :



Luke ii. 13, 14, 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men.' So they blessed Christ: Rev. v. 11, 12, 'I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' Though they cannot fully comprehend God, yet they do it far more clearly than we. They apprehend God's excellency and perfection in himself; they know also the excellency of his works, creation, and providence, and the redemption of mankind. 'Then we shall know as we are known,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12, and understand the faithfulness of God's conduct in bringing us to glory. O blessed time when we shall fall upon the work of angels, when we shall have a sublime understanding to know God, an heart to love him, and a mouth to praise him for evermore! We shall not need any excitement, but be willing and ready to do it. We have greater cause of blessing God than the angels have. It is a question whether an innocent or a penitent person is more bound to thank God? An innocent man is bound to praise God in respect of the greatness of the benefit, and the continuance of it; but a penitent man in respect of the freeness and graciousness of it. The freeness and graciousness is much more conspicuous towards men. God was indeed good and bountiful to the angels, creating them out of nothing, endowing them with many excellent gifts; but to man sinful was God good indeed; he loved us as enemies; when his justice, offended by sin, put a bar to our salvation, he spared not his beloved Son, but delivered him to a cursed death in our room and stead.

2. To exhort us to prepare ourselves for this estate; and let us labour that we may be such as may be counted meet to minister before the Lord in his heavenly temple. To this end—

[1.] Let us hasten the acts which belong to our consecration, and attend upon them with more seriousness, which is the cleansing of the soul from the guilt and stain of sin. From the guilt of sin: Rom. v. 1, 2, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Comfortable access to God here in the world depends upon our justification; the more clear that is, the more we are fitted to come before the Lord. From the stain of sin: Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Though all see enough of God to satisfaction, these see more than others do. Therefore the more we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, the more of God shall we see, and the sooner shall we be admitted into his blessed presence. It was an old observation, even among the heathens, *ὃν φιλεῖ Θεὸς ἀποθνήσκει νέος*, that he whom God loveth dieth young. Not that all that die young are beloved of God; but ordinary observation will teach you this, that let a man more than ordinarily improve in purity of heart, though God may lend him to the world for an example for some time, yet they are taken to God sooner than others; or if they are

continued in the world, they are continued under more weaknesses, and do with more earnestness expect their translation to the everlasting priesthood.

[2.] Let us begin our sacrifices, and discharge our priestly office now, and perform all the duties which belong to our ministration with more fidelity. Some of our duties are proper only to the present state, as consecrating ourselves to God, and using ourselves for God; that is out of date then, for our consecration is over before we come there. It is undeniable that the blessed spirits all live to God: Luke xx. 38, 'He is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him.' But there is no need of giving up ourselves to God, for then we possess God. Mercy is useless in an estate where misery cannot approach; therefore now it must be exercised. None are priests in heaven but those that have acted the priest's part upon earth. But praise holds good now, and then too: Ps. cvii. 22, 'Let us sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.' This is to tune our instruments, and to be fitting ourselves for our everlasting work.

[3.] Let us be more frequent and often with God; for the throne of grace is the very porch of heaven; by it we pass to the throne of glory. Surely that life upon earth is best which is likeliest to the life of heaven: Ps. lxxxiv. 10, 'For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' Prayer giveth us the nearest familiarity which a man in flesh can have with God, and is the best preparation for our entrance upon our everlasting priesthood. A man acquainted with a God beforehand is not to seek for a God to pray to when he cometh to die, nor for a mediator to intercede for him, nor for a spirit of adoption to fly to God as a reconciled Father. Having been frequently entertained and accepted by God, he can the better resign his spirit into his hands, and with more confidence wait for this nearer attendance. Alas! to go out of the world into unknown and unseen regions, where we are wholly strangers, how sad is that! Who will venture into the ocean who hath not learned to swim in the shallow brooks and streams? Communion with God in a way of grace is the way to communion with him in a way of glory. We go to see him face to face whom we have seen by the eye of faith, to live with him in heaven with whom we have lived upon earth. *Species non latificat in patria, quem fides non consolatur in via*—Sight will not be joyful to him in heaven whom faith hath not comforted upon earth. He that hath often heard and accepted us will not reject us.

3. Let us be more apprehensive of the greatness of the privilege of drawing nigh to God, that we may improve it accordingly. The priests were sanctified to draw nearer to God than the common people, and employed in his holy service. Yea, nearness of ministration before the Lord is the felicity of the glorified. How must we improve it?

[1.] Partly to be ashamed of our loathsomeness to draw nigh to God, and our weariness of his special service. Oh, let us not shun God as an enemy, and be loath to come into his special presence, or backward to converse with him.

[2.] To thankfulness to our Redeemer. It was purchased by the blood of Jesus: Heb. x. 19, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to

enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' We may be the more confident of drawing nigh to him in a way of grace, for he hath purchased also our entrance into glory: Eph. iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him.'

*Use 3. Comfort.*

1. Against present weaknesses in duty. There will be a time when we shall more perfectly express our thanksgiving to God.

2. Against troubles and sufferings. It must be so now, that we may be conformed to our head; but no molestation should be an impediment in our work.

3. Against death. It should make us willing to die, that we may minister before the Lord. If David so longed for the enjoyment of God in the earthly temple: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2, '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; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary;' how much more cause have we to long for the time when we shall be made priests to him for ever?

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